

July 21, 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa
200 E Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: (515) 281-5503

RE: Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant Program – NOFA #006

Dear Chief Information Officer and Review Committee:

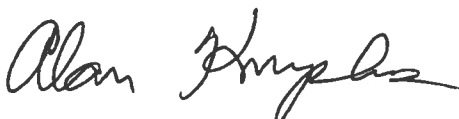
I am writing this letter on behalf of Minerva Valley Telephone Company (Minerva Valley). As a resident and farmer of Story County, Iowa, we would like to express our full support of the Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant application for Minerva Valley. They have a long and successful history of providing state-of-art communications services within the State of Iowa. Minerva Valley has a strong reputation for community commitment and strong customer service. We are confident in Minerva Valley's capabilities for enhancing broadband service for those residing in Story County.

With the assistance from the broadband grant, Minerva Valley will be able to enhance our broadband connectivity with a fiber network design. This fiber build will enable us to overcome some geographical distances, empower us through information, and bring the world to us through a few simple strokes of a keyboard.

As a local area grain and livestock producer, we use advancements in technology to help manage crops more effectively and efficiently. We use technology to map fields for maximum grain production. Farmers in the rural Story County area use broadband for soil mapping which aids in their seed and fertilizer application, GPS systems for precision farming, as well as for irrigation and grain bin monitoring. Fiber to the home connections offer endless opportunities for monitoring services, livestock feed and environment monitoring, security, video surveillance, energy management, and GPS tracking. Therefore, it is extremely important that broadband grant funding be obtained to provision for much needed broadband service to our area.

We strongly urge the Chief Information Officer and Review Committee to fund this Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant application, not only will this help with sustaining the future of advanced broadband services in Minerva Valley's proposed funded service area, but also promoting the future economic stability of our community.

Sincerely,



14390 670TH AVE McCallister, IA

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Erickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Erickson" clearly distinguishable.



**STORY COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
LISA HEDDENS
LINDA MURKEN
LATIFAH FAISAL**

Story County Administration
900 Sixth Street
Nevada Iowa 50201
515-382-7200
515-382-7206 (fax)

July 19, 2021

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200 E. Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50309

RE: Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant Program – NOFA #006

Dear Chief Information Officer and Review Committee:

We would like to express our full support of the Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant application for Minerva Valley Telephone Company's (Minerva Valley) broadband plan for portions of rural Story County. The funding they have requested would help address the lack of adequate broadband Internet access and connectivity in the area. Due to Minerva Valley's long and successful history of providing state-of-the-art broadband service at modern speeds to other rural communities and their strong reputation for customer service and community commitment, we are confident in their capability to enhance broadband service for the residents of rural Story County.

As an underserved area with limited modern Internet services, residents of rural Story County are faced with many challenges, such as limited medical resources and distance barriers between patients, physicians, and facilities. Because of the rural nature of the area, students do not receive equitable broadband resources as compared to those in more urban areas. Rural students may lack the opportunity for research, distance learning, video, and other tools that advanced broadband can deliver.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Story County was aware of ongoing needs for greater broadband connectivity through the county. Dating back to 2014, when Story County became a Connect Iowa community, we recognized the pivotal role technology plays in how businesses operate, how services are provided, and the degree to which our citizens need reliable internet access. Our Strategic Plan built on that work, stating that we will "Update and expand broadband connectivity needs assessment throughout Story County and explore options for expansion of services." COVID-19 cemented our commitment and dedication to addressing these needs.

Story County staff have been working with the Greater Des Moines Partnership (GDMP) to assess broadband needs in Story County and through the Central Iowa Region. The OCIO's map update identifies several areas significant areas of Story County where broadband falls within the tiers (categorized by download/upload speeds) identified by the Legislature and the

OCIO as not being adequate. The results of the GDMP survey also show several underserved areas in Story County.

With funding assistance from the Empower Rural Iowa Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant program, and a cash match provided by Story County, Minerva Valley's proposed expansion will enable the residents of rural Story County to overcome geographical distances, empower them through information, and bring the world to their fingertips. Additionally, we feel strongly that this project will enable greater collaboration and teamwork between community service centers, public safety offices, county offices and municipal offices.

We respectfully ask you to consider Minerva Valley's proposal for their fiber project in rural Story County. It is extremely important that state broadband grant funding be obtained to provide much needed broadband service to this area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa K. Heddens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent.

