

October 7, 2019

The Honorable DJ LaVoy
Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Under Secretary LaVoy:

I write to request your full and fair consideration of three applications for grant funding, detailed below, under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ReConnect Loan and Grant Program. All three projects are consistent with the goals of the ReConnect Program and the Department's broader mission to close the digital divide and ensure economic opportunity for every American. These projects will meaningfully improve the lives of thousands of families, farms, and businesses in Colorado, spur economic growth, and help our rural communities sustain their quality of life.

Please find additional details about each project below:

- **San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative**: This is a grant request for \$1.7M along with \$576K in matching funds, for a total project cost of \$2.3M. The project will provide approximately 67 Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) connections to homes, local businesses, community anchor institutions (CAIs), and farms in the area.

The San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative proposes to create a FTTP high-speed broadband network deployed across a 365-square-mile area reaching the most rural and completely underserved portions of Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties. The proposed network will be capable of transmission rates of 100/100Mbps and 1/1Gbps synchronous, offering fast, modern broadband connections to residents and businesses alike.

- **Emery Telecommunications & Video, Inc.**: This is a grant request of \$2.7M in addition to \$912K in matching funds, for a \$3.6M total project cost. The project will provide approximately 551 FTTP connections to homes, businesses, CAIs, and farms. The proposed project would provide fiber to 494 locations in Colorado and 57 locations in Utah.

The town of Dove Creek, located in Dolores County, generally lacks access to broadband speeds above 10/1Mbps, and most critical institutions and businesses lack access to broadband entirely. The regional economy depends heavily on agriculture, mining, and

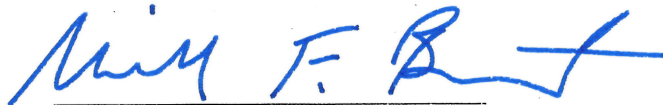
tourism. In recent years, each sector has become increasingly reliant on broadband to improve efficiency and reach distant markets. Improving access to reliable, high-speed broadband is essential for continued economic growth in the area, with significant positive spillover effects for the community.

- **Delta-Montrose Electric Association, Elevate**: This is an application for 50% grant and 50% loan for a total of \$21.4M. The project will provide 3,445 FTTP, home, businesses, CAIs, and farms. The proposed network will be capable of transmission rates of 100/100Mbps and 1/1Gbps synchronous, offering broadband to residents and businesses alike.

The broader region is undergoing a period of economic transition, and new development is essential for sustaining the region's quality and way of life. Delta County, in particular, has been hit hard by the closure of two coal mines. By connecting rural farmers to high-speed broadband, this project will allow them to make use of cyber agriculture, optimize growth patterns, participate in continuing education, receive telemedicine, and age in place. Moreover, it will help eliminate the homework gap between rural students and those in urban and suburban areas.

These three projects align closely with the goals of the ReConnect program and the broader imperative to close America's digital divide. To that end, we strongly encourage a comprehensive and fair review of these ReConnect applications. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator