



March 7, 2014

**Letter – Expression of Interest
VIA ECFS**

Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Jonathan Chambers

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW 20024
Washington, DC

**Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Experiments
Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90**

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, and Mr. Chambers,

This letter is to express Startup Nevada’s interest in receiving funding from the Rural Broadband Experiments announced at the January 30th FCC Open Meeting.

I was a region champion for Startup America Partnership and currently serving as a region champion for UP Global. Startup America Partnership was the White House launched, private sector led initiative to foster entrepreneurship - by strengthening local communities and helping young companies to grow.

Among various activities that I was involved in, I served on the judging panel of Project Vesto, the state wide business plan competition participated by over 200 Nevada enterprises and backed by the Nevada Governor’s Office of Economic Development. I had a chance to witness strong interest among entrepreneurs in rural regions of the state seeking opportunities to stay competitive.

After meeting with entrepreneurial leaders and rural advocates, I have been passionately advocating for Startup Nevada initiative since late 2012. We are exploring different organizational structures for Startup Nevada to best serve the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

With funding from Rural Broadband Assembly, we plan to support and mentor innovative enterprises with latest technologies in this space. Because high bandwidth Internet connectivity throughout the state, including rural areas, is critical to foster state-wide entrepreneurial initiatives, with this funding, Startup



Nevada will create an accelerator program to assist entrepreneurs to start new companies – that focus on bringing enterprise grade broadband to rural regions of the state.

We believe, by creating Startup Nevada accelerator, will aid sectors, such as ecology, mobile health and agricultural commerce.

With this fund, we intend to invite entrepreneurs, enterprises from throughout the state of Nevada to participate. With proven processes in place, we intend to expand this program beyond rural Nevada to regions in other states.

We are not currently an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC). We will seek partnership with subject matter experts, current ETCs at the time of launching our accelerator. We will reach out to entrepreneurial leaders, state wide organizations, including but not limited to Connect Nevada, Nevada Governors office of Economic Development.

With this fund, we intend to reach out to anchor institutions (schools, libraries, hospitals, community centers, etc.) throughout the state of Nevada.

We will be open to innovative technologies, including disruptive, technologies that are in an early stage of development. We are studying successful case studies and will continue to learn from initiatives and technologies being successfully practiced elsewhere. We believe that innovative enterprises will emerge out of this accelerator.

The following is a summary of actions already taken, along with a roadmap for the future:

March 2013: Conducted meetings with rural advocates, entrepreneurs.

June 2013: Conducted Assessment of need for broadband initiative in rural areas of the state, value add by the proposed Startup Nevada initiative.

August 2013: Conducted further Assessment: Met with existing ISPs, rural broadband advocates, last mile providers and entrepreneurs offering internet services.

November 2013: Met with USDA Rural Development Program Nevada, local leaders to explore available grants for broadband entrepreneurs. Represented Nevada at the UP America summit in Iowa. Met with entrepreneurial leaders from rural parts of other states.

Jan 2014: Attended session with Rural Broadband Assembly, learned about potential opportunities with funds from FCC.



March 2014: Expression of Interest submitted to form an umbrella accelerator program to support innovative technologies to foster entrepreneurial activities to bring broadband internet connections in rural areas.

Upon receiving the funds, we will

- Finalize the management team, board of advisors, directors
- Come up with a full business plan; define types of incubation/acceleration programs.
- Secure location for offices, incubator centers.
- Explore locations to maximize the impact of incubator/accelerator programs.

We feel our proposed accelerator model is scalable as we have found out that needs among rural entrepreneurs across different geographic regions are consistent. We believe that the demand among rural entrepreneurs to leverage on resources of this kind and create sustainable, scalable business models serving rural communities is high.

We are seeking 10 million in funds to build team, launch Startup Nevada accelerator and operate the initiative for 4 years throughout the state.

Leading accelerators Y Combinator and Tech Stars mentored and funded over 200 companies since 2005, the values of these companies exceed \$ 7 billion. We plan to apply a similar model to launch our accelerator.

As a region champion for Startup America Partnership, I had a chance to work with fellow champions from other states. Like Nevada, many states have similar rural infrastructure needs.

We believe that this proposed measurable accelerator program would allow a platform to assess and understand the needs of customers in rural parts of the country and be able to offer guidance, resources in implementing sustainable, scalable solutions.

Thank you for considering our Expression of Interest. We commend the FCC in this effort to connect rural communities and look forward to helping you close the digital divide.

Sincerely,

Jay Maharjan
Region Champion
Startup Nevada