Mainstream Fiber Networks (MSFN)

Harrison County Next Level Connection-County Close Out

This Next Level Connections project will serve 798 unserved households and 92 unserved businesses in the Harrison County. In a funding partnership with the State of Indiana, Mainstream Fiber Networks will improve unserved levels to 1 gigabits per second up and 1 gigabits per second down by June 30, 2021. Mainstream Fiber Networks will work to bring Broadband fiber to the remaining households in Harrison County that were not reached in the original Phase I and II project undertaken in partnership with the Harrison County Community Foundation and Mainstream Fiber Networks. This will bring opportunities to the remaining residents and businesses for teleworking, business growth and expansion, Agri-Tech, telemedicine, educational accesses and improve the general quality of life for the remaining residents. Total eligible project cost is $4,229,471. Applicant match is $2,157,300. (51%).

General Geographic Location
The area served in Harrison County, reflects the remaining connections needed to bring Broadband to the remaining 19% of areas that do not currently have access. These areas are located throughout the county. The remaining areas to be served in Harrison County include 38 census tracts of which, four are called out as being eligible by the Next Level Connections program. None of the remaining 38 census tracts proposed for expansion are offered service above the minimum of 10 Mbps Up or 1 Mbps Down.

Mainstream Fiber Network's Involvement in the Project to Date
In 2014, as the result of a study and request for proposal initiated by the Chamber of Commerce of Harrison County and Connect Harrison County, Inc., Mainstream Fiber Networks (MSFN) proposed to connect the county government buildings to each other and the internet via fiber optic cable. Linking the county buildings (now referred to as Phase I) created a fiber loop in and around Corydon. Phase I was financed entirely by MSFN after securing long-term commitments to purchase services by the county and business customers along the initial route. Phase II, which was planned and invested in 2017, was completed in September 2018. Phase II provided 122 miles of 72-strand fiber optic cable “backbone” reaching outward into rural areas with the reliability of redundant connections. The route reaches 81% of the addresses (both residential and business) in Harrison County. The opportunities for the Next Level Connection Funding is to build on a $15 million investment made by MSFN’s, the County's and the Harrison County Community Foundation. The investment in Phase II was $10 million from MSFN and a local investment of $5 million. Harrison County government agreed to loan $2 million for the project and HCCF loaned $3 million in order to make it happen.

Support for this project is significant as evidenced by a letter of support from the original project partner the Harrison County Community Foundation.

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 Harrison County project would not be able to be implemented to full completion. The state resources will assist in bringing Broadband to the remaining areas in the county. If the resources were not available, the remaining households will continue to having challenges getting access to Broadband. Let's work to reward Harrison County's initial investment and bring high-speed internet to the last 19% of Harrison County.