



26 November 2024

Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Broadband
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
600 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Letter of Intent for the Virginia DHCD BEAD Grant Program

Dear Dr. Holmes:

Firefly Fiber Broadband (Firefly) intends to apply for grant support under the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program as necessary to assure that there is universal high speed broadband access in the counties within our service territory.

Firefly was created by its parent company, the not-for-profit Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC), in 2018. The sole purpose for Firefly's existence is to overcome the digital divide in rural central Virginia. Since its inception six years ago, Firefly has been involved with the construction of more than 7,000 miles of fiber optic cable in a robust and reliable regional network presently serving more than 34,000 active accounts primarily in 14 central Virginia counties. Along the way, it has developed a reputation for overcoming challenges and finding solutions to stay in budget and stay on schedule. It has also exhibited a true commitment to universal access.

Firefly employs 40 positions, and through a management services agreement, all 110 CVEC employees are permitted to provide services to Firefly thereby increasing the knowledgebase of a young, start-up business with the experience of an 87-year-old anchor in the local community.

Firefly is headquartered in Palmyra, Virginia but has office hoteling and parking spaces for Firefly installer trucks at CVEC offices in Appomattox and Colleen. Firefly has warehousing in the counties of Greene, Louisa, Nelson, Fluvanna, and Appomattox.

Firefly will have many employees involved with the project, but the key employees will be Gary Wood, President and CEO, Tina Mallia, CFO and Executive Vice President responsible for daily operations of Firefly, and Dennis Reece, Director of Engineering and Operations. This team will oversee the project, provide leadership and guidance, as well as provide technical oversight.

In addition to in-house staff, Firefly continues to use the same project team that has been responsible for the project success since its inception. Using Conexon as a design and contract administration partner and S&N Communications as the fiber and splicing construction partner, the Firefly project has averaged over 20 miles of fiber placed per week for six years. In the past 18 months the pace has been in excess of 30 miles per week. Throughout the aggressive build schedule, weather difficulties, labor market shortages, supply chain issues and other unplanned hurdles that have created opportunities for roadblocks, Firefly has addressed each one and continued its construction. Firefly finds solutions and stays focused on its goal of delivering universal access to broadband as soon as possible to the families and small businesses in need in our rural area. This company is setting the standard for meeting commitments.





Conexon is well known throughout the industry, providing design and project administration services to more than 200 electric cooperatives on rural fiber optic deployment projects. S&N Communications is a regional company which started business in 1977 and is still headquartered in Louisa, Va. It has been responsible for fiber in large projects, including working on Verizon FIOS and Google Fiber projects in various cities, and it has built every foot of fiber on the CVEC/Firefly network.

The Firefly partnerships with Rappahannock Electric Cooperative and Dominion Energy continue, as well as the excellent relationship with American Electric Power. The relationship with CoBank, the financing partner to Firefly, will also continue with this project.

Firefly has proven itself capable of rapid deployment of fiber optic cable to deliver world-class broadband service at up to a gigabit per second in speed. Firefly subscribers have responded to the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey giving Firefly scores of 90 and 89 the past two years in an industry that typically averages 65. The scores were the highest in Virginia and second highest in the US in recent rounds of surveying.

When grant funds are awarded to Firefly, they are put to work promptly and efficiently. They help as Firefly works each day to achieve its vision: transforming lives.

Dennis Reece, Director of Engineering and Operations, will be our main point of contact for the purposes of the application process, and can be reached at:

800 Cooperative Way
Lovingson, VA
434-373-7001
dreece@fireflyva.com

Firefly understands that this BEAD Letter of Intent is required in order to submit an application for the BEAD application, and that this notice is not binding on the entity represented by the undersigned.

Firefly intends to submit an application for serving areas of Central Virginia that may include the counties of Albemarle, Amherst, Appomattox, Buckingham, Campbell, Cumberland, Fluvanna, Goochland, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, and Powhatan and that are unserved according to the definition of broadband in the BEAD Application Guidance for Broadband Providers.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding this letter or the qualifications of Firefly Fiber Broadband.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Wood
President and CEO