

Section 2.2.4 – Demonstrated Experience

NEIT Services, LLC (NEIT) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Northeast Iowa Telephone Company, and is based in Monona, IA. NEIT, established in 1903, has a long history of providing high quality wireline voice, wireless voice, Internet and video services to residents in Northeast Iowa and Southwest Wisconsin. NEIT is and has always been committed to customer service and providing the latest communications services available to meet customer needs. NEIT is a shareholder owned company, based in Northeast Iowa and managed by a board of nine directors. A substantial number of shareholders live within NEIT's service territory and the Company is a significant employer in Clayton County, IA.

NEIT currently employs a staff of twenty-five full-time employees. NEIT staff will utilize a wealth of knowledge to ensure the success of its proposed NOFA #007 Rural Postville 1 Gbps And Beyond Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) Expansion project. Staff directly involved with the proposed project will include four full-time customer service staff, six full-time trained FTTH technicians, and four senior key management employees. The senior managers include David Byers - Secretary/COO, Steve Hanson - Director of Business Development, Charlie Roys – Outside Plant Manager, and Dave Lund – Network Manager. Combined, this management team has over 90 years of experience in building, operating and maintaining communications networks. When outside assistance is necessary, NEIT has long-term relationships in place with numerous highly experienced telecommunications consultants and contractors, such as Central Cable Contractors, Mid-States Consulting Engineers, Olsen Thielen & Co., and John Staurulakis Inc.

The proposed FTTH network is designed as an Active Ethernet FTTH network. This means that the path from NEIT's Central Office equipment to the customer is never shared – service is delivered to each location with one or more dedicated strands of Fiber. NEIT has selected an access equipment vendor (AdTran) that has a consistent history of upgrading their product offerings as technology develops. Because of these design characteristics, NEIT will be able to easily upgrade the proposed network to offer speeds faster than 1 Gbps in the future. Should customers demand speeds of 10 Gbps or higher as technology is developed, the proposed network is designed such that the cable plant will support those needs and only the electronics will need to be upgraded.

NEIT constructed its first FTTH network in 2010, and since then has expanded its FTTH network to 100% of the locations within its ILEC exchanges; Monona/Luana (563-539), Farmersburg (563-536), and Saint Olaf (563-783). In addition to its ILEC territory, in 2016 NEIT expanded its network by adding CLEC FTTH service within the City of Postville (563-863/864). Thanks to funding provided via Iowa OCIO NOFA #003, NEIT was able to make its first FTTH network expansion into rural Postville and Luana in 2020. Every mile of NEIT's wireline network in operation today is Fiber-to-the-Home. NEIT provides Broadband service to approximately 1,700 subscribers via FTTH, and provides Broadband service to another 465 customers via Terrestrial Fixed Wireless outside the FTTH network footprint.

