

## **Executive Summary and Grant Rationale**

### **Project Description:**

LigTel submits its Next Level Broadband Grant application to extend its Fiber to the Premises service further into Noble County, specifically to serve 83 residences and 12 business in the communities of Brimfield and Merriam. LigTel will bring its extensive experience and construction expertise to the proposed service areas, since it already provides service within Noble County. LigTel will leverage existing middle mile networks and new Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) plant to provide up to symmetrical 1G service. The Indiana Broadband map and Form 477 data confirm that other communication providers within these areas don't offer broadband at the required 10Mbps/1 Mbps speed. LigTel feels compelled to submit a grant application given its qualifications and preparation in delivering service to these communities. LigTel's application match is 21% of the cost: \$117,374. LigTel plans to begin construction in Fall of 2019 and complete the project in Fall 2021.

### **General Geographic Location**

LigTel's Noble County Broadband Improvement Phase 1 project includes a total of forty census blocks located between Brimfield and Merriam, Indiana. Thirty-two of the census blocks are split up into two large clusters of census blocks. One of the larger clusters is located in Brimfield, Indiana and the other large cluster is located in a small area east of Brimfield, along the intersection of E US Highway 6 and N State Road 9. Additionally, there are a few smaller census blocks located in between. The project also includes eight census blocks in Merriam, Indiana. These eight census blocks are located collectively at the intersection of S US Highway 33 and State Road 9. All forty census blocks are located within Noble County and have an eligible listing according to the Indiana Broadband Map and Form 477 data. There will be approximate eleven locations per mile of new plant constructed.

There are no specific demographics of the area available, but Noble County demographics show the area to be only slightly below the State average in income and employment. However, a high percentage of the population is over sixty-five, and only a small percentage of the population have a college education. The ninety-five premises connected to the fiber to the home network will have greatly improved broadband access. Current providers offer a maximum of 7Mbps down and 1Mbps up service while LigTel's lowest tier will be 50Mbps. This is a minimum improvement of a 700% increase in bandwidth.

### **Applicant Involvement**

LigTel is already perfectly positioned to build, manage and sustain its proposed project of FTTH and providing symmetrical 1G service within Noble County given that (i) it will be leveraging the company's existing engineering, design, and financial plans.; (ii) it already serves census blocks within Noble County and is well known and trusted in the community; (iii) LigTel has been investing over \$2 M in FTTP plant per year for the last three years so this ~\$550 K project is well within the LigTel experience with construction, management, and financial commitment; and (iv) LigTel operates a much larger network that serve over 3,500 customers with a mix of FTTP that delivers reliable broadband service to its customers.

LigTel along with its affiliate, Ligonier Telephone company, has the financial resources to complete this project using cash on hand and does not required any external financing.

LigTel's engineering and design plans are a Fiber to the Home design, using a passive design, based on design parameters already being used in LigTel's network that currently serves customers in Noble, LaGrange, Steuben and Kosciusko Counties. In fact, this project will simply be an extension of LigTel's current services and leverage its core ISP network, customer support personnel and construction experience. LigTel already has a strong ISP network in place, made up of three 10G connections to the Internet, which also connect to Cisco core, routers, firewalls and support software to ensure customer support and security. Moreover, LigTel has already completed the preliminary engineering and priced its project to construct fiber services to 100% of the 95 locations in the eligible census blocks outlined in the grant application, using a financial model based on a 70% take rate for broadband based on take rates from FTTH projects LigTel completed in the past two years. If successful in the application process, LigTel is prepared to use the funds to complete middle mile fiber installation and extend mainline fiber from its existing end points into Brimfield and Merriam and deliver Fiber to the Premise to local business and residents in those areas.

Finally, given that LigTel already serves census blocks and has a long history of construction within Noble County, it is ahead of the game, since LigTel has already been through the Noble County permitting and environmental impact processes, is familiar with the terrain, and has customers already requesting service.

LigTel is very involved in the community and has received # letters of support from the critical community organization in the area: The School System, the Economic Development Council, [List others]. They have also received letters from businesses in the area that are stifled due to the poor broadband. These companies and organization are looking for LigTel to improve the E-Learning access, economic development, adult access to online training, and E-Health applications.

Since 1990, LigTel has invested millions of dollars in providing voice and broadband services throughout rural, Northeast Indiana, including Noble County. LigTel is prepared and has the experience to successfully deliver better, more reliable and more affordable service to these unserved citizens.

### **Impact of Broadband Improvements on Quality of Life**

LigTel's proposed project provides an opportunity to stimulate economic opportunities, improve education, and enhance healthcare in the unserved rural towns of Brimfield and Merriam, by bringing high-speed broadband capabilities to residents who would otherwise have lesser quality services or lack the ability deliver real-time services such as E-Learning, video-streaming, telehealth, work from home and strong access to broadband.