

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Saginaw Valley State University

Project Title: SVSU Rural Medical and Education Sustainable Infrastructure Broadband Project

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

a) A statement of the problem/need with regard to improving broadband service adoption plans.

As the BTOP funding opportunity brings Broadband access to rural communities, institutions of higher education face unprecedented opportunities for educational partnerships with healthcare agencies and local education agencies. Broadband-based teleconferencing, web-based instruction, and hybrid programs accessing both technological methods connect residents of geographically isolated and sparsely populated communities to regionally-based institutions of higher education enabling local residents to pursue higher education without leaving their responsibilities/jobs. In addition, dual credit classes increase the likelihood that local students will understand higher education options while still in high school. Awareness increases the likelihood that students will pursue degree programs, thereby increasing economic opportunities for themselves and for the communities. SVSU has already entered into partnerships with area school systems and Broadband internet providers to provide educational programs via Broadband-based teleconferencing and web-based instructional programs with the following communities: Marlette, Alpena, Cass City, Tawas City, Macomb, Port Huron, Mt Pleasant, Saginaw, Caro, and West Branch.

b) Your overall approach to addressing the need and how the project is innovative.

Each of the communities participating in this project can do so because of Air Advantage's plans to bring or expand Broadband services to unserved/underserved communities. Using a combination of fiber and wireless backbone construction, by building a last-mile delivery system to rural communities, Air Advantage will also have the capacity to expand Broadband access for healthcare agencies and LEAs. Sufficient capacity, up to 10Mbps up & down at schools & hospitals, and 2Mb down, 1Mb up for residential customers, will enable school systems to install teleconferencing facilities connecting schools not only institutions of higher education, but also to other schools in the region. Residential customers will be able to take advantage of emerging technologies with the higher bandwidths to do computer based distance education at home. Rural schools and healthcare facilities face challenges in maintaining a quality workforce; for education the challenge is particularly acute in the areas of mathematics and science. With teleconferencing interconnectivity, it will be possible for schools to share talented faculty and staff in critical areas. In addition to teleconferencing, school-based Broadband will enable students and community members to access not only web-based instructional programs, but a world of learning available via the Internet.

c) Areas to be served; population of the target areas including demographic information; and the estimated number of potential broadband subscribers your project will reach.

BTOP funding and a partnership with 27 LEAs in target communities and with Air Advantage, LLC will enable expansion of the program to unserved and underserved communities in the highly rural areas of southeastern Michigan. Communities (population and demographics) to be targeted by this project will include: Alpena—pop:11,304=97.7%white+2.3%other;Bad Axe—3,462=97.6%W+2.4%O;Brown City—1,334=97.9%W+2.1%O; Carsonville—502=98.4W+1.6%O;Caro-4,145=94.6%W+5.4%O; Caseville—888=97.5%W+2.5%O;Cass City—2,643=97.7%W+2.3%O;Croswell—2,467=90.8%W+9.2%O; Deckerville—944=94.7%W+5.3%O; Fairgrove-627=93.5%W+6.5%O; Gladwin—3,001=96.1%W+3.9%O; Harbor Beach—1,837=96.4%W+3.6%O; Kinde—534=97.2%W+2.8%O; Kingston—450=94.7%W+5.3%O; Marlette—2,109=93.8%W+6.3%O; Mayville—1,055=97.7%W+2.3%O; Millington-1,137=98.9%W+1.1%O; Owendale—296=97.3%W+2.7%O; Peck—599=98.6%W+1.4%O; Pigeon—1,207=96.6%W+ 3.4%O; Port Hope—310=98.7%W+1.3%O; Reese—1,375=98.5%W+1.5%O; Roscommon—1,133=96%W+4%O; Sandusky—2,745=95%W+5%O; Sebawaing—1,974=99%W+1%O; Tawas—2,005=97.3%W+2.7%O; Ubyly—873=98.9%W+1.1%O; Vassar=2,923=88.4%W+11.6%O. The equipment requested in this application will allow the student (of all ages) on a home computer to engage in distance education. In the seven counties in the extended Thumb, this is dependent on the higher broadband availability provided thru the REMC-10 and Air Advantage grant application. Estimated number of potential broadband subscribers the project will reach: 32 community anchor organizations.

d) Qualifications of the applicant that demonstrate the ability to implement the project and achieve its intended results. SVSU was accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association as a baccalaureate and masters degree-granting institution. All five colleges have accredited programs of study and many of those classes are offered in a hybrid format. SVSU has a comprehensive Information Technology Services Department fully capable of supporting teleconferencing and Web instructional programs. ITS facilities include the capacity to supplement online and hybrid courses with MCU Bridge, PVX and MCU Bridge, GoToMeeting or Agora meetings. A number of teleconferencing classes are already provided by SVSU with ITS specialists working with faculty content specialists to customize teleconferencing, web-based and hybrid instruction to meet the needs of the geographically isolated rural students in the University service area. SVSU has a history of successful implementation of grants from \$500 - \$10M from a range of federal and state agencies and foundations.

e) Jobs maintained - est. 10 (equipment manufacturing, installation, testing; maintenance; and instructors who use the equipment. This project serves vulnerable populations, elderly, people needing medical help, and youth; healthcare professionals and educators who are advancing their education utilizing distance education are estimated at 227 who are preparing for jobs.

f) Overall cost: \$757,002 federal & nonfederal funds.