

Staff Report

Subject: Support for Planters Communications BEAD Program Application

Author: Tim Callanan, County Manager

Department: County Manager

Meeting Date: January 7, 2025

Item Description: Consideration to approve a financial commitment and letter of support for Planters Communications' Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program application.

Summary Recommendation: Staff recommends the Board approve a financial contribution of \$100,000 and endorse Planters Communications' BEAD application through the attached letter of support.

Executive Summary/Background: Effingham County faces significant challenges in providing reliable broadband access to 2,833 underserved and unserved locations, including households, businesses, and educational institutions. Expanding broadband infrastructure is critical for economic development, education, and quality of life in these areas.

Planters Communications has been a trusted partner in enhancing connectivity in the Clio area and throughout the county. Their proven track record, expertise, and community engagement make them well-suited to address these challenges.

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program offers an opportunity to secure funding for these critical broadband expansion efforts. Effingham County's financial commitment of \$100,000 demonstrates strong local support and enhances the competitiveness of Planters' BEAD application.

Alternatives for Commission to Consider:

1. Approve the financial contribution of \$100,000 and the letter of support for Planters Communications' BEAD application.
2. Decline to approve the financial contribution and letter of support.
3. Provide staff with alternative direction.

Recommended Alternative: Staff recommends Alternative 1 – Approve the financial contribution and letter of support to Planters Communications.

Other Alternatives: Do not approve &/or provide staff with direction.

Department Review: County Manager

Funding Source: Special Service District

Attachments: Letter of Support for Planters Communications BEAD Program Application.