



Serving Clayton, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties
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March 15, 2023

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa,

Re: Intent to Qualify – Southeastern Clayton County

To Whom it May Concern:

Please accept this letter on behalf of Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC), expressing support for the Intent to Quality application to be considered as an intervention zone and futuristic funding.

Our council of government has been involved in supporting the growth and expansion of the counties of Clayton, Clayton, Howard, Fayette and Winneshiek throughout Northeast Iowa since 1972. UERPC celebrated its' 50th anniversary in 2022 and is proud to have such great partners with cities, counties, businesses, state and federal agencies and residents. The UERPC board is focused on helping create more family-friendly communities and opportunities in Northeast Iowa.

I am proud to be a part of OCIO's past funding opportunities. UERPC has partnered with local service providers to build over 1,000 miles of fiber already in Clayton County. I am proud of UERPC for being a part of that initiative and being the catalyst. I am proud of our local providers for seeing the need and investing in our region. And I am proud of our state for investing in our residents and businesses.

The 8-mile area including rural areas of Elkport, Osterdock and Guttenberg is showing 76 unserved locations. 8 underserved locations with a total eligible of 84 locations. Within the proposed intervention zone, the area is seeing higher levels of poverty of 13.0% than the state's average and Clayton County's rate of 12.2%. It is also seeing high levels of children within poverty, 16.3%. This zone is showing 30% of the population to be children under the age of 19 years of age. The median income with this area is significantly lower than that state's median. While showing a lower level of educational attainment, 51.7%. In order to attract businesses, those 51.7% could be skilled up to assist the ever-needed workforce. This could benefit existing business growth and prospective business growth. In order to attract families, fiber is needed for residents to work wherever they wish while living where they wish. Fiber will be the key for economic growth, educational improvement, increase incomes, and improving health. Brain health has become a major concern for the world, state and Clayton County. Suicide is the #2 reason for death among children and men. Access to tele-health can be the solution and in order to have access and reduced healthcare costs. Broadband is the answer to better brain health and wellbeing.

I can honestly state, the fiber builds within the county will save our rural areas from depressed economic times, reduction in populations, closures of businesses, closures of school districts, and declining health issues. Clayton County and the southeastern area is like no other area in topography the State of Iowa, we need to preserve the landscape and wildlife but yet cannot sustain on existing businesses and tourism alone.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachelle Howe".

Rachelle Howe
Executive Director