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Backgrounder

Frontier Communications, DISH Network and CoBank are the proud founders of **America's Best Communities**, an innovative **\$10 million** competition to boost small cities and towns that are the spirit of our country and the foundation of our economy.

Frontier, DISH and CoBank recognize that our nation's economic success is reliant upon the vibrancy and resiliency of rural communities, many of which have faced significant hurdles in these economically challenging times.

Regardless of the obstacles, these self-reliant communities possess the tenacity and creativity to address the challenges that are present within their communities, and to identify innovative solutions that encourage long-term growth and sustainability.

America's Best Communities is determined to help — investing in the big dreams that small cities and towns can use to transform and re-energize their local economies.

Legacy of Prize Competitions

Prize contests have a proven track record of stimulating creative solutions. In 1919, French hotelier Raymond Orteig offered a \$25,000 prize to anyone who could fly non-stop between New York City and Paris. Eight years later, aviator Charles Lindbergh became the first to complete a non-stop transatlantic flight, landing the Spirit of St. Louis in France and winning the Orteig Prize.

More recently, in 1996, entrepreneur Peter Diamandis offered a \$10 million prize to the first privately financed team that could build and fly a three-passenger vehicle into space twice within two weeks. The X Prize was won on Oct. 4, 2004, by Mojave Aerospace Ventures, and the winning vehicle, SpaceShipOne, now hangs in the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum adjacent to Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis airplane.

Inspired by the vision of how a prize competition can engage spur growth and innovation, **Frontier**, **DISH** and **CoBank** are now offering a new prize — **America's Best Communities** will award \$6 million in cash to three communities with the best plans for economic growth and vitality. While



on this journey, up to 50 communities will benefit from \$4 million in support.

America's Best Communities: An Innovative Approach to Competitions

America's Best Communities is a unique, multi-stage, three-year contest. Launched in September 2014, communities with populations of 9,500 to 80,000 and located within Frontier's 27-state footprint are eligible to apply. Those with populations less than 9,500 are encouraged to join forces and collaborate with neighboring communities to become eligible.

Spearheaded by Frontier Communications Chairman and CEO, Maggie Wilderotter, and supported by other sponsors, **America's Best Communities** aims to inspire the revitalization of small town America and harness the power of community collaboration and innovation for the greater good.

The America's Best Communities' approach to engaging small towns and cities across America through a contest is unique, as the communities involved will become a center for change through an incentive and reward structure. In addition, this prize competition will provide a framework for new rural investment by both local government and businesses. According to the Center for Rural Affairs, communities that have the opportunity to invest in themselves are likely to keep and attract the young families that energize communities and create new businesses.

"This contest is designed to challenge a community's brightest and most innovative thinkers to develop meaningful strategies and plans that will transform their town or city," said Maggie Wilderotter, Chairman and CEO of Frontier Communications. "Whether ideas come from an individual or a group, visionaries in a community can effect powerful transformations. And the \$10 million in support from Frontier, DISH and other partners is just the tip of the iceberg. As businesses join together to support their local community through the America's Best Communities Contest, there will be a multiplier effect that will expand the size and impact of the prize. Frontier is offering qualified applicants the resources they need to be their own agents for positive change."

"DISH got its start serving remote areas of Colorado, so we understand the innovation and entrepreneurialism that springs forth from America's smaller communities," said DISH CEO and



President Joe Clayton. "Every small community has a story to tell and we want to help create an opportunity for the best ideas that lead to thriving communities to be identified and shared."

"We're extremely pleased to be a sponsor of this highly innovative campaign," said Robert B. Engel, CoBank's chief executive officer. "Rural community development is the central focus of CoBank's corporate social responsibility program, and closely aligned with our broader mission to serve rural America. We look forward to seeing the tangible benefits it will deliver to all communities who decide to participate."

Communities must apply by March 25, 2015 to qualify. Judges will then select up to 50 qualified applicants in April, each of which will receive \$35,000. These communities will then have six months to leverage resources and track progress, submitting their final proposals in November 2015.

Up to 15 semifinalists will be selected in January 2016, and an **America's Best Communities** Summit will take place in April 2016 during which up to eight finalists will be named, winning \$100,000 each.

The America's Best Communities top three competition winners will be announced in April 2017 following a year of implementing the visions and plans. The community with the most innovative and effective plan will be awarded a \$3 million grand prize. Second place will win \$2 million, and third will win \$1 million.

More detailed information on eligibility and how communities apply can be found at www.americasbestcommunities.com.

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