

## Harmony Telephone Company

527044 – Empower Rural Iowa - Capital Projects Fund NOFA #008



### Harmony Telephone Company Demonstrated Experience

Harmony Telephone Company (HTC) was a family owned and operated telecommunications company from 1950 until 2006. In 2006, two area telecommunications cooperatives, Mabel Cooperative Telephone Company and Spring Grove Communications formed a partnership to purchase Harmony Telephone Company. In 2018, this partnership was expanded to include MiEnergy Cooperative. As a part of the partnership agreement, a Management and Services Agreement was signed by all parties bringing together the board of directors and management from all three ownership entities to oversee and manage Harmony Telephone Company.

Members of the management team from affiliated companies:

- Brian Krambeer, President/Chief Executive Officer, MiEnergy Cooperative; Board of Directors President for Harmony Telephone Company
- Jill Huffman, Chief Executive Officer, Harmony Telephone Company; Chief Executive Officer, Spring Grove Communications
- Vassil Vutov, Vice President of Information Technology, MiEnergy Cooperative

In 2002, Harmony Telephone Company began providing broadband services utilizing copper plant facilities. Harmony Telephone Company also has experience upgrading infrastructure to include fiber-to-the-premise having been awarded previous OCIO grants and two USDA ReConnect awards.

Since Harmony Telephone Company shares resources with Spring Grove Communications (SGC), it is beneficial that SGC has had a 100% fiber network since 2009. This has been useful for our technicians and customer service representatives to share best practices and knowledge through our fiber deployments.

Harmony Telephone Company and all our affiliates are in primarily agricultural areas. As a part of a rural community, we are all very familiar with our customers, their needs, and how our services directly impact and improve their daily lives.

The team at Harmony Telephone Company has the experience and dedication to support this FTTP project. This build will utilize a GPON network design and can offer speeds up to 1G symmetrical speeds. We provide Calix equipment that provides customers network protection and the ability to prioritize devices, filter content per device – creating another layer of security for households, and the ability to schedule times devices can access the internet. A new addition to our service offerings is an app that detects cyber bullying and any harmful threats focused on school-aged children. Harmony Telephone Company prides itself on 100% network availability. If there is a network outage for an extended amount of time, the customer will be credited appropriately. Harmony Telephone participates in the Federal Lifeline Program and Affordable Connectivity Program, offering support for low-income households to stay connected.

The mission for Harmony Telephone Company is to provide broadband services where residents and businesses are currently unserved or underserved and the entire staff has a passion for helping consumers get the best experience from their broadband connection. Our passion - making lives better! Our niche - by helping customers get a fabulous experience from their connection!

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**Chief Executive Officer, Jill Huffman** – Jill began her career in telecommunications at Harmony Telephone Company in 2004 as an accountant and was subsequently promoted to Vice President of Operations. In 2018, Jill joined Spring Grove Communications as Chief Executive Officer and through a management agreement continues to serve as the Chief Executive Officer for both Spring Grove Communications and Harmony Telephone Company. Jill's dedication and vision of growth these companies, along with her savvy business acumen, promotes her mission to serve subscribers with worldclass broadband.

**Director of Operations, Nicole Schulte** - Nicole joined the company in late 2020 as an Executive Assistant. In Spring of 2023, Nicole was promoted to the Director of Operations and recently received her SHRM-PMQ certification. Nicole's experience coordinating multiple departments across multiple facilities promotes efficiencies and best in class service practices. With Nicole's dedication to helping all personnel be their best, we are poised to serve additional subscribers with excellence.

**Director of Business & Community Affairs, Jacqui VanMinsel** - Jacqui joined Spring Grove Communications in 2005 as the Office Manager and was promoted to Director of Business and Community Affairs in 2019 for both Spring Grove Communications and Harmony Telephone Company. Jacqui promotes our brands positively in our communities and ensures HTC and SGC is a household name in the areas we serve. She also researches and develops new lines of business so customers have access to the greatest products and services increasing the value of their broadband connection.

**Network Operations Manager, Barry Churchill** – Barry also joined the Harmony Telephone Company team in 2004 as a Customer Networking and Central Office Technician. In 2020, Barry was promoted to Network Operations Manager and oversees all networks, installation and repair technicians and ensures the network performs at optimal capacity.

**Sales & Marketing Manager, Alissa Stelpflug** – With 14 years of experience at Harmony Telephone Company, Alissa is prepared to handle all the sales and marketing tasks this project incorporates. Alissa has extensive knowledge of all products and services in order to ensure our future customers will have a trouble free experience from construction to installation and get the services that make sense for them.

**Accounting Manager, Marsha LaFreniere** – Marsha's accounting position is shared across three broadband providers giving her excellent exposure to not only financial accounting but compliance with program grants and loans. As a controller with her previous company, Marsha has an in-depth understanding of the need for compliance with all grant and loan award terms as well as the compilation of data for reporting and financial statement completion.

**Operations Manager, LeAnn Kraus** - LeAnn has over two decades of industry knowledge between Harmony Telephone Company and Spring Grove Communications. She directs the technical and customer experience staff so our customers have the best experience if they call in with questions or need on-site assistance.

**Technical Staff** – The technicians for Harmony Telephone Company have extensive knowledge and experience with central office, both company and customer networks, network and device troubleshooting, plant maintenance and inside wiring. These technicians have expertise with infrastructure consisting of fiber optics, copper, fixed wireless and coax. Our company culture revolves around a total customer experience

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for optimal broadband service. We assist customers with all their needs from the core network to all connected devices within the home. Our technicians are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing our customers reliable, rapid service.

**Customer Experience** – Our customer experience representatives are trained not only in traditional customer service duties but also serve as help desk representatives for technical support. They are extremely knowledgeable in all of our customer management platforms and are well versed in ongoing service support and can assist subscribers with all of their broadband inquiries. These representatives understand it's not enough to provide a connection to a customer. We must be able to help our customers fully utilize their broadband connection.

The references listed are a testament to the commitment Harmony Telephone Company brings to providing affordable and reliable broadband services in the rural area we serve. We strive to work with our customers and communities to understand their needs, obstacles they may face, and assisting with developing solutions to resolve any issues in a timely manner.