



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 – Frenchtown area in 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' 50<sup>th</sup> 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 apart of OCIO's past funding opportunities. UERPC has partnered with our 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 1-mile area is showing 47 eligible locations. Within the proposed intervention zone, this small area is parallel to the Mississippi River giving higher difficulty and costs to building fiber. This census tract has a high population of elderly persons, 21.7% of the age of 70 or older. Poverty levels are at 10.7% for this zone. And the median income with this area is significantly lower than that state's median. While showing a lower level of educational attainment, 49.2% having only a high school education. In order to attract businesses, we have a workforce (of that 49.2%) that could be skilled up. This could benefit existing business growth and prospective business growth. In order to attract families and added workforce, fiber is needed for residents to work wherever they wish while living where they wish. Broadband will be the key for economic growth, educational improvement, increase incomes, and improving health.

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 Frenchtown area is like no other area in topography the State of Iowa, we need to preserve the Driftless Region but yet cannot sustain on tourism dollars alone.

Sincerely,

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

Rachelle Howe  
Executive Director