



Rural Healthcare Broadband Experiment Expression of Interest

P.O. Box 714
Athens, Ohio 45701

March 17, 2014

Mr. Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20544

RE: Rural Healthcare Broadband Experiment Expression of Interest: Dockets 10-90 and 02-60

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

This letter provides an expression of interest from the Southern Ohio Health Care Network (SOHCN) to participate in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Broadband IP Experiment funding.

Proposed mHealth Project for Improved Chronic Disease Management

Across the SOHCN's Appalachian territory, the burden of chronic disease continues to climb. Extending the reach of caregivers by leveraging mobile patient care solutions (mHealth) will improve lives and reduce costs. We are seeking \$8 million over two years to conduct a large scale project to improve care for patients with chronic diseases using mobile patient care solutions utilizing 3G/4G IP services, small tablet computers, patient monitoring devices and cloud-based care coordination solutions.

The existing model for chronic disease management includes monthly or quarterly visits to physicians. During the time between physician appointments, patients generally lack the ability to monitor their condition and few mechanisms exist for impromptu care based on patient concerns. As a result the frequency of hospital admission for patients with chronic diseases runs much higher than necessary.

The proposed mHealth service will provide round-the-clock patient monitoring and support remote caregiver interactions (including daily video calls for the most severe patients). The benefits are realized by:

- Tracking vital signs to spot trends, allowing for intervention instead of hospitalization
- Improving medication compliance
- Providing just-in-time educational materials to patients and family members
- Increasing compliance with behavioral goals including diet, exercise, sleep, etc.
- Detecting negative living conditions
- Reducing loneliness

The logistical challenges of the low population density and rugged terrain in our service area exacerbate the continuity of care challenge. The existing model of chronic disease care breaks down even further when patients cannot travel due to poor road conditions, lack of reliable transportation and/or shortage of money to pay for gas. Home care professionals face similar obstacles in our remote locales.



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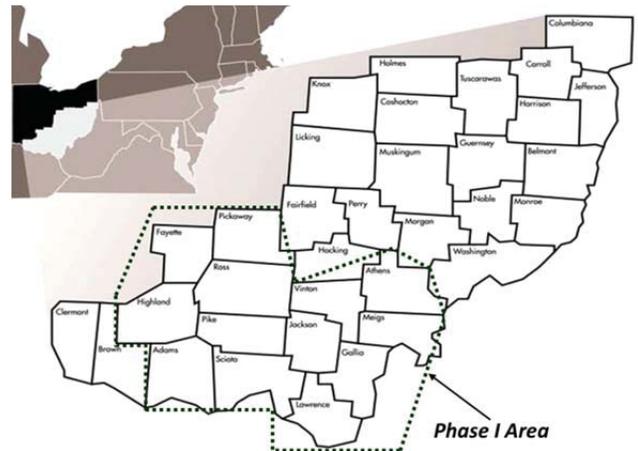
Fortunately, the SOHCN region has experienced significant expansion of 3G/4G coverage due a combination of Federal and private investments starting in 2007. Fiber projects funded by the FCC and the NTIA have provided back-haul capacity to towers enabling Verizon Wireless to extend IP data services across much of the previously unserved 17,000 square mile territory. AT&T Wireless has also expanded services in the area but not as aggressively as Verizon.

We seek funding from the FCC to support the deployment of a large scale mHealth project. The SOHCN's rural health systems will address the needs within their respective population areas, thus maintaining the relationship of the patients to their existing caregivers. The improvement in the continuity of care will significantly reduce hospitalizations and lengthen the time that seniors can remain in their own homes. The project will save money while significantly improving the lives of the patients.

Pilot projects across the county have demonstrated the ability of mHealth to improve key facets in successful management of chronic disease but have lacked the study design elements and statistical rigor to definitively quantify the impact. Thus the SOHCN also proposes a rigorous comparative effectiveness study to assess the return on investment from mHealth. The SOHCN mHealth study could provide a watershed demonstration of the power of this technology-enabled care paradigm in a large scale project.

Overview of the Southern Ohio Health Care Network

The 34-county Southern Ohio Health Care Network (SOHCN) is governed by a board comprised of six members representing the three largest health care providers (HCPs) in the original service area, led by the Adena Health System. The SOHCN membership includes health care providers across thirty-four counties of southern and eastern Ohio.



Phase I Area

- The SOHCN began in 2007 with a 13-county project to provide fiber connectivity to all of its members. We conducted a competitive bidding process and awarded the project to Horizon Telcom. The resulting Master Services Agreement (MSA) with Horizon guarantees high availability, low fixed rates and seamless bandwidth upgrades.
- 93 unique locations owned by 11 separate HCPs have connected to the network. The network is saving members over \$2 million per year in broadband costs.
- The \$30 million project was conducted based on the combination of:
 - Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Health Care Pilot Project Program (RHCPP) awards totaling \$16 million awarded in 2007.
 - Adena's contribution of the 15% match and administrative costs totaling \$4 million.
 - Horizon's reported additional investment of \$10 million.
- The SOHCN retains indefeasible rights to use (IRUs) for fiber in the backbone and to a majority of the connected facilities in the Phase 1.



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Phase II Area

- Phase II extended the SOHCN's reach by an additional 21 counties.
- The SOHCN partnered in a successful application for \$66 million in funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) awarded in 2010.
- Horizon was the lead applicant for the NTIA funding, responsible for the 30% match and administrative costs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Reid". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Reid" clearly distinguishable.

Tom Reid
Project Coordinator