



March 7, 2014

Mr. Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Rural Healthcare Broadband Experiment Expression of Interest

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

This letter provides an expression of interest from the California Telehealth Network (CTN) to participate in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Broadband IP Experiment funding. As described below, we are seeking \$3 million over two years to conduct the Children and Seniors Patient Monitoring Telehealth Project. This project will use a singular technology and strategy – televideo consultations via wireless web enabled devices – to serve two very distinct populations: 1) Children receiving palliative care in rural regions of Northern California; and 2) Elderly patients in skilled nursing facilities and homecare situations in rural and urban California.

The goal of the proposed CTN initiative is to use wireless broadband to extend coordinated care access to vulnerable, hard to reach patient populations while documenting the impact on patient satisfaction and the cost of care delivery. To accomplish this, CTN proposes to leverage initial work already done by the Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP) in conjunction with UC Davis Health System in an initial grant funded by the California Health Care Foundation. CTN will engage stakeholder organizations such as CCHP, which serves as the HRSA funded National Policy Telehealth Resource Center, as well as UC Davis Health System, Manchester Technologies and AT&T among others.

Organizational Background

The California Telehealth Network (CTN) serves as California's broadband consortium for safety net healthcare providers with the mission of promoting advanced telecommunications and information technologies and services to improve access to high quality healthcare focusing on medically underserved and rural Californians. CTN was an awardee in the FCC's Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP) and is currently migrating to the new Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF). Through CTN, over 270 healthcare sites across the state are able to realize the benefits of affordable broadband connectivity. CTN's Board of Directors (www.caltelehealth.org/board-directors) is comprised of representatives from California's most influential agencies focused on technology and healthcare. This unique collaboration drives the organization's focus to provide access to quality healthcare for rural and medically underserved populations in California.

Population Targeted

CTN's Children and Seniors Patient Monitoring Project will serve two distinct age populations and two distinct geographic locations – each of which present needs that can be well-served by telehealth.

One target population will be children receiving palliative care in rural regions of Northern California. Pediatric medicine has achieved remarkable successes in saving children who would have died at an early age two decades ago. In so doing, an increasing number of children are living with life limiting conditions that cannot be completely cured and an even greater number living with complex, chronic conditions requiring ongoing medical support and attention. Community-based palliative care teams are needed to care for many of these pediatric patients. Current economic pressures are adding to the enormous challenge of delivering the medical services needed by all members of society, adults and children. The limited resources of both adults and children who reside in rural locations create further disparities in access to healthcare. Conditions are particularly difficult in Northern California counties such as Trinity, Siskiyou, Shasta and Del Norte, which are a two to three hours drive from the nearest tertiary care facilities. This isolation makes it difficult for pediatric care patients and their families to consistently keep follow up appointments for chronic care conditions.

The second target population to be served is underserved elderly populations in rural California and inner city Los Angeles who are residing in skilled nursing facilities, assisted living and home healthcare environments. The opportunity in serving this patient population is to reduce the need to physically transport patients to see a doctor (or vice versa) in both rural and urban areas where transportation availability and cost is an issue. In addition to the expense of in-person doctor visits, travel stresses patients, exposes them to contagions, and can lead to falls and other injuries. Key geographic areas targeted include high poverty areas of South Los Angeles County and the remote Eastern Sierras. CTN anticipates that elderly patients served by this initiative will reside in communities in which 25% of the population lives beneath the poverty level.

Collaborative Partners

In implementing the Children and Seniors Patient Monitoring Project, CTN will collaborate closely with four key partners:

Center for Connected Health Policy

The Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to maximize telehealth's ability to improve health outcomes, care delivery, and cost effectiveness. CCHP conducts objective policy analysis and research, makes non-partisan policy recommendations, and manages innovative telehealth demonstration projects. In 2012, CCHP became the federally designated National Telehealth Policy Resource Center, tasked with providing technical assistance in telehealth policy to twelve (12) Regional Telehealth Resource Centers nationwide and serving as a national resource on telehealth policy issues. CCHP is a resource in California and for other state and national decision makers in the health care industry, and provides technical support that can lead to a more receptive policy environment for provision of telehealth services.

