

**FCC Rural Health Pilot Network Approach
Texas Healthcare I Network Consortium (THINC) Proposal
Internet2 Connector – LEARN**

Name of RHCPP participant(s)

CHRISTUS Health System
East Texas Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
Rural & Community Health Institute (RCHI)
TeleCommunity Resource Center (TCRC)
Texas A&M University
Texas A&M Health Science Center (TAMHSC)
Texas Organization for Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH),
University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB)

Brief description of RHCPP project(s)

Texas has the largest rural population in the nation. To help meet these challenges a statewide collaboration of Texas rural healthcare providers and leading nonprofit medical resource institutions has committed to build a broadband telecommunications network designed to improve rural healthcare across the state.

The Texas Healthcare Information Network for Communities (THINC) initiative will connect rural health care providers to urban and regional resource centers, and with each other, for expanded health care access, improved services and lowered costs. The new THINC healthcare information network infrastructure will allow rural providers full access to expanded telehealth services including telemedicine, remote consult and triage, electronic medical records, grand rounds, continuing patient and provider education, and many other innovative telecom-based healthcare services. One means to expand rural telehealth connectivity is THINC's access to Internet2 and National Lambda Rail (NLR) resource using fiber optic infrastructure available from the Lonestar Education and Research Network (LEARN). This allows THINC to offer providers access to resources via ultra-high-speed connections as well as statewide broadband intranets.

Anticipated outcomes of this RCH support include: model programs using telehealth technology to increase affordable healthcare and to improve general standards of health for residents of all rural communities served.

Brief description of the challenges

Largest rural population in Nation; 262,000 square miles (7.4% of US); 86 counties with less than 10 per sq. mile, 55 counties with less than 5 per sq. mile, 11 counties with less than 1 per sq. mile; 26 Rural phone coops; 18 independent phone companies.
15% matching fee is major challenge

Approach to meeting these challenges

A lot of legwork and face to face rural meetings coupled with extensive additional grant writing.

Submitted by

Larry Flournoy

Date

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