



Serving Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek
Counties
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March 10, 2023

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa

Re: Intent to Qualify – Clayton/Fayette Counties

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 Allamakee, 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 our local service providers to build over 300 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 Clayton-Fayette proposed zone is seeing 195 underserved, 45 unserved with a total of 240 eligible locations. We feel there are more locations underserved that the updated map is showing, those would be served as well.

According to the 2021 ACS five-year estimates, the demographics within the proposed zone include 6,195 residents, with a 10.5% decrease from the 2010 census. The poverty level is 11.7%, with a higher poverty level within the portion of Fayette's census of 16.1%. More specifically, the children ages 18 and under within poverty is at 8.7%. The median income with this area is significantly lower than that state's median. While showing a lower level of educational attainment with 38.2% only having high school degrees. In order to attract businesses, we have a workforce that could be skilled up. 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. Mental health has become a major concern for the Nation, State and Clayton and Fayette Counties. 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, fiber again is the answer.

I can honestly state, the fiber builds within the proposed zone will save our rural areas from depressed economic times, reduction in populations, closures of businesses, closures of school districts, and declining health issues. Clayton and Fayette County areas are unique to the remainder of area in the State of Iowa, we need to preserve the landscape and wildlife but yet cannot sustain the economy on those items alone.

Best,

Rachelle Howe
Executive Director