

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: ctechnologica

Project Title: West TN Regional Technology Workforce Pipeline

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

cTechnology's theme is New Ideas, New Energy, New Growth. We have as our purpose in this project to continue and expand our programs for linking broadband & related online technology, K-16 education, workforce and economic development, and entrepreneurialism together in rural communities. Simply put: we are bringing fresh eyes and ears to the issues surrounding rural economic development and sustainability. We are a Tennessee-based non-profit organization centered on very specific areas of interest and bringing real outcomes and impacts to solve the real issues in rural America.

The BTOP Adoption program is very appealing to us in that we heard from the NTIA opening remarks in Washington, DC an almost entrepreneurial zeal to see something really happen with the stimulus funds they have been charged to distribute. We applaud this zeal as it lines up with our own and we hope to become one of its stewards as well.

We have a depth of history in west Tennessee and we are "shovel ready" in terms of momentum and previous preparation for the type of engagement we are contemplating. We have been engaged for the past two years in the west Tennessee county of Lauderdale which has some startling statistics: 19.7% unemployment rate, 77% economically-disadvantaged K-12, 44% minority, 47% of K-12 homes never have seen broadband, highest teen pregnancy rate in the state. Here we have been researching and launching a number of pilot programs that have had a direct affect on broadband availability, 21st Century skills development of 6th-12th graders, emergency services readiness, workforce readiness for local industry, and new a economic future and hope for the community.

To ultimately change the value proposition of rural constituents and stakeholder about the Internet, we must shift their value perception of the Internet from information and entertainment, to personal and community economic advancement. We seek to do just that.

Broadband availability and adoption is directly tied to the economic future of rural America. Ask any rural ECD person whose been trying to sell that disconnected Megasite to a potential developer who is

asking for fiber optic levels of connectivity. Ask the HR director of a local manufacturing plant that needs new digitally savvy kids coming in the door to replace their aging boomer workforce. Digital workforce readiness cannot be laid solely at the feet of K-16 schools because online social skills are now 21st century business skills. You don't learn those in K-12 or college, you must experience them personally and learn how to link into a virtual community both locally and trans-locally; balancing an online life with the rest of your life. These are the new basic skills of 21st century business. Gen Y'ers, even disconnected ones, know this instinctively.

Rural west Tennessee is in need of a new and relevant 21st Century approach to workforce development and job creation if we wish to establish a legacy for the upcoming generations of rural west Tennessee young people. Broadband is at the center of that move.

The alarming loss rate of young people from rural west Tennessee can only be stemmed by establishing beachheads of new economic opportunity in every rural county. The online economy is one such beachhead. 21st Century workforce development and job creation methods combined with broadband Internet deployment can be the driving force to establish a new army of rural young people who are prospering in their rural communities. These young people will become the core of a new transforming force for good in rural west Tennessee, bridging rural community values with 21st Century opportunity.

Shockingly, a Connected Tennessee survey shows that 59% of Tennessee residents without a computer at home do not see a good reason for owning one. We believe the adult residents polled do not represent their children's viewpoint since our classroom surveys have shown that 98% of high school children in our rural pilot community own a MySpace account – regardless of computer ownership or home access.

Rural young people under 25 already understand the power of the Internet and are positioned to lead the region in technology-based jobs creation using the online economy – they simply need direction in P-12 to career tracks within the tech online economy.

Our plan is simple:

Engage with regional stakeholders: The Development Districts

Engage with the K-16 community and create a K-16 Technology Workforce Pipeline

Experiment with telecommuting as a new front for jobs in rural America & the Disabled homebound

Light the fire in the K-12 young people about the online economy and careers

Hand off the process to the locals for sustainability

Engage carriers directly in the K-16 markets

We hope to demonstrate in this project that the Internet has a direct stake in the personal economy of rural America. If we are the least bit successful, news travels fast in counties with 22% unemployment. We are convinced that telecommuting and the online economy have a tremendous potential in rural America. We are not the first. We want to try. We have smart people on deck. We've been committed to this process for over two years already.

Let's make a new front of hope for rural America.

Paul Van Hoesen