



MILLS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

State of Iowa
Office of the Chief Information Officer
200 E. Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50309

November 23, 2020

Dear Annette Dunns,

The Mills County Economic Development Foundation is excited to offer support to Western Iowa Networks for the Empower Rural Iowa Emergency Broadband Expansion Program (NOFA #004). Broadband expansion is fundamental to our mission of improving long-term economic sustainability in Mills County and ensuring a prosperous place to live, work and do business in western-Iowa.

Concerned about the state of broadband and telecommunications in the county, Mills County procured a rural broadband study conducted by the engineering firm, HR Green. The 2018 study reported that Mills County was underserved with large areas of the county lacking adequate broadband service. Currently, Glenwood ranks as the 530th most connected city in Iowa and approximately 2,000 people in Mills County do not have access to any wired internet, while fiber optic internet is available to just 8% if Mills County residents.

Mills County's large labor-shed within the Greater Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area and proximity to Interstate-29 and multiple rail lines positions Mills County well for future economic development. Greater broadband in Mills County is needed to attract new businesses and retain the firms currently located in the county. The digital landscape and growing reliance on internet of things (IoT) based technology in supporting agriculture, logistics, manufacturing and office operations hinges on reliable and accessible broadband.

Western Iowa Networks is committed to expanding their services in Mills County and the Rural Broadband Expansion Program will assist Western Iowa Network's growth in offering broadband to some of the 2,000 residents and businesses without broadband. Western Iowa Networks is a local partner with a proven track record of getting work done on time and in an efficient manner. Their past work with grants has been pivotal in Mills County economic development by providing essential services to households, businesses, and emergency responders operating in the county today.

The county and our business community partners are grateful for the opportunity to apply for these broadband funds and appreciate the IEDA considering Western Iowa Network's projects in Mills County. The funding has strong support across the county and there is dedicated plan in place to ensure the funds will be spent before the end of 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marco Floreani". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marco Floreani
Executive Director, Economic Development