



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Year:

2013

Status:

Laureate

Organization Name:

Horizon Telcom

Organization URL:

www.horizontel.com

Project Name:

Connecting Appalachia Ohio Middle Mile Consortium

Category:

Economic Development

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

The grant we were awarded in 2010 was to build a world-class, state-of-the-art fiber-optic broadband network into 34 Appalachian counties in Ohio. This would bring high-speed Internet to Community Anchor Institutions along with small and large businesses in underprivileged areas that are trying to thrive in our rural region. Southern and Eastern Ohio have always been left behind in regards to technology. The project was put into place to close the digital divide in Appalachian Ohio. Schools, hospitals, and businesses in rural Ohio will now be on a level playing field with other schools and companies in the metropolitan areas. For years, it's been hard for businesses to stay afloat or even prosper with the lack of broadband.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

This project began in 2010 when we received the federal government-issued stimulus funds for broadband projects. The Connecting Appalachia Middle Mile project is a nearly \$100 million effort with Horizon supporting more than 30% of the funding. The project was awarded in July 2010 and after 10 months of surveying the land, we finally completed the Environmental Assessment and began construction in May 2011. The project is still under construction, but with over 60% already completed, we expect the network to be fully complete by July 2013.

If this is a previously submitted project that has been significantly updated and/or expanded, please describe the nature of the update here. (In 300 words or less.)

N/A

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

There were many phases of this project. Once our congressmen had an idea of what they felt was needed in the area, the grant-writing phase began. Once the grant was written, the consultants needed to find who the telecom provider would be. That is when Horizon bid on the project, and was awarded the \$100 million project by putting up the remaining \$30 million of our own money. After having discussions with the federal government, Fish and Wildlife, and the State Historical Preservation Office, they decided we needed to have a complete Environmental Assessment completed. After ten months of surveying the land, getting through all of the red tape, construction could now begin. Contractors began construction in May 2011. Once we began construction and engineering the correct routes, receiving permits, rights of way to hang fiber over railroads and bodies of water, work progressed. Now, two and a half years later, 20 out of 34 counties are lighted and we are servicing customers. We still have construction crews diligently hanging and lighting fiber in the remaining 14 counties.



Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

One of our customers resides in Gallipolis, Ohio. He is a 27-year-old business owner, who decided to open up his own movie theater. He had heard of Horizon, through word of mouth, and decided to give us a call. We ran fiber to his movie theater, and he was so impressed by the additional speed our broadband had given him. One night in June 2012, Gallipolis received some terrible wind storms, knocking out power, cable, and Internet to the majority of the city. Since so many people were without entertainment, they decided to head to the movie theater. Due to Horizon's redundant and reliable network, the system still stayed up and running even through the biggest of storms. That night resulted in one of Silver Screen VII's busiest nights, since they could still run credit cards and were able to access their motion pictures.

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

This project would be considered innovation advancement. It absolutely could be adopted by numerous organizations. Horizon, through its extensive research and public-private partnerships, was fortunate to win the bid, and was financially stable enough to financially back the project. We're very excited to implement this network and allow the prosperous businesses, hospitals, schools, and other CAIs to take advantage of it, growing their businesses and communities.

If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)

The public-private CAO-MMC offers a cost-effective and sustainable solution by expanding existing fiber-optic networks to provide metropolitan-class broadband throughout the service area. Agreements with last-mile providers will bring broadband to the region's 10,000 unserved square miles. This combination of new fiber and related expansion by last-mile providers will extend the CAO-MMC impact across the entirety of the 34-county region. With broadband in place, the united action of the CAO-MMC partners will create new jobs, open critical educational avenues, improve public safety coordination, advance health care innovation and reignite tourism. For more information see www.connectingappalachia.org.