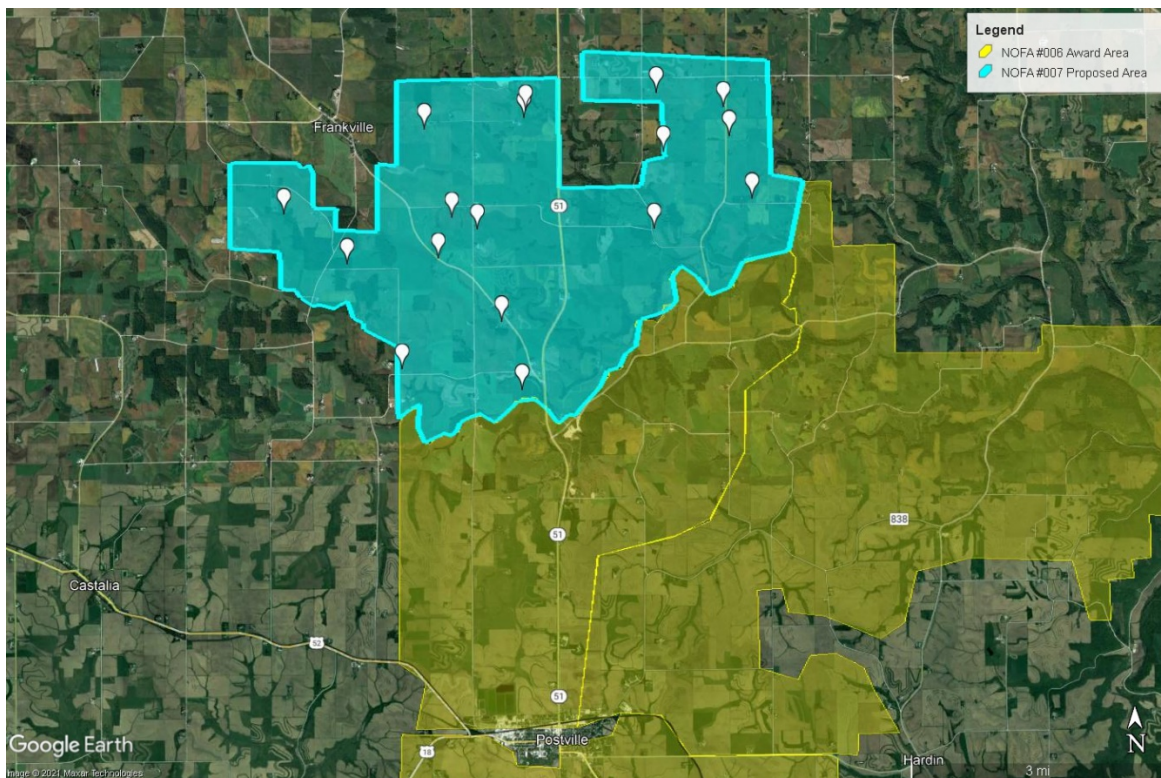
In addition to its own FTTH networks, NEIT is a partner of Community Digital Networks, and provides management services for the company, which provides FTTH service within Sumner, IA. NEIT also provides management services for Hawkeye Telephone Company, which also has deployed FTTH to 100% of the locations in its ILEC network in and around Hawkeye, IA, as well as within seven other communities; Arlington, Fayette, Lawler, Maynard, Saint Lucas, Waucoma, Westgate and West Union.

NEIT has a long history of completing FTTH construction in advance of the deadlines required by funding support programs, including NEIT's ILEC FTTH networks which were Federally funded via ACAM-I, as well

as the Iowa OCIO NOFA #003 funded Rural Luana and Postville Fiber to the Home Expansion project. In addition to this history of meeting requirements of outside funding, NEIT has been a longtime partner of local anchor institutions. When possible, NEIT provides free or discounted services to local Fire Departments, Libraries and other community service organizations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, NEIT worked with low-income families to provide free Internet service so their children could participate in remote learning efforts implemented by their schools.

The proposed NOFA #007 Rural Postville 1 Gbps And Beyond Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) Expansion project fits very well from a design and geographic standpoint into NEIT's existing FTTH network and is a natural extension from the Rural Postville 1 Gbps And Beyond Fiber-to-the-Home Expansion build area awarded during the Iowa OCIO NOFA #006 grant process. Construction on the NOFA #006 build area is slated to commence in 2022 and construction crews would be able to include the proposed additional area in their construction schedule for efficiency. NEIT has provided fixed wireless Broadband in portions of the project build area for over 15 years and is very familiar with the residents and businesses in the area. In preparation for funding opportunities, NEIT performed a high-level demand study to measure interest in NEIT expanding FTTH to locations in the proposed NOFA #007 application build area. The results of the survey were overwhelmingly positive. 63 survey letters were delivered to locations inside the proposed build area. A response rate of 33.33% was realized, and of those responses, 15 locations, or 71% of the responses indicated they would subscribe to NEIT Fiber Broadband if NEIT is successful in its grant application and extends FTTH to their locations. With a sample size of 21 locations (33.33% response rate) and a confidence level of 95%, NEIT can expect that 71% of all locations in the population (entire build area) are interested in NEIT FTTH Broadband, with +/- 18% margin of error.

