

Broadband Adoption Program Executive Summary

In New York State, 48 percent of households are not high-speed broadband subscribers, even though 78 percent do have some type of Internet service using digital subscriber lines (DSL). This is one percent below the national average of 79 percent. Research indicates that the largest barrier to home broadband use is relevance, which includes a range of adoption hurdles, i.e., interest, age, access, affordability, computer availability, and rural location. We will address the issue of relevance by demonstrating the value of broadband and providing the skills to use broadband technologies effectively.

Our project consists of three primary components:

- Develop a set of curricula that is targeted for a broad demographic within New York, including those with special needs such as the visually impaired, physically impaired, geographically isolated, early literacy group and non-English speakers;
- Provide Professional development programs for educators and librarians;
- Market and deliver digital literacy training, education and awareness, using our curricula to the many public audiences who need and desire increased digital fluency.

Our proposal is innovative because it:

- Crosses the lines of traditional education delivery
- Includes professional educators and the general public
- Proposes to use broadband as a delivery tool for the training designed to increase broadband; broadband as a demonstration of its own value
- Incorporates the skill sets of different types of institutions, academic libraries, public libraries, schools, workforce development agencies, etc.
- Proposes new programs to enlist youth & senior citizens in creating broadband awareness

Our project will develop education programs based on the training, again targeted at specific and general audiences and available in multiple languages. Our education will be delivered through a variety of methods including online courseware, video and webinars, downloadable podcasts, and in-person training and education. In those cases where we deliver in-person training, we will use specialized peer-to-peer training methods through our K-12 "Broadband Buddies" and our older American "Cyber-Sages" programs. We will drive non-broadband adopters to education and training programs which stress the benefits of broadband for teaching and learning, enhanced employee productivity and skill, public safety, employment, job search, and the development of daily living skills in a digital economy.

The estimated number of potential broadband subscribers that we hope to reach through this project is 14.5 million or 75% of the total state population. Currently, 52% of New Yorkers are broadband subscribers. At the conclusion of the project we anticipate adoption of broadband by nearly 5 million additional users. Individuals who are: economically disadvantaged, speakers of English as a second language, aged, blind, physically handicapped and children are specific targets for educational outreach, digital literacy and public awareness initiatives. These populations are over-represented in the population of New Yorkers who do not subscribe to broadband. Therefore, our outreach and education efforts will be focused to increase the adoption rate within these communities.

In the Public Computer Center program category, (NTIA PCC Program Track) New York's application for static and mobile computing centers proposes serving geographic areas previously identified as economically disadvantaged. This will reinforce our ability to reach our target audiences.

The project will serve all of New York State, which is the 3rd most populous state in the country with an estimated population of 19.4 million. New York is the 27th largest state in terms of geographic size, with 54,555 square miles of territory and ranks behind much smaller states in broadband penetration and has fallen in terms of economic competitiveness. Despite New York's populace and commerce, 25% of the states are ranked higher for Digital Economic competitiveness

In New York City with a population verging on 10 million, 2/3rds of the population do not have home broadband and 48% of households are not high-speed broadband subscribers. 35 % of people surveyed indicate that cost is the major impediment to broadband adoption, but awareness of the uses of broadband and its importance in the digital economy is also a factor.

The New York State Library serves as the broadband hub for citizens in many communities, and in 72% of instances, offers the only free community access to the Internet through its 1100 library outlets, including 755 public libraries. Although the diffusion of broadband has increased, the home adoption for Internet remains suppressed by cultural, regional, and economic barriers. Indeed 24% of rural users indicate they cannot access high speed Internet because the infrastructure is not available.

The University of the State of New York (USNY), the nation's most comprehensive and unified educational system proposes a broadband education, awareness and outreach program to raise the broadband adoption and use rates among New Yorkers from the current 52 percent to a target of 75 percent. Our program creates a sustainable human infrastructure to build knowledge and access to a digital world through a digital literacy curriculum. We will develop and expand a corps of educators to reach the broadest array of citizens so they can become engaged participants in a broadband economy.

The program we propose is unique in that it combines and leverages the skills and resources of the many institutions that comprise USNY to provide a holistic approach to digital literacy education.

USNY is the most complete, interconnected system of educational services in the United States including: More than 7,000 public and private K-12 schools; 248 public and private colleges and universities; 251 proprietary schools; Nearly 7,000 libraries; 750 museums; The State Archives; Vocational Rehabilitation Services for adults with disabilities; Special education services for pre-school and school-age children and teenagers; A School for the Blind; A School for the Deaf; 25 public broadcasting facilities, including seven public television stations and 240,000 certified public school teachers, counselors, and administrators.

USNY manages annually the distribution of over 26 billion dollars in aid to localities throughout New York. Additionally, the State Library manages \$9 million annually in federal Library Services and Technology Act funds in addition to other federal grant projects awarded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services and other federal agencies. The State Library also administers over \$100 million in state grant programs for libraries and oversees the State's network of 73 library systems and some 7000 academic, public, school and special libraries. The State Library also has managed over \$20 million in private funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in support of public access computing over the past decade.

Our project will create a total of 224 new jobs within the various partner organizations. The jobs will include instructors, course developers, curriculum writers, marketing staff, web designers, higher education interns, network administrators and librarians. Following the implementation period, those positions necessary to sustain an ongoing digital fluency requirement will be supported with institutional, state and private funds. The partners have endorsed these projects and will strive to maintain the jobs created. Proposal participants intend to sustain and leverage the opportunity that Federal stimulus funding provides.