Lisa Heddens, Chair



**STORY COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
LISA HEDDENS
LINDA MURKEN
LATIFAH FAISAL**

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**PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO STORY COUNTY SERVICE PROVIDERS
FOR APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING FROM THE
EMPOWER RURAL IOWA BROADBAND GRANT PROGRAM**

On July 1, 2021 the Office of the Chief Information Officer issued Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) #006, for the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program, making available up to \$97,500,000 for broadband expansion in Iowa. The Application Acceptance Window is from July 1 – July 26, 2021, during which time communication service providers may submit applications for grant funding under the program. This grant round is based on renewed Targeted Service Area determinations published in an updated version of the Statewide Broadband Availability Map V4 as of 7/1/21.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Story County was aware of ongoing needs for greater broadband connectivity through the county. Dating back to 2014, when Story County became a Connect Iowa community, we recognized the pivotal role technology plays in how businesses operate, how services are provided, and the degree to which our citizens need reliable internet access. Our Strategic Plan built on that work, stating that we will “Update and expand broadband connectivity needs assessment throughout Story County and explore options for expansion of services.” COVID-19 cemented our commitment and dedication to addressing these needs.

Story County staff have been working with the Greater Des Moines Partnership (GDMP) to assess broadband needs in Story County and through the Central Iowa Region. The OCIO’s map update identifies several significant areas of Story County where broadband falls within the tiers (categorized by download/upload speeds) identified by the Legislature and the OCIO as not being adequate. The results of the GDMP survey also show several underserved areas in Story County.

Four local telephone companies provide internet service through fiber in Story County. All plan to apply to the funding through the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program. Details about their plans, and staff’s recommendation for Story County providing matching funds, are shown in the chart below.

Service Provider	Service Area	Approximate # of New Locations	Funding to be requested	Proposed Match: \$500/location, cap of \$30,000
Colo Telephone	Between Nevada and Colo	11	\$100,000	\$5,500
Huxley Communications	Rural Maxwell and Iowa Center	1091	\$5,250,000	\$30,000
Minerva Valley Telephone	Rural McCallsburg	8	\$271,000	\$4,000
Stratford Regional Telephone	Rural Roland, west to Hwy 69, south to 170th	120	\$2,400,000	\$30,000

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With the assistance from the broadband grant, Minerva Valley will be able to enhance our broadband connectivity with a fiber network design. This fiber build will enable us to overcome some geographical distances, empower us through information, and bring the world to us through a few simple strokes of a keyboard. As an unserved rural area with limited access to Internet services, we face many challenges including limited medical resources and distance between patients, physicians, specialists and facilities. Because of the rural nature of our area, our students do not receive equitable broadband resources as other students in more urban learning centers. We lack the ability to engage in distance learning, video and other tools that advanced broadband can bring to our students. Therefore, it is extremely important that broadband grant funding be obtained to provision for much needed broadband service to our area.

We strongly urge the Chief Information Officer and Review Committee to fund this Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant application, not only will this help with sustaining the future of advanced broadband services in Minerva Valley's proposed funded service area, but also promoting the future economic stability of our community.

Sincerely,

Seth & Zaidy Tjelmeland

66902 120th St McCallsburg, IA 50154
641-745-9939

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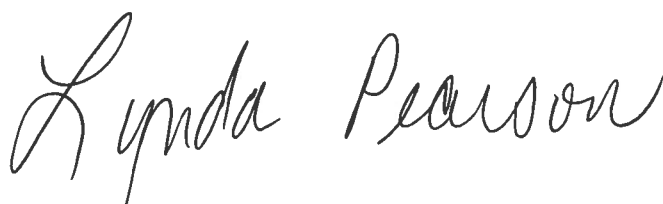
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynda Pearson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.

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Sincerely,

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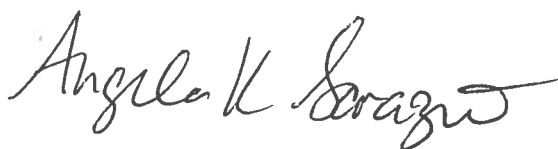
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Sincerely,

Cathy Weirone
14869-670th Ave.
McCallsburg, IA
515-434-2985

Shayne Skume