

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Open Neighborhoods

Project Title: Open Los Angeles Community Adoption

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

Open Los Angeles Community Adoption

The digital divide in urban settings is of growing concern and one that unfortunately is reflected in local area school performance, low-income unemployment and a vulnerable population that will benefit greatly provided the opportunity of access to information.

Our overall approach is to extend our current community-based broadband open wireless mesh network into low-rent housing areas of Mar Vista and Del Rey, including Mar Vista Gardens. Create a new open wireless mesh network in low-rent housing areas of Venice/Lincoln. At its core, this initiative will provide last-mile solutions, bringing broadband internet and provide information, community support, employment and education opportunities to the underserved. Working in concert with the Los Angeles Unified School District's "Computers for Youth" program and the City of Los Angeles Public Computer Centers, this innovative and grassroots program utilizes deployment of gateway and repeater antennas to provide broadband access, coupled with an on-line social networking site.

The powerful combination of current and future deployment of the Open Neighborhoods service territory will target the most under served population in the larger community. This program serves a population of over 4,000 households. Some of the most serious under-served demographic has over 87 percent of the school aged children categorized as "Free and Reduced Lunch" low-income families. Statistically, over 11 percent are unemployed, some estimates put the under served members of our community at over 20% unemployed, with little means to gain knowledge needed for today's workforce standards.

As community organizers we engage in grassroots initiatives, and have implemented the backbone of this program which is already working to provide information, communication, education and opportunity. With over 40 antennas currently deployed and active with over 1,300 unique users per day utilizing the existing mesh network, we are completely confident that we will reach, meet and potentially exceed the expectations for this program. This robust community wireless mesh network is

made possible with the support of residents, business owners, community groups, local city organizations and others.

We have applied all available resources to the best of our ability but need further support. With the assistance of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant, we will scale the current Open Neighborhoods network to the under served population with swift and effective messaging and engagement. We will initially employ 6 staff members directly to assist in implementing the extension of this program into the under served areas. Additionally, through the use of Open Neighborhoods social networking site and other outreach, we will greatly extend the reach of adoption to provide the ability for job listings, continuing education offerings, free classified advertising, neighborhood events, blog postings, government data, healthcare updates, public safety, security, education data, family and community information.

The movement toward locally established organizations have proven to be the most effective and efficient and we are pleased to be part of it. Utilizing funding from the Broadband Technology Infrastructure Grant to build out further deployment of the wireless mesh network partnered with the Sustainable Broadband Adoption portion will ensure the success of this program. What is most remarkable, this unique grassroots, mesh network program is scalable, can be a model for a nation-wide wi-fi network in both rural and urban environments to stimulate un-served and under-served communities throughout the United States.