

Thanks to the dedicated commitment of the local governments who comprise the North Florida Broadband Authority, the initiative and leadership of the North Florida Economic Development Partnership and its Board of Directors, and the financial support of Enterprise Florida and the Governor's Office of Trade, Tourism and Economic Development (OTTED) I'm pleased to tell you that we've been awarded more than \$30 million to develop and enhance our broadband services.

As I and others involved in this effort have stated repeatedly, I can think of no more important investment for this region than Broadband and high-speed connectivity infrastructure—the infrastructure of the 21st Century. It has the potential to create unique and significant opportunities for economic development, to significantly improve and advance education, health care, and public safety standards, and enhance the quality of life for communities and residents throughout the region.

Folks from outside our region (and state) may not be able to fully appreciate the magnitude of what has taken place or how historic and strong our commitment is and has been throughout this entire project. For our board members and the communities they work in and lead, the requirement to trust and believe, act fast, develop and adopt an interlocal agreement, and ultimately gain approval from all 22 local governments was nothing short of historic. The fact this was done from start to finish in three weeks stands as a model and example to communities across Florida.

The leaders of our health care, education, business and other sectors and our representatives in Tallahassee and Washington were all supportive and were asked to provide that support in writing. Again, we garnered more than 70 letters of support.

Government Services Group provided professional support and guidance creating what is not only a winning proposal, but among the largest awards in all stimulus grants to Florida. With 2200 proposals submitted from across the U.S., ours was one of nine awarded to this point. The Florida Institute of Government at Florida State University also provided tireless time, energy, and resources to make this a reality--

We want you to be among the first to know that our hard work has been rewarded and we look forward to making this investment pay off in big ways for our RACEC!

We could not have done it without you.

With Gratitude,

Jeff Hendry
Executive Director
The North Florida Economic Development Partnership