

## **Stealth Broadband — Digital Inclusion Plan**

### **1) Affordability / Need**

This project is a rural only project within Boone County, Nebraska.

#### **Existing Rural Broadband Providers in the project area**

- Stealth Broadband (currently listed on FCC website as Applied Connective Technologies) – Wireless Internet Service within and adjacent to project area.
  - Advertised Speeds – 15/5 Mbps and 25/5 Mbps
    - Stealth is in the process of adjusting the advertised speeds for wireless customers that were acquired from Applied Connective on April 1, 2023. The advertised speed shows that 25/5 is available, when testing shows that only 20/5 is available.
- Frontier
  - Speeds – Up to 10/1 Mbps
- Great Plains
  - Speeds – Up to 10/1 Mbps

#### **NTIA – Indicators of Broadband Need Median Speed-test Results**

- Boone County – 15.33 Mbps Download / 4.72 Mbps Upload

#### **Demographic Data**

- Median Income for Boone County is \$63,668 with poverty level at 6.3%
  - Numbers are skewed as we can't separate out Albion and other towns.

### **2) Work / Education / Healthcare**

Stealth Broadband's fiber to the home network provides much more than the minimum bandwidth levels needed for all Internet applications. In many cases, Stealth customers have more bandwidth available at home than they do at work, making working from home viable for all customers. Stealth customers with students at home had no issues with their students being able to join Zoom classrooms for remote learning. As tele-health has become more prevalent, Stealth has talked to customers that are successfully using our service to reach doctors remotely.

### **3) COVID-19**

As the COVID-19 pandemic showed us, broadband availability is extremely important for every household. Students were forced to attend school from home, and some were unable to do

schoolwork at home because of no (or little) access to broadband services. Stealth worked diligently to provide internet to people unable to gain access by making sure we tried everything possible to get people access to high-speed internet.

#### **4 / 5) Critical Needs and Access**

As this project is 100% rural, the needs of the area are different than those of urban areas. Many of the locations included in this application are farmers that have specific needs that require robust and reliable Internet access. Farmers are now having to use the Internet for the following applications:

- Commodity prices and futures
- Field and crop data
- Equipment firmware and software updates
- Accounting software
- Center-pivot monitoring
- Soil moisture monitoring
- Chemical application classes
- Online auctions

In addition to the needs of the farmers in the area, all locations will have access to these applications:

- Remote learning
- Tele-Health
- Work from home
- Computer and Phone software updates
- Web Searching
- Streaming
- Gaming

By providing Internet service in the areas we have identified, we can help bring people back to rural areas and help spark economic growth. After the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of professionals are working from home. We've heard from consumers that they are considering moving back to rural areas after their job was changed from in-person to remote. Their only downfall was the lack of good quality, and affordable, broadband access. Again, in some cases we were able to serve those in need, but in other cases there was not a viable Internet provider in the area. If we do not expand fiber to the home to rural areas, we are at risk of further extending the digital divide in Nebraska.

#### **6) Low Income Availability**

Stealth is committed to ensuring that all members of the public will have access to affordable and reliable Internet services.

Stealth speeds and packages for all fiber to the home areas are as follows:

- 500/500Mbps for \$60/mo.
- 750/750Mbps for \$80/mo.
- 1000/1000Mbps for \$100/mo.

All Stealth plans include the following:

- Unlimited Data
- No Contract Option
- 24 Month Contract Option (Reduces Monthly Rate by \$5)

Low Income Availability - Stealth understands the challenges that low-income families face. We know that quality Internet service is critically important to most families for parents to work and for children to learn. With this in mind, Stealth will be launching a reduced-price plan for low-income families with speeds of 100/100 Mbps for \$45/mo. This package will be offered to customers that meet the criteria of a low-income household.

Stealth is a qualified provider for the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). ACP was created to help connect families and households that struggle to afford Internet service. This is advertised on our website at [www.stealthbroadband.com/financial-assistance-resources](http://www.stealthbroadband.com/financial-assistance-resources). ACP is also advertised on every area sign up page on the Stealth website.

Stealth provides flexible payment plans to all customers. If a consumer is making regular efforts to pay on their account, we do not turn off their Internet services. Stealth also does not charge re-activation fees for customers who have had their Internet shut off due to no payment.

## **7) Outreach**

Stealth Broadband has met with the Boone County board of Commissioners to discuss broadband in the county. They are supportive of our application and letters of support will be forwarded to the PSC prior to the March 27, 2024 deadline.