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Ohio Receives an Additional \$111.3 Million in Broadband Recovery Act Awards



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Ohio Governor Ted Strickland has announced that two members of an Ohio public-private consortium were awarded more than \$111 million in grants from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to extend broadband access throughout northeast and southern Ohio and create nearly 430 direct jobs, and many more through indirect job creation. Horizon Telcom has been awarded \$66.5 million to fund an extensive network in 34 counties in the southern and eastern parts of the state and OneCommunity has been awarded \$44.8 million to extend its fiber optic network in northeast Ohio.

"These awards support our plan to create a seamless broadband infrastructure throughout Ohio," said Ohio Governor Ted Strickland. "Comprehensive Internet access is one part of our strategy to lay the groundwork for Ohio's long-term economic growth and improve Ohio's business environment. Because access to high-speed Internet is increasingly essential for businesses and is a gateway to connecting our students with the world. I want to thank the Obama administration and our Ohio Congressional leaders for their continued support of our goal to make sure that every part of Ohio has access to high-speed Internet services."

Ohio's successful grant applications were coordinated through the Ohio Middle Mile Consortium (OMMC), a partnership between today's award recipients Horizon Telcom and OneCommunity, July's award recipient Com Net and the Ohio Academic Resources Network (OARnet). The consortium forged a coordinated and collaborative approach, with the support of Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, Governor Strickland and Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut, to expand broadband infrastructure needs across Ohio.

"Broadband must reach all of Ohio, including our rural, underserved and unserved areas, to prepare our future workforce to drive Ohio economic development," said Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric D. Fingerhut. "These broadband investments will enhance educational opportunities for Ohio's traditional students as well as displaced workers."

The funded OMMC projects, collectively, will add more than 3,600 miles of optical fiber in the state and focus on anchor institutions such as universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, state and local government offices and health care facilities.

"The collective grants awarded to the three OMMC members will expand OARnet's current infrastructure and link together regional and local networks on our statewide backbone," said Pankaj Shah, executive director of OARnet. "This critical first step will begin Ohio's transformation into a 'Broadband State,' where high-speed network access is as ubiquitous as any other utility."

The OMMC projects complement OARnet's statewide network by increasing middle mile connection points (points of presence, or "POPs") from the current 14 to 68. The expanded distribution of POPs dramatically reduces "last mile" costs for connectors throughout the state.

"We have created a truly unique, open, state-wide fiber network that will serve the needs of our local community providers and bring high-speed broadband services to all Ohioans," said Scot Rourke, president and CEO of OneCommunity.

"Through the Ohio Middle Mile Consortium, the companies' individual projects will extend a state-of-the-art high capacity fiber optic network into virtually every county in the state, resulting in a broader range of affordable advanced broadband services, without duplicating efforts," said Bill McKell, Horizon CEO.

The Ohio Middle Mile Consortium-member projects that received funding are:

Horizon Telcom, \$66.5 million. The Chillicothe company plans to expand existing networks with the construction of 1,960 new miles of fiber optics across 34 southern and eastern Ohio counties. The project will create 230 direct jobs, save 290 jobs and connect 592 anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, industrial parks and public safety facilities.

OneCommunity, \$44.8 million. The project awarded to the Cleveland-based nonprofit organization will add nearly 1,000 miles of fiber-optic cable in 20 northeast Ohio counties. OneCommunity will connect an estimated 800 community anchor institutions, including schools, hospitals, government and public safety facilities, to the high-speed broadband network, and create 200 direct jobs and save more than 300 jobs in the counties it serves.

Com Net, Inc., \$30 million, awarded on July 2, 2010. The Wapakoneta, Ohio, company's project will add more than 700 miles of high-capacity fiber to rural and underserved communities in 28 western counties. It will create 105 jobs, save more than 220 jobs and connect to about 900 anchor institutions, including schools, government and community organizations.

More information is online at www.ohiomiddlemile.org.