

Kansas Broadband Acceleration Grant Program
Project Proposal
H&B Cable Service

1. An Executive Summary of the Project.

H&B is proposing to build a hybrid fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) and fixed wireless network with fiber backhaul in rural Ellsworth County in Central Kansas. This network will utilize and expand upon H&B's existing fiber infrastructure. Building this network will allow H&B to provide affordable high-speed broadband services with multiple service level options to households and businesses in the proposed service area. Furthermore, the design of this network intentionally allows for an incremental transition from a wireless to fiber network as grant funding becomes available.

2. A Description of the Location, Proposed Service Area, Partners Involved, and Anticipated Improvements.

The proposed service area covers 215 square miles and is focused on customers in Ellsworth County who live outside of city limits and do not currently have high-speed broadband available. This area is rural by definition of the USDA. Population density in the service area is sparse at only 0.67. Rocky terrain and sparse population density make building FTTH networks on a mass scale extremely cost prohibitive.

The Ellsworth County Commission originally awarded H&B ARPA funds in 2021. One of the county's goals is to expand the availability of broadband and they were excited to partner with H&B to make that a reality. When H&B approached the Commission to claim the ARPA grant as matching funds for the proposed network outlaid in this application, the Commission increased the award. Included in this application is a commitment letter from the Commissioners expressing their support of this project. Due to the increased support from Ellsworth County, H&B strategically added FTTH routes to portions of the proposed funded service area.

H&B has contacted and garnered support from additional key stakeholders in the proposed service area, such as the mayor of Kanopolis, the County Economic Development Executive Director, and the rural Water District Office Manager, all of whom wrote letters which are being submitted with this application. H&B also has 11 letters of support from residents in the proposed service area who state they are in desperate need of highspeed broadband. In addition, H&B has an agreement in place for the tower locations necessary to building the network. Lastly, H&B has had preliminary conversations with its Engineering and Construction firms regarding the project, who have also supplied letters on intent regarding the proposed project.

3. Goals of the Project and Community Needs to Address (including whether the proposed area is unserved or economically distressed or what the compelling need is, if served).

H&B proposes to build a hybrid fiber and fixed wireless network to provide access to advanced services to residents who have no access to such services today. According to broadbandmap.fcc.gov, portions of the proposed service area are considered unserved. For those portions of the proposed service area that show as served according to the FCC Broadband Map, H&B has obtained letters from customers stating that high-speed broadband is not currently available. Additionally, the proposed service area is economically distressed as evidenced by its 5-year average per capita income of 77.5% of the national average (according to statsamerica.org). Providing access to high-speed broadband to residents in the proposed service area will create jobs, enhance educational opportunities, allow for tele-medicine, and provide a boost to the local economy.

H&B recognizes that wireless technology is not as reliable as fiber; however, as noted above, the rocky terrain and scarce population density of the proposed funded service area make FTTH cost prohibitive. H&B has put together a hybrid fiber and fixed wireless network that leverages the available ARPA and BAG funds as cost effectively as possible and prepares H&B to serve more customers with fiber in the future. It is H&B's goal to reach as many customers as possible via fiber and then to offer wireless service to those who cannot be affordably reached with this grant program. When future grant programs become available, H&B intends to extend the proposed fiber network beyond the proposed funded service area.

4. The Proposed Infrastructure and Access Improvements Planned (including the number of proposed connected premises and community anchor institutions, business, or other organizations and the recipients to be served by the project).

H&B will offer high speed broadband access to 140 households and 4 businesses, 1 of which is a municipality, in rural Ellsworth County. Because the service area is outside of city limits, it is difficult to tell exactly how many businesses will be served as most would be farmsteads and other small businesses based out of home offices. For example, one of our evidence letters comes from a family that runs a feedlot next to their home. These services will be offered via a hybrid fiber and fixed wireless network with fiber backhaul to allow future scalability.

5. The Short and Long-Term Investment Benefit to the Community and Service Area Proposed.

As we've seen highlighted recently, broadband access is a necessity for keeping the world connected and those without it are left behind. Building this network will allow H&B to offer affordable, reliable service options to a community that would otherwise be one left behind. Improved access to broadband service will increase the educational opportunities for children, allowing them to attend school virtually as well as access the same information as school children living in urban areas. Farm ground covers a large portion of the proposed service area. Providing high speed broadband access will enable small businesses, such as farms, to obtain greater efficiencies, promote rural economic development, and help

strengthen the local economy. It might also encourage the start-up of new small businesses for citizens less likely to travel the distance necessary to be employed or who have recently become unemployed due to financial hardship. Furthermore, the availability of highspeed broadband allows employers to recruit employees more easily. All of these benefits are both short and long-term in nature.