

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

Project Title: Virtual Campus and Community Centers for the Northern Marianas Islands

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

The Northern Mariana College (NMC) is requesting funding from the ARRA Broadband Initiative to sustain broadband adoption to support the community's needs in providing access, education, awareness, training and equipment in underserved areas to stimulate demand for broadband services. The college will implement a plan that includes developmental content that will be available through virtual campus and community center sources. These services will help serve the specific needs of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) brought on by an economic crisis that has tightened the resources available to families needing assistance and the public agencies organized to provide support. NMC proposes a plan that will help better connect the public to educational and developmental resources through facilities that is best supported by broadband internet capabilities.

The NMC is located on the three populous islands of the CNMI in Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. According to U.S. Census counts from 2000, the CNMI has a population of 69,221 and 14,055 households. The area also had a 30% poverty rate making access to technology and broadband internet harder to obtain. The plan NMC is ready to implement best promotes increased adoption through community involvement and public offerings specifically addressing the needs of the community. Because of a targeted plan, the NMC has projected subscriber counts of broadband usage to increase from approximately 3,000 to over 5,000. This is based on current estimates and anticipates sustained use over a two year period increasing subscribers by approximately 166 percent.

The strategy integrates three objectives and provides a solution that promotes the initiatives of the NMC and the ARRA Broadband plan. The first phase includes the development of multifunctional community centers with access to educational and training equipment (Proposed in a separate application). The centers will initially serve as the classrooms to facilitate training courses on broadband internet education and evolve into community resources that can be used to facilitate instructional coursework at no or little cost to the learner. The centers will utilize existing facilities and be open to the public for a variety of uses and to learners of all ages and capabilities. In this application, the college has a plan to promote adoption of broadband services through broadband internet training and educational content that will be made available online through virtual campus and community center sources. These

two applications work best in conjunction to serve the community to promote educational opportunities locally helping to create more professional opportunities retaining local talent.

The NMC is ready to use funding as it is available because of a strategic plan that supports quick implementation. The NMC is led by a talented team that has implemented projects promoting the long term vision of the college. These projects include a Fixed Asset Management System and Fiber Optic Network Infrastructure. The plan will help create 20 additional opportunities for employment and will save 200 other direct and indirect jobs through reassignment. The total cost of the project is \$7,037,277.50 and the college is ready to begin using funding to initiate a plan spurring broadband adoption.