

Demonstrated Experience

With close to 100 years of providing communication services to multiple communities in rural Iowa, West Iowa Telephone Company dba WesTel Systems (WesTel) has proven the dedication to keeping Iowans connected. Internet was first offered in 1996 to all exchanges. Over the last 25 years, WesTel has continued to improve broadband by providing advanced services that connect customers to the world. In July 2020, WesTel was recognized by NTCA as a Gig-Capable Smart Rural Community Provider.

The first fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) project began in 2010. The company continuously deployed FTTH technology, upgrading eight communities throughout six exchanges by 2016. Immediately following successful fiber upgrades to all in-town customers, WesTel began rural fiber construction. The last rural fiber project was completed in April 2021, resulting in 100% of WesTel's customers having access to broadband speeds of up to 1 Gig. In addition to the rural customers located within the exchange boundaries, WesTel has done targeted fiber build-outs to unserved or underserved homes located outside our exchange. In addition to over 3,700 customers in our exchanges, we currently serve 76 households out of our exchange boundaries.

In August 2020, WesTel was awarded the Empower Rural Iowa Emergency Broadband Expansion Grant (NOFA #003) to assist with a large rural fiber build near Anita, Iowa. That project was successfully completed underbudget and before the expected completion date. More recently, WesTel was awarded another grant under the Broadband Grants Program - Empower Rural Iowa Grant (NOFA #006) to provide future-proof fiber broadband to additional rural, underserved areas in Plymouth County. This work is expected to commence in 2022 and be completed before the end of the year.

Broadband has become an essential part of many people's lives. WesTel strives to ensure every customer has a great experience and receives reliable broadband to further telework, telemedicine, and distance learning. WesTel's positive reputation has resulted in many rural Cherokee and Plymouth County customers requesting broadband service. Our success with two other grants makes us a prime candidate to serve other rural Iowans with reliable broadband of superior quality.

WesTel Systems plans to start the project as soon as possible; however, due to the low supply of fiber, electronics, and contractors, we are anticipating a later project start date than would be our normal business practice. We also conservatively estimate a later completion date due to the same reasons and possible unforeseen delays in the supply chain.