

Executive Summary & Grant Rationale

Your response to the outline below should be no longer than two pages.
This information may be made public.

*After you've completed the preceding application and reviewed the **AWARDING GRANTS – Selection Criteria & Weights** pages that follow this page, please reflect on your application responses and provide a brief executive summary and grant rationale that includes:*

- Brief project description/summary (less than 150 words)

The Sharpsville Northwest project is a Fiber-to-the Home project that will serve 127 unserved households in northern Tipton County and southern Howard County. The project includes building fiber directly to residences and farms within the project area. The project will be completed by February 2020. Total eligible project cost is \$1,005,773. The applicant match is \$755,733. This project will leverage an additional \$1.7M of private investment to bring gigabit speeds to 400+ residents within the project area that are currently underserved.

- A general geographic location of the project (not census blocks) and total number of passings estimated to be made as a result of the grant project

The project area is located in northern Tipton County, northwest of the Town of Tipton in Liberty & Prairie Townships and in southern Howard County in Harrison and Taylor Townships. In addition to the 127 homes that are currently unserved, this project will improve speeds for an additional 401 residences that already are experiencing speeds above 10/1, for a total impact of 528 homes.

- A brief description of the applicant's involvement in the project to date and how the applicant (and/or partners) intends to manage and sustain the project

Smithville has been a provider in Tipton County since the 1960s. As such, we have actively supported various organizations and activities in the County. For this project, we have met with members of the Tipton County Broadband Task Force including representatives from the Tipton Mayor's office, Community Foundation, County Surveyor, and representatives from the business and agriculture sectors. We have also had communication with local elected officials including the County Commissioners, State Representatives, and members of Congress. Recognizing that there are sensitivities with accessing farmland, we are working closely with County representatives and members of the agriculture community to identify areas of concern for property owners and intend to conduct "kitchen table" style meetings to share information and gain support for the project.

Our long-term commitment to the community and our customers includes a focus on continually improving services and increasing speeds. In rural areas such as Tipton and Howard Counties, this takes time and significant investment, but we plan to sustain this path forward for the foreseeable future. The Next Level Connections Broadband Grant provides an opportunity to move that timeframe forward and upgrade services much sooner than we would be able to do otherwise.

- A statement on how broadband improvements will advance the quality of life and strengthen economic development opportunities in the communities in the project area

This area of the state is very rural, with a focus on agriculture. This project will bring gigabit-speed fiber optic connectivity to residents in a rural portion of the county that are currently unserved, as well as additional residences that are underserved. This portion of the state has some of the most fertile farmland in Indiana. Access to gigabit-speed broadband services will enable farmers to employ precision agriculture techniques and other applications that require high-speed connectivity. Gigabit speed broadband will allow residents to access online tools for healthcare and education as well as offer the possibilities of teleworking and home-based businesses. For any business that wishes to locate in the area, access to fiber is necessary.