

Mainstream Fiber Networks (MSFN)

Floyd County Next Level Connections-Completion Broadband Project

This Next Level Connections project will serve 2520 unserved households and 463 unserved businesses in Floyd County. In a funding partnership with the State of Indiana and the Floyd County Council, Mainstream Fiber Networks will improve unserved and underserved levels to 1 gigabit per second up and 1 gigabit per second down by June 20, 2021. Floyd County residents, businesses and public entities have expressed on multiple occasions, the lack of reliable, Broadband service leads to businesses being unable grow, children being unable to access educational resources, limited rural telemedicine and teleworking opportunities, as well as being unable to implement advanced technology solutions for AgriTech and other farming solutions. Increased access to quality, affordable Broadband Strategies will impact all of these areas improving the quality of life for Floyd County Residents. Total eligible project cost is \$4,262,977. Combined applicant and county match is \$2,175,115, (51%).

General Geographic Location

The Floyd County Next Level Connections Completion Project focused on the northern and southern portions of Floyd County where there are both eligible census tracts as per the FCC maps and underserved census tracts as per data collected and information from businesses and residents. Floyd County has 41 census tracts noted as having no provider, of those 19 are eligible for NLC funds. There are four NLC eligible census tracts served by AT&T and Frontier. The remaining 56 census tracts are served by Charter Internet, which is a cable internet provider. Like DSL, Cable Internet speeds can be aspirational, and are shared among multiple consumers. At peak times service can be ineffective since it's not dedicated.

Mainstream Fiber Network's Involvement in the Project to Date

MSFN originally met with Floyd County Commissioners at the Indiana County Commissioners Association event in November 2018, specifically the Breakout Session, "Indiana Broadband....Is your County Ready?" After the announcement of the Next Level Connection grant opportunity extension, Floyd County decided it really wanted to serve its unserved and underserved areas and called on MSFN to see if they would partner with them to move an application forward. Numerous phone calls and e-mails furthered the conversation to bring this application to completion. Floyd County has worked tirelessly to gather resident input to ensure their application is competitive.

Support for this project is significant as evidenced by letters of support from key Crawford leadership and 49 unique e-mails from Floyd County residents dissatisfied with their service or lacking service. Letters of support are shown below:

- Representative Edward Clere
- Representative Karen Engleman
- Senator Ron Grooms
- Senator Mark B. Messmer
- One Southern Indiana Telecommunication
- Southern Indiana RDA Telecommunication
- IUS Letter of Support
- Highland Hills Middle Schools

MSFN ability to manage and sustain the project

Mainstream Fiber Networks (MSFN) is the lead applicant for the Next Level Connection Grant and has been in existence since 2004. MSFN is a locally owned and operated internet service provider based out of Nashville, IN. Their mission is to provide customers in rural communities with affordable, reliable fiber optic service solutions and superior customer care. They currently provide broadband solutions in six counties and are seeking to expand services to another six counties.

MSFN provides a full service implementation strategy that starts with working one on one with local communities/counties to determine the need, the approach and put together the best financing strategy. It includes all aspects of project design, implementation and last mile consumer strategies and support. The Engineering and Design work is done in house making the transition from plan to construction quick and seamless. As the project moves into construction, the Network Construction is primarily handled by in-house employees reducing implementation times. As new counties are added, the Network Operations and Customer Servicing Facing employees are local individuals hired for those roles, bringing jobs to local communities, as well as a local face to help solve consumer needs. Additionally, Mainstream prides itself on becoming a local community partner, investing time, talent and treasure with the communities it serves.

MSFN has the experience, the financial wherewithal, and demonstrated successes in implementing and completing complete Fiber solutions for rural businesses and households. They are installing in ground line that has a proposed 40 year life and have committed to providing service for at least five years but plan on providing service in perpetuity.

MSFN delivers a complete Fiber high-speed solution that allows for families to enhance its quality of life. As noted in Gallardo, Beaulieu and Kumar's Research and Policy Insights for Purdue Center for Regional Development March 2018, *"From a quality of life perspective, reducing the digital divide will bring benefits to the state. Aside from the benefits to the business sector, a bridged digital divide would allow local governments to leverage digital platforms that would be more effective in responding to residents and take advantage of telework, telehealth, and other broadband applications that will continue to transform the Hoosier landscape."*

Without the Next Level Connection Broadband grant, the Floyd County project would not be able to be implemented to bring internet to its rural areas. The state resources greatly assist in bringing Broadband to those areas of the county. If the resources were not available, the county would not be able to make up the difference and MSFN may not be able to finance all of the dollars required (because of the projections). This would reduce the households and businesses that can be served and ultimately decrease the reach of the service.

Floyd County has rallied its rural residents to provide significant feedback on how the lack of high-speed internet impacts: education, telework, businesses, and other general quality of life issues. One mother noted that as she comes down the "hill" every day she gets a bunch of text messages, e-mails and other critical notes from the night before. As she gets ready to send her oldest daughters off to college, let's be sure she can be available to them by providing her access to quality, high-speed Broadband internet, so in the event of an emergency she can be contacted.