

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** MSA Global Inc

**Project Title:** Georgia Broadband Initiative for Visually Impaired Individuals

**Project Type:** Sustainable Adoption

---

### **Executive Summary**

---

#### Executive Summary

In 2009, the Obama Administration made history by appointing Kareem Dale, as Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy, it signaled to the American community, as well as \$54 million Americans living with disability that as a nation we are committed to expanding educational opportunities, increase access to employment, and protecting civil liberties. The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act will provide over \$500 million in job rehabilitation services to assist with job training, education, and placement. The Georgia Broadband Initiative for Visually Impaired Individuals (GBVI) will address specifically sustainable adoption broadband as defined by the Recovery Act by providing services to this vulnerable population by providing broadband-related equipment, hardware, software; developing and providing training, as well as community outreach in designated unserved and underserved counties in the state of Georgia. Furthermore, the Georgia Broadband Initiative for the Visually Impaired Individuals (GBVI) creates a sustainable business model in the fact that we are able to provide jobs once the visually impaired individual completes job readiness and professional development training.

The Georgia Broadband Initiative for the Visually Impaired Individuals (GBVI) was the brainchild of Madinah S. Ali, Founder & CEO of MSA Global, Inc. MSA Global, Inc (MSA) is, a female, minority small business as defined by section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, 15 USC §637. The company is an AT&T call center solutions provider, and has other major telecom partnerships with Qwest Communications, and Partnertel, a leading telecom broadband reseller in the United States. MSA has various Value Added Re-seller (VAR) partnerships with Samsung, Ipitomy, and SecureAxxess for telecommunications equipment and broadband infrastructure. Through its joint-venture partnership with ToptelUS, the company has close to ten years of experience in setting up broadband networks and call center operations. Its founder was recently selected by AT&T to participate in a 12-month mentoring program for the Women of Color Business Growth Initiative.

MSA Global's educational partners are the Center for the Visually Impaired (CVI) Georgia, and the Drexel's Goodwin College of Professional Studies. CVI Georgia, one of Georgia's largest and fully accredited rehabilitative training center provides life skills and employment readiness skills annually to over 4,500 individuals who have a wide range of vision impairments. They service individuals from low vision to total blindness using its expertise in computer based assistive technology; and is only reaching 3% of the Metro Atlanta population, and 0% of the unserved and underserved rural areas in the state of Georgia. Despite that there are about 400,000 visually impaired individuals in the state of Georgia; only 1% of the adult visually impaired population utilizes rehabilitation training in activities for daily living. In a survey by Lighthouse National Survey on Vision Loss, when asked why they were not utilizing rehabilitation services, a sizeable proportion of respondents reported being unfamiliar with the availability of vocational rehabilitation services.

Currently, CVI Georgia has placed two visually impaired individuals at MSA Global. Through the placement of these two individuals, both organizations uncovered gaps in training and the need to develop career tracks that align with corporate training modules designed to ensure the growth. Development and retention of these employees can grow their partnership MSA Global and CVI Georgia by training and placing 70 visually impaired individuals in diverse call center positions at MSA Global call centers located in the USA. Drexel University, (Drexel), a 501 (c) 3 institution and one of the nation's top 100 universities, is a pioneer in online education and specializes in innovative, Internet-based distance learning programs for working professionals and corporations throughout the US and abroad since 1996. Its Goodwin College's School of Education is ranked among the best graduate schools for education. Drexel is also the third largest employer in the economically-distressed West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area and has worked with various underserved populations.

For this reason, MSA Global, CVI Georgia and Drexel collaboratively seek assistance of an estimated 5.7 MUSD over a 3 year period for broadband funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to increase the capacity of CVI Georgia and MSA Global to implement a turn-key adult learning program to create call center job opportunities in the visually impaired community who currently account for a 70% unemployment rate. The program will focus on three counties designated by the State of Georgia as unserved or underserved, Harris County, Forsyth County, and DeKalb County, for the visually impaired community in terms of low broadband adoption rates and unemployment rates. In conclusion, this funding is required to properly plan, develop, coordinate and control the Georgia Broadband Initiative for Visually Impaired Individuals (GBVI) sustainable adoption program. These financial resources will be used to ensure that the Program not only achieves broadband adoption rates and community awareness, but that it also achieves its economic goals; namely the training and educating of visually impaired individuals (i.e. vulnerable populations) to achieve employment opportunities as designed through the Recovery Act.