Manchester Community Technologies

Manchester Community Technologies, Inc. (MCT) is a California Public Benefit non-profit corporation whose focus is to lessen the digital divide in underserved communities. MCT's mission is to empower communities with sustainable technologies that enhance the quality of life and equality of information access. Their demographic population consists of underserved urban communities throughout the eighteen (18) South Bay Cities of Los Angeles County with an emphasis on the senior citizen population. MCT is the lead agency of the South Bay Regional Broadband Consortium and the Co-Coordinating Agency of the LACRBC.

UC Davis Health System Department of Pediatrics, Critical Care Division

UC Davis Children's Hospital is a world-class pediatric hospital devoted to the health of babies, children and adolescents. With over 120 physicians in 33 pediatric subspecialties, UC Davis Children's Hospital is the most comprehensive pediatric hospital in the Sacramento region. Under the leadership of David M Steinhorn, M.D., the Department of Pediatrics, Critical Care Division has recently completed a Pediatric Palliative Care Telehealth Initiative. This project builds upon the knowledge, experience and community contacts developed under Dr. Steinhorn's previous project.

AT&T

AT&T serves as the statewide master vendor for the California Telehealth Network. Utilizing FCC Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP) and Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) broadband subsidies, CTN leases wired and wireless broadband services from AT&T to serve safety net healthcare providers in rural and medically underserved communities in California. Under this proposal, CTN plans to utilize AT&T wireless and WiFi services to extend care delivery into non traditional settings such as patient homes, skilled nursing facilities and nursing homes utilizing broadband enabled tablets provided by AT&T.

Focus of Project

CTN will implement the Children and Seniors Patient Monitoring Project over a two-year period. This project has four areas of emphasis:

1. CTN and AT&T will provide wireless and WiFi enabled tablets to enable patient monitoring for patients being that have ongoing follow-up care needs with monthly wireless usage charges funded with universal service support.
2. CTN will evaluate optimal service levels and document cases where patients have insufficient broadband access to fully utilize the program.
3. CTN will document patient/patient family satisfaction levels with broadband enabled care delivery
4. CTN and the Center for Connected Health Policy will document the impact on the cost of care delivery for the target patient populations comparing actual results to overall industry norms for the same patient populations.

The project will enable primary care physicians and specialists to maintain access with hard to reach populations – specifically, children in rural settings receiving palliative care and elderly underserved patients residing in rural and urban settings. The use of

web/WiFi enabled tablets reduces the need for intermediaries and provides for more direct and efficient contact between patients and clinicians.

A team of home health providers will be recruited and trained to conduct the project. The project will engage approximately 50 children receiving palliative care and 50 elderly patients residing in urban Los Angeles homecare settings and 50 elderly patients in rural skilled nursing facilities or residential settings. Each patient will have a dedicated tablet for their use and will be trained and supported to use it effectively. CTN will ensure that all participating patients have access to the bandwidth required to utilize the tablets. Any funding that can be made available for personnel to implement and manage the project will be a vital contributor to CTN's ability to successfully implement the project and leverage additional funding support.

As previously mentioned, the Children and Seniors Patient Monitoring Project builds upon a recently completed pilot project led by the UC Davis Department of Pediatrics, Critical Care Division. Working with eight patients, this project demonstrated that significant savings could be attained in the cost of care by issuing iPads to the patients. Unnecessary in person patient visits were reduced and patient satisfaction increased. CTN and CCHP will engage their joint stakeholder partners to ensure that the project is designed and implemented in an effective and scalable manner.

The project will seek to serve as a demonstration project for the purposes of altering MediCal's current reimbursement restrictions. Currently, MediCal requires that a patient is served directly by a registered clinician in order to bill. However, this project will aim to demonstrate that services can be provided safely and successfully through remote care. As a result, a case can be for MediCal to lift their current restriction.

Closing

This letter serves as an initial presentation or our expression of interest. CTN and its partner organizations stand ready to develop a more detailed proposal and provide a business plan that demonstrates the path to sustainability. Should we be invited to do so by the FCC, CTN will promptly provide additional detail, answer questions and/or develop a full proposal.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Eric P. Brown
President & CEO
California Telehealth Network