

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Deproduction

Project Title: Open Media Project

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

a. The Pew Research Center reported in June 2009 that households who have yet to subscribe to broadband in the home list "relevance" to their lifestyle as the #1 reason for their lack of use. More than price, availability and usability combined, the primary factor preventing predominantly low-income communities from using broadband is the perception that the resource is not relevant to them (PEW IALP, Apr. 2009).

Internet service providers are not the appropriate group to help low-income communities understand the relevance of Broadband Internet use in their lives. Our mainstream media and marketing systems are designed to deliver eyeballs to advertisers, to connect consumers with marketers. The ineffectiveness of this system in reaching low-income communities is no mystery; when the per-capita buying power of a community is low, the profit motive of targeting those communities is low.

b. Public Access TV (PATV) stations have a unique potential and motivation to educate and engage these communities and empower their constituents. The approach of the Open Media Project is to modernize and transform these stations into a collaborative network leveraging a participatory model enabled by open source, web2.0 tools to engage their communities in broadband use. This model provides the community with greater ownership of the station, increased accessibility to locally produced multimedia content and more resources to participate in the growing online dialogue. Deproduction recently received a Knight News Challenge award to conduct a beta test of the Open Media Project. The experiment has proven that this is an affordable and sustainable model for transforming outdated PATV stations into powerful broadband adoption resource centers. The Internet offers access to powerful and diverse information that is valuable to a wide range of populations. Recognizing this, the Open Media Project is driven by a distributed, participatory model that empowers individuals to directly engage in the media conversation. Using Cable TV, DISH Network and the Internet as distribution outlets, our model reaches disconnected communities with user-generated content from their own communities and demonstrates the relevance of broadband from the perspective of early adopters within those neighborhoods, not from the marketing department of an ISP. This campaign will encourage civic engagement in our partner communities via Broadband and promote full participation in shaping their local media conversation. Our open-source tools put local perspectives on-line and place communities

in-charge of their own media by enabling the community to drive the programming schedule and engaging them in the media conversation in a way that they have never before been engaged. In low-income communities in Denver, this model has proven effective in providing incentive for early adopters to encourage their friends and neighbors to get on-line, watch media produced in their neighborhood and vote on it so that their shows earn repeat airings and more prime-time exposure.

c. Building on the initial beta-test funded by the Knight Foundation, we propose working with 20 PATV stations, each serving communities with below 40% broadband adoption, and with Free SpeechTV and the Alliance for Community Media for documentation, awareness, and evaluation support. The 20 Pilot sites, population served and average household income are detailed in upload 20. Supplemental Information 2. The Open Media Project anticipates a total of 3 million potential broadband subscribers reached over the 3-year grant period, through direct service, web and TV (numbers explained in question #25: Awareness Campaign).

d. In the first phase of the Open Media Project, Deproduction transformed Denver's outdated Public Access TV station, with no broadband services or focus on the Digital Divide, into a nationally recognized community technology center that no longer depends on general operating support from the city or cable providers. The second phase of this project was made possible through a Knight News Challenge Award and included a revision of the model and software, both tested at six Public Access stations across the nation. With great success in the first two phases, we look to the BTOP Sustainable Broadband Adoption opportunity to complete the third phase of the project and help us demonstrate the true power of this model for transforming the nation's under-utilized PATV stations into a network of cutting edge community media centers, stimulating broadband adoption in disconnected communities. The model guides those organizations through a modernization process that expands their services beyond a limited focus on Cable TV technologies and supports them as they develop the new skills, knowledge and resources they need to bring the power of the Internet to disengaged constituents.

e. The Open Media Project budget includes at least 8-10 direct hires across three organizations and supports at least a dozen part-time and contract positions. Each of the 20 pilot program sites will need to hire or re-train to support the requisite skill sets. We also anticipate up to 200 jobs saved, due to the fact that many of the participating organizations are facing steep budget cuts, a trend across the Public Access TV community. In Denver, when operating support for PATV was eliminated, 10 jobs were lost. The Open Media Project model enabled us to re-launch the station without operating support, re-hiring staff to equal the size of the previous PATV provider, an outcome we expect to repeat at a minimum of 20 additional stations.

f. The total budget for the proposed project over a three-year period is \$ \$3,880,844. Deproduction is requesting \$2,208,844 from the NTIA's BTOP funds to expand the project to our 20 partner sites and to enable the documentation, production and evaluation work of Free Speech TV and the Alliance for Community Media.