

Members: [Log in](#) | Not Registered? [Register](#) for free extra services.

Wichita Business Journal - November 23, 2009
[/wichita/stories/2009/11/23/story8.html?b=1258952400%5E2481691](http://wichita/stories/2009/11/23/story8.html?b=1258952400%5E2481691)

Wichita Business Journal

Friday, November 20, 2009

Kansas seeking \$283.1 million for broadband projects to increase rural access

Wichita Business Journal - by [Daniel McCoy](#)

The state of Kansas has submitted for federal approval a list of 22 projects, totaling about \$283.1 million, that would increase broadband Internet access to rural areas.

The money is being requested under the stimulus-funded Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, which will make about \$4.9 billion available for the mapping and construction of hundreds of projects nationwide.

“The whole idea is to increase broadband connectivity,” says Joe Monaco, a spokesman with the [Kansas Department of Commerce](#). “That’s hugely important to commerce statewide.”

BTOP will provide grants to organizations such as nonprofits, schools, libraries and hospitals to fund broadband infrastructure, public computer centers and to companies with projects designed to increase rural broadband access.

And at least one local company says that means work for Kansas contractors and the addition of workers to help manage the new infrastructure.

New Work, New Jobs

The largest request on the list comes from [Pixius Communications](#) LLC, a company that provides high-speed broadband Internet access throughout rural areas of Kansas.

The company has 5,600 customers and has had its corporate headquarters in Wichita since 2002.

Pixius had made a grant request of \$55 million to build the infrastructure that would bring broadband service to a number of rural areas, says company director John E. Smith.

The total cost of the project is about \$69 million — \$14 million of which will come from the company's investors.

Part of the project will include the construction of 152 new communication towers.

“They'll be capable of handling our load and the equivalent of three cell phone carriers,” he says.

Smith hopes funding for infrastructure projects like Pixius' will begin being awarded in December.

He says the company could begin work within 60 days of receiving funding on the 33-month project and once complete, Smith says, Pixius will hire 59 full-time positions in Wichita to help maintain the new equipment.

A Large Scale

Home Communications Inc. is also included on the projects list, but the company's director, Carla Shearer, says it's been a frustrating process.

The company provides service to customers in rural communities north and west of McPherson and has applied for a \$1 million grant to bring broadband access to about 250 people who are without service.

She says these type of projects are important because of the number of home- and agriculturally based businesses in the region.

“What's been frustrating is that it's been a moving target,” she says of the application process. “But I think that's due to the scale of what they're trying to do.”

Broadband Technology Opportunities Program

Kansas has applied for \$283.1 million for stimulus-funded projects designed to increase broadband Internet access across the state. The state compiled a list of 22 applicants from a group of 85 proposals, based on the federal requirements involved and the readiness of the projects.

A complete list of projects can be viewed at www.kansascommerce.com.

Selected projects will be funded directly by the federal government.

Source: Kansas Department of Commerce

dhmccoy@bizjournals.com | 266-6195

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.