

Executive Summary

Stimulating broadband adoption in small, rural communities in New York starts with stimulating demand for broadband by providing a compelling reason for internet use. The Research Foundation of the State University of New York (RF) on behalf of the State University of New York Institute of Technology (SUNYIT) and the Digital Towpath Cooperative propose to provide that reason by expanding the e-government functionality offered through the Digital Towpath Project (DTP), promoting the use of e-government to citizens, and supporting the development of Digital Towpath websites for 150 additional local governments in rural New York.

Rural town and village governments deal with quality of life issues for their residents more directly than any other level of government. Rural towns and villages are responsible for public safety, economic development, road maintenance, planning and zoning regulations, parks and recreation, and other government services that affect the day to day lives of rural citizens. Commonly, town and village halls are a primary meeting place for the communities they serve, not only for governmental functions but also for community organizations like senior citizens groups and scout troops.

Residents of rural communities in New York are of all ages, all ethnicities, all income levels, and both sexes. They include people with disabilities, the elderly, and the disadvantaged. No matter which demographic describes a resident of one of these communities, that resident will at some time require access to the services afforded him by his local government. Through adoption of e-government, rural governments can provide access to services in spite of primarily part-time staffing and seasonably harsh weather conditions that complicate travel.

We estimate that the project will result in over 270,000 new subscribers to broadband services over the next ten years at a cost of about \$9.00 each. The total project cost to the BTOP program is \$2,515,320. The overall cost of the project is ██████████ \$3,417,047. The project partners will provide a 26% match over the grant period.

SUNYIT and Digital Towpath are uniquely qualified to implement the project because they have been working together for more than a decade, supporting the adoption of technology within local governments in New York. A dedicated and experienced staff is already in place and ready to provide the leadership needed to successfully complete the project within three years.

DTP has been updated and enhanced through NYS grant programs throughout its history. Today DTP offers local officials an easy to use web-based system for municipal websites and technologies that support increased efficiency, greater access to public information, and increased communication with citizens, as well as promoting citizen participation. All DTP services rely on shared resources, allowing Digital Towpath to provide sophisticated functionality at low cost.

A project that builds functionality best suited to broadband; trains government and residents to make full use of it; and promotes the adoption of the Digital Towpath Project's shared service promises to be as effective in the project's targeted areas as it has been in the past. Digital Towpath websites currently serve a total of 564,005 residents of New York. The proposed project will significantly increase that number.

The project will generate 2.50 FTE of permanent employment and at least 3.0 FTE of temporary employment throughout the grant project period. It will also bring marketing, technical support and system development expertise, previously obtained by contract, into DTP, further promoting efficiency and cost savings for all member governments.