To demonstrate the responses geographically, the positive Broadband responses are mapped below in white in relation to the NOFA #007 proposed build area shown in blue. The NOFA #006 FTTH build area that was recently awarded to NEIT Services, LLC is also shown in yellow for reference:



The proposed project is constrained geographically by the Postville, IA (563-864) Telephone Exchange Boundary. One census block included in the application is proposed to be partially served, as that census block includes area outside the boundary. Upon a Notice of Intent to Award, NEIT can provide detailed design maps to further demonstrate the edges of the proposed network.

Finally, aside from all of the experience, knowledge and dedication they bring to construction and operation of the proposed network expansion, NEIT staff members live, work and play in the area that we serve, including the proposed build area. Our existing customers and prospective customers in this area are our neighbors, friends and family, and we are dedicated to bringing them the service they demand today and far into the future.

**Live. Work. Play.**

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT | TALENT DEVELOPMENT | PLACEMAKING

November 1, 2021

David Byers
NEIT Services, LLC
800 S. Main St.
Monona, IA 52159

101 W. Main Street
Waukon • IA 52172
563-568-2624

Dear David:

I write on behalf of Allamakee County Economic Development & Tourism (ACED) in support of NEIT Services, LLC's proposal to the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability #007 to fund the expansion of NEIT's Fiber in a portion of rural Allamakee County. ACED strongly supports this grant application and the focus on expanding fast, high-quality, reliable Broadband in rural portions of the county.

The existing service options available to residents and businesses in the proposed funded area are inadequate and do not meet the standards of today's definition of Broadband. Considering that the network expansion would be capable of serving customers with speeds of 1 Gbps or greater, as technology develops, this project would open doors for the residents and businesses in this area for distance learning, telecommuting and smart agriculture that is just not possible today. Allamakee County currently ranks in the bottom 50% of Iowa Counties in median income, and Broadband expansion such as this proposed project is critical to improving the local economy.

As an organization which has continually invested in the upgrade and expansion of its network in Northeast Iowa through its parent company, Northeast Iowa Telephone Company, which was formed in 1903, NEIT has demonstrated a customer, technology and service quality focus that is worthy of the funding to support this project. ACED applauds the efforts of the State of Iowa to expand Broadband to underserved areas and encourages approval of NEIT's application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie O. Reinke".

Valerie O. Reinke, Executive Director
Allamakee County Economic Development & Tourism
101 W Main St
Waukon, IA 52172



GUNDERSEN

PALMER LUTHERAN HOSPITAL AND CLINICS

Office of the Chief Information Officer

Annette Dunn
200 E. Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50309

Good Day,

Please accept this letter of support for Northeast Iowa Telephone (NEIT) Company's application to the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability #007 grant opportunity. This grant application requests funding to expand fiber broadband availability in Allamakee and Clayton counties. Gundersen Palmer Lutheran Hospital & Clinics is one of six critical access networks put in place by Gundersen Health System (GHS) to provide increased access to underserved rural areas and represents a rural population that would greatly benefit from an award of this grant application.

These critical access hospitals and their associated clinics were constructed to provide care to underserved rural areas, which is best illustrated in the average population per square mile of 36.5 in these communities, which is just 42% of the national average. Expanding Access to Clinical Care Health Professional Shortage Areas is an issue throughout the Midwest, and it widens in the rural counties of Gundersen Palmer Hospital & Clinic's service area. The deficit grows wider with a 2,830:1 ratio for mental health providers compared to state's ratio of 700:1. Primary care provider shortage ratio equates to 2,860:1 compared to the state's ratio of 1,509:1.

Gundersen Palmer's service network includes a critical access hospital and outpatient clinic located in Fayette County, IA; along with additional Rural Health Clinics located in Allamakee and Clayton counties. NEIT's proposed broadband expansion would include these underserved areas in both Allamakee and Clayton counties, which according to US census data as of 7/1/2019 represent a population that broadly lacks access to broadband relative to the state and national averages. In Allamakee county, only 71.7% of households possess a broadband connection, with 73.7% in Clayton county. The US average for broadband is 82.7%.

