

## Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications

**Project Title:** NYC Connected Learning

**Project Type:** Sustainable Adoption

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### Executive Summary

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Mayor Bloomberg recognizes the importance of maintaining New York as a thriving urban center not only for its own residents and businesses, but also for the impact it has on the nation and world. The Mayor has undertaken a number of ambitious programs to ensure the City remains vibrant and strong, such as PlaNYC 2030, a blueprint for environmental sustainability. Similar in spirit is NYC Connected, a set of initiatives aimed at increasing broadband use and adoption among vulnerable New Yorkers. These efforts have important implications for both short- and long-term economic stimulus in New York City, and the US more broadly. Such efforts are particularly crucial at a time when the country faces a major economic crisis, with the City at the epicenter. With historically high unemployment rates and the City facing an underlying structural shift in its economy, it is even more critical that all New Yorkers are provided the skills and access to broadband to enable them to contribute to rebuilding the City's, and the nation's economy.

Recognizing the increasingly important role broadband plays in the economic and social well being of all New Yorkers, the Mayor commissioned a Broadband Needs Assessment Study in 2006/7. While broadband availability was found to be high, with at least 89% of New Yorkers having access to two options for broadband service, the Study identified a stark disparity in broadband adoption. Citywide adoption was comparable to national averages at 47%, yet adoption by low-income residents was strikingly low at 26% as compared to 54% in other income groups. Furthermore, this gap was projected to persist well into the future, absent targeted, large-scale initiatives aimed at addressing it. The Study further found that multiple, interconnected issues conspire to slow adoption in low-income households, including inability to afford computer hardware, software and broadband service, lack of recognition of the value of technology and poor digital literacy skills.

In a City where the number of low-income households exceeds the total number of households in almost every other city, this disparity demands action. In response to these findings, the City crafted a Broadband Action Plan in 2008, calling for a set of aggressive programs to spur broadband adoption by its vulnerable populations. Confronted with a contracting national economy and severe resulting budget cuts across the City, however, the Plan could not be implemented. The BTOP stimulus brings new opportunity to implement these important programs. NYC Connected Communities, a program

proposed under BTOP to expand public computer center capacity and NYC Connected Learning, an education-focused program, and the subject of this submission, are borne from this larger Plan. Unlike many well intentioned programs which address only portions of the problem in isolation, together these programs target New York City's poorest communities and flood them with holistic interventions to drive sustained broadband adoption.

NYC Connected Learning targets a critical vulnerable group in these communities – public school students. With 1.1 million students, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) is the City's largest talent-generating engine. Yet more than 70% of New York's public school students are from low-income families. Without intervention, New York City risks producing a talent pool ill-equipped for the jobs critical to the future growth of the City and nation.

NYC Connected Learning melds the dual objectives of increasing adoption of broadband and enhancing educational outcomes. Targeting low-income 6th graders, the program utilizes broadband to create a vital and reinforcing link between the classroom and the home to simultaneously support the achievement of disadvantaged students, while spurring broadband adoption. The program provides students and their families a robust set of tools to create a home learning environment, including a free computer, discounted broadband service, and access to rich online educational resources, along with digital literacy training and access to a bilingual help desk. It simultaneously makes key investments in the school environment to empower educators to successfully utilize broadband to enhance teaching and learning and to strengthen ties between teachers, parents and students. This holistic approach positions broadband as a powerful educational tool, supporting sustained adoption both by students and schools.

The Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) will leverage its knowledge of City broadband needs and complex program execution to oversee the program, while relying on the DOE's subject matter expertise and partner relationships to ensure high quality program delivery and evaluate program impact. NYC Connected Learning will target 100 schools located in the City's highest-poverty communities. The program will span three academic years - two and half years of BTOP funding - and will cost a total of \$37.4M. The City and its partners will provide \$9.2M in match funding, or 25% of total program costs. The program is also expected to generate \$2.3M in program income through school contributions over the life of the program. It will serve approximately 19,488 students and 42,874 household members, and generate an estimated 14,377 new broadband subscribers. In addition to the indirect impact of preparing students for future employment, the program will create 115 full-time jobs.

By bringing together the best models the country has to offer and integrating them to provide a truly holistic solution, NYC Connected Learning represents a truly innovative solution for national replication for increasing broadband adoption amongst vulnerable populations and enhancing educational outcomes. Funding from BTOP is critical to serving these critical goals, and will allow program results to be leveraged for additional funding from other sources.