

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** Contact Network Inc. d/b/a InLine

**Project Title:** Sustainable Broadband Adoption Project for Southern Mississippi

**Project Type:** Sustainable Adoption

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### **Executive Summary**

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Problem:

Contact Network Inc, d/b/a InLine (henceforth referred to as "InLine"), believes there is a significant need and opportunity to encourage greater adoption of broadband services in Mississippi, where our telephone surveys indicate that only 25% of residents in the proposed service area subscribe to broadband services. A key reason for this is a lack of broadband infrastructure, a problem which we address in our complementary Infrastructure application. InLine has focused on this region for over 6 years, and the company has already built networks in the area, but due to local funding shortages and despite existing contracts, we have been unable to fully deploy previously planned networks. InLine believes that universal access to broadband Internet is as critical to the future of a community as telephone service and electric service were to previous generations. However, the availability of services does little to enhance the quality of residents' lives or serve to break the cycle of poverty in the nation's poorest state without additional efforts to ensure that broadband capabilities are utilized to their fullest potential. Many school districts already possess some videoconferencing technologies, but with a lack of adequate bandwidth and without professional development, the technologies remain unused. Computer ownership also remains low, due to a combination of factors which include depressed economic conditions, a lack of computer literacy, and a lack of understanding the potential benefits that computer and Internet usage bring.

Approach:

The proposed program uses a number of emerging technological applications in combination with training programs in order to promote the adoption of broadband services throughout the region. We believe that our program is truly innovative because it addresses the problem of broadband subscribership and computer usage from multiple aspects, providing a comprehensive approach. The program will be comprised of four major components: videoconferencing systems in K-12 schools, low-cost virtualization services for businesses, training programs for all classes of clients, and a financial accessibility program. We intend to install videoconferencing systems in three high schools in the proposed service area that do not presently have systems. We will also offer low-cost virtual desktop services to residents, businesses, and institutions, which will reduce energy consumption and greatly reduce the cost of computer ownership. We intend to further provide skills training both to the

community at large and professional development to teachers, ensuring that the benefits of these broadband-enhancing services are maximized. Finally, we will offer a voucher program that will greatly offset the costs of investments in computer hardware for residents, small businesses, and community institutions. Community training programs can reach up to 35,000 adults, helping them to develop vital job skills. In total, we anticipate that over the course of five years, our program will generate over 35,000 new household subscribers, 3,000 business and institutional subscribers, and 25,000 new users of public computing facilities.

#### Proposed Service Area:

InLine's proposed service area is made up of a broad service region covering over 8500 square miles, in Mississippi between McComb, Hattiesburg and Meridian. This service area covers a total of 17 counties and 24,501 census blocks, with 2000 U.S. Census Population of 345,585. Of these, 250,118 residents – 72% – live in rural areas. Our proposed training services will be provided in 52 communities and will be made available to all residents. The potential effects of our videoconferencing component alone could reach a total of 92,846 students and employees across the 28 school districts in the area. Low-cost virtualization services may also reach up to 10,620 businesses of all sizes in the area, as well as 293 key community institutions and agencies, allowing them to enhance their organizational performance and effectiveness in serving the community.

#### Qualifications of the Applicant:

InLine is a Birmingham, AL based company that has been in operation for over 17 years, and which also staffs regional offices in Montgomery, AL and Jackson, MS. Founded in 1992 as a professional services firm, InLine has become the leading Total Solutions Provider (TSP) in Alabama and Mississippi, offering Internet services, information technology products, and end-to-end solutions to small, medium, and large businesses and government agencies. InLine has experienced significant and consistent growth in recent years, generating over \$26 million in 2008 revenue. We provide a host of broadband-enhancing products to all levels of clients, which are further outlined in our supplement to this application.

#### Job Growth and Preservation:

We believe that the presence of broadband services will encourage economic growth and development throughout Southern Mississippi, as small businesses are able to utilize these services to compete in the broader international marketplace and as local governments are able to leverage the presence of the network to attract large industry and corporations to the region. Through this project we intend to provide training services to over 35,000 individuals over a five year period, helping them to develop new computing and job skills. Further, we anticipate that this program will create six new full-time equivalent

positions for professional development trainers: three with InLine and three with our key partner organization, SCMCEED.

**Overall Cost:**

We have submitted a total budget of \$2,926,362, of which \$2,341,090 is federal funds. With an estimated 63,000 new broadband users, this comes to a total cost per new user of only \$46.45, or a federal expenditure of only \$37.16. We further believe that program income can be used to sustain these efforts and to expand and replicate the program elsewhere.