Access to broadband plays a vital role in the current state of rural medicine, and that role is continuing to grow as our health system, along with others across the country, continue to expand telemedicine offerings in light of COVID-19. In response to the crisis, GHS instituted Project Phoenix, which set percentage-based goals for telemedicine usage across the entirety of the health system. GHS has committed to extending these goals beyond the pandemic, as a reimagining of care to provide greater access and efficiency for all patients moving forward. An award of the NEIT grant program will greatly aid in the scale of this project and allow for the increased telemedicine capacity to be used by rural Iowa patients in underserved areas. To that end, an award of the NEIT grant program would also help rural Iowa residents to realize travel-based cost savings. Many of our telemedicine programs would remove the need for patients to drive to their nearest hospital or clinic to receive care, especially those with chronic conditions that require frequent attention.

Thank you for your consideration,



Patrice Kuennen MSN, RN

Administrator ~ Gundersen Palmer Lutheran Hospital & Clinics

Palmer Lutheran Hospital
112 Jefferson Street
West Union, Iowa 52175
(563) 422-3811
Fax: (563) 422-9754

Fayette Clinic
110 King Street
Fayette, Iowa 52142
(563) 425-3381
Fax: (563) 425-4361

Postville Clinic
111 South Reynolds Street
Postville, Iowa 52162
(563) 864-7512
Fax: (563) 864-7511

West Union Clinic
110 Jefferson Street
West Union, Iowa 52175
(563) 422-3817
Fax: (563) 422-5937

Steve Hanson
Director of Business Development
NEIT, Northeast Iowa Telephone Company
800 South Main Street
Monona, IA 52159

RE: Letter of Support for Needed Fiber in Rural Residences and Rural Businesses

Dear Mr. Hanson:

I have learned that you are applying for a grant for installing underground fiber to our local Rural residences and rural businesses for improving internet/phone/TV availability in the portions of Allamakee and Clayton County, Iowa. I am a rural resident in this area of potential fiber and fully support NEIT's grant request due to the need for these services.

The current availability of broadband in this area is not sufficient. The current wireline Internet available from Centurylink is very slow and intermittent. Even their landline telephone service is not reliable. Wireless Internet services are available in the area from NEIT and another provider, but it still does not offer adequate speeds for the things we do on the Internet today.

A few years ago, NEIT installed fiber underground within the city limits of Postville. The residents that have fiber broadband from NEIT have been very satisfied and we wish very much that NEIT receive funding to support expansion of their network to our home.

We are thankful for the state providing this opportunity to fund broadband expansion in our area and we recommend NEIT be awarded funding to expand its network to serve our location and many others in the area that currently have inadequate broadband service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicholas Snitker". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Nicholas Snitker
687 Frankville Rd.
Postville, IA 52162

Administration

Tim Dugger, Superintendent
Brendan Knudtson, 7-12 Principal
Jennifer Schutte, PreK-6 Principal

Phone: 563-864-7651
Fax: 563-864-7659

**Board of Education**

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Melissa Fettkether, Sec
Jessica Deering, Vice Pres.
Travis Koenig
Amy Loera
Staci Malcom

November 1st, 2021

David Byers
NEIT Services, LLC
800 S. Main St.
Monona, IA 52159

Dear David:

The Postville Community School District supports NEIT Services, LLC's (NEIT) proposal to the State of Iowa Broadband Grant Program to fund the expansion of NEIT's Fiber to the Home network in a portion of rural Allamakee County. The school district would find it beneficial for our students and families to expand quality broadband service for their needs as a high percentage of the residential locations that would benefit from this network expansion are within the Postville Community School District.

The existing service options available to residents and businesses in the proposed funded area are inadequate and do not meet the requirements of Broadband for today's students. Considering that the network expansion would be capable of serving customers with speeds up to 1 Gbps or greater in the future, this project would equalize opportunities for students in this region, which is critical today given how COVID-19 has changed education. Ensuring that all students have high quality broadband access is critical to distance learning in Allamakee and Clayton Counties.

The Postville Community School District endorses the broadband grant application that NEIT will be submitting to the State of Iowa.

Sincerely,

Tim Dugger
Superintendent