

Jackson County, North Carolina Office of Economic Development

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North Carolina GREAT Grant Program Overview January, 2019

Program Summary – The North Carolina General Assembly appropriated \$10 million dollars in 2018 for the purpose of furthering access to high-speed broadband service in rural areas across the state. The North Carolina Department of Information Technology’s Broadband Infrastructure Office (BIO), as authorized under S.L. 2018-5, is providing grants to private providers of broadband services to facilitate the deployment of broadband service to unserved areas of the State. The Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Program funds eligible projects in economically distressed Tier One counties. The application materials and program guidelines are for use when applying for the GREAT Program, and have been developed based on the enabling legislation for the GREAT Program within S.L. 2018-5.

Whereas Jackson County was previously designated a Tier One county at the time of this appropriation, service providers in this county are eligible to apply for these funds based on qualifying projects and the application process. These are competitive funds that will favor highly vetted and locally supported deployment projects that are designated for under-served and unserved communities.

SkyFi Wireless, Inc. Grant Proposal – SkyFi Wireless, Inc., owned and operated by local entrepreneur Travis Lewis, intends to make application for NC GREAT funding assistance, and has mapped 2 specific under-served communities in Jackson County for his targeted wireless deployment project. Those communities include, but are not limited to Caney Fork, East Laport, and East Cope Creek, and are comprised of an estimated 400-500 residential customer who currently have limited or no internet access.

Funding secured by SkyFi, Inc., if successful in their application process, will construct 2-4 new towers and respective access points to allow for the wireless transmission of the high-speed broadband signal in previously difficult to reach areas of these communities. The newly constructed infrastructure will dramatically improve line-of-sight wireless signal coverage to the communities as specified, but also to surrounding communities as well, making further expansion of service a distinct probability. SkyFi currently services over 700 customers in central and northern Jackson County with true high-speed internet service, with minimum download speed of well over 10 mbps.