

## Attachment E

Technical capability statement: Applicants must include a statement relating to their experience providing broadband, whether they currently provide broadband at the minimum 100/100 Mbps speeds, and how the project will be resilient and sustainable in the long-term. This statement should also include the number of technical staff that will be dedicated to serving the project area once the project is complete, a description of how the service area will be maintained throughout the useful life of the facilities, and any other relevant technical expertise of the applicant.

### **Applicant Response:**

#### **Experience Providing Broadband**

Nextlink Internet was founded in rural North Texas in 2012 by Bill Baker with a focus on serving the rural countryside with high quality internet and phone service along with great customer service. Bill continues as Nextlink's CEO today and keeps that philosophy core to how Nextlink conducts its business. As a result of that philosophy, Nextlink has grown to over 86,000 subscribers across seven states (Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois).

With an approach of serving the entire community and not cherry-picking certain types of customers or parts of town, Nextlink has a robust business, governmental entities and school districts clientele. In Texas, where Nextlink has operated the longest, it is the largest provider of internet service to rural school districts in the state.

Nextlink's ultimate mission is to serve the unserved and underserved rural areas across the heartland of America with high-quality, high-speed broadband internet service. We pride ourselves on operating a company with a heavy focus on the overall customer experience and for treating our employees like family.

Nextlink has millions of fixed wireless passings and tens of thousands of fiber passings currently across its seven state footprint. The company's operating roots are in serving the rural markets with high-quality internet service. In 2018, Nextlink was the largest winner in the FCC Connect America Fund II (CAF II) auction program addressing the rural unserved. Since that time, Nextlink has exceeded the required coverage and milestone requirements of the CAF II program and built internet service networks across six states covering hundreds of thousands of locations. During that service expansion, Nextlink also added over 60,000 active subscribers and currently adds approximately 2,000 new subscribers a month.

In addition to the CAF II program expansion, Nextlink is independently expanding its fixed wireless network and is adding fiber network on its own across a multitude of rural areas and small communities in multiple states.

#### **Minimum Speed Plans Offered – Fixed Wireless**

Nextlink currently offers residential fixed wireless internet speed plans ranging from 25/5Mbps to 500/100Mbps. We also offer business plans up to 1Gbps/1Gbps over our fixed wireless network. Nextlink utilizes Tarana high-end CBRS hardware to provide its high-speed fixed wireless internet service and Nokia hardware to power and distribute its fiber network on both access and middle mile, all feeding back to a carrier grade core network with multiple data center locations for redundancy. The company's pervasive licensed CBRS spectrum holdings throughout the state enable it to provide high-quality wireless service to its customer base.

Nextlink expands its current service network daily and has an extensive sales and marketing team working to educate the market regarding our new presence. That marketing effort is comprised of a mix of traditional

marketing such as billboards and mailers combined with digital marketing via Google and other digital platforms. Nextlink currently spends approximately 5% of its revenues on sales and marketing efforts. Beyond brand education and outreach efforts, Nextlink is very active in the communities it serves with charitable activities.

### **Network Sustainability and Resiliency**

Nextlink's core network is located across multiple Tier 3 data centers listed below positioned in multiple states and utilizes scalable, carrier-grade infrastructure including embedded redundancy within the core (primarily Nokia 7750 SR2 or SR12e with redundant route processors and switch fabric cards) with existing traffic capacity capable of 10x the current subscriber traffic levels. At those data centers, Nextlink has engineered its upstream traffic via numerous Internet transit vendors such as Hurricane Electric, Zayo and Cogent as well as peering relationships and direct connectivity at the data centers which improves latency. Nextlink takes full Internet routing tables from all its upstream providers allowing the 7750 SRs to select the most optimal route to any destination on the Internet keeping under the 10 Autonomous System hop count target to any domestic (US) site.

Due to the continued growth in traffic demand, all these links will start at the 100G size. As demand grows, Nextlink will expand to multiples of these 100G or 400G links as the need arises. In addition to Nextlink's peering design, added care is provided via BGP routing with ample primary and redundant DIA connectivity to allow for 100% of traffic to route via Internet transit options or alternative data centers if all peering connections were to fail. Although engineered to handle a complete peering connection failure with no impact on traffic, we highlight that no such complete peering failure has ever occurred over Nextlink's ten-year history. Additionally, each of Nextlink's data centers are engineered for redundant power systems designed for 99.999% uptime.

The 7750 SR core routers house the BNG service with redundancy to other datacenters 7750 SRs in the event of a complete data center outage. When this happens, the routes for the BNG VPRNs will be withdrawn from the VPRN 100 cloud and the secondary routes are inserted at the alternate BNG sites. Nextlink hosts both its authoritative and recursive DNS servers at its data centers using the open-source BIND DNS system configured to be redundant across multiple data centers.

As part of its future-proofing strategy, Nextlink hosts multiple streaming traffic caches within its network providing the bulk of Netflix downloads to our subscriber base as well as Google server caches. We highlight this design as almost 50% of Nextlink's data traffic at peak time is comprised of data coming from the Netflix and Google caches and direct peering relationships. All of these in-network elements result in a more robust network with a lower latency level experience for the subscriber even in a highly rural environment. Nextlink's latency target is sub-30ms round trip time (RTT) for all subscribers regardless of their rural location or distance from the data center.

### **Field Offices and Staffing**

Nextlink currently has multiple field offices throughout the State of Nebraska including a major operating hub in Lincoln with total employee headcount of 53 across the state. We would expect to open at least three additional field offices in Nebraska within the next two years to support the expansion required for its Nebraska Broadband Bridge awards and continued CAF II network expansion. Each office would have between 10-15 field personnel including tower technicians, installation technicians and construction personnel.