

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: FUSE

Project Title: Minority Broadband Outreach Program

Project Type: Middle Mile

Executive Summary

It was once noted that, “Broadband ‘fundamentally changes the way people use the Internet.’” The impetus to expand universal broadband access must be approached as a task of necessity not luxury. Currently the overall expansion of broadband access is segmented and its uneven growth continues to polarize demographic groups and areas that are already deemed marginalized due to income, education, age and race/ethnicity. Leveling the playing field is not just about providing a technological tool that is “better or faster.” The far-reaching implications are inherently tied to economic opportunity and political participation as broadband use may in fact encourage skill development and the migration of online tasks. The Federal Government must begin to approach the disparity in broadband access as a public policy issue as “information technology use and skills are ‘public goods,’ because, like education and libraries, they are capable of providing positive externalities that promote economic growth and democratic governance.” (“New Inequality Frontier: Broadband Internet Access,” by: Caroline J. Tolbert and Karen Mossberger, January 2006, EPI Working Paper No. 275). The Federal Government has the ability to improve the affordability of broadband whose cost prohibitiveness has limited its diffusion to economically disadvantaged groups; individuals who could reap increased benefit from this type of interconnectivity. Furthermore, the extension of access in both rural and urban areas could bridge the gap for those whose access is limited to educational institutions and health care services. Finally, promoting broadband use within public access sites and within schools and educational arenas (through public-private-government partnerships) would expand touch-points and eradicate learning curves in underserved communities. Broadband not only has the potential to diminish social and spatial isolation but economic isolation as well. The Department of Commerce and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, contracting with FUSE, will manage and coordinate the following: 1. Creating and executing the communication plan a. Creating and distributing messages b. Creating and maintaining an open feedback loop. c. Preventing contradictory messages d. Provide measurements of reach – post campaign analysis report The objective is to ensure more than adequate levels of African American engagement at all levels of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (Minority Broadband Outreach Program). One of the key success factors of communication is the perceived credibility of the message. Appropriate, proactive behavior and maintenance of support, of course, is critical for the success of the Minority Broadband Outreach Program, and thus communication will be directed toward a critical stream of activities, and cross-referenced against risks listed in the communications. This effort would be a national campaign reaching low-income areas across the United States. Many of these urban cities and urban counties do not fit with the “Unserved” and “Underserved” criteria as outlined. The approach of the campaign would be a multi-prong effort. Project specifics are as

follows:

- Comprehensive integrated marketing program
- o Advertising targeted to African American Owned Media Firms – 12 Month Media Schedule
- African American owned Television stations
- African American owned Radio stations
- African American owned weekly newspapers
- African American owned magazines
- African American owned Internet sites and portals
- African American organizations
- Event Marketing/Experiential Marketing/Speaker Series
- o NAACP
- o National Urban League
- o National Association of Security Professionals
- o National Association of Black Engineers
- o National MBA Association
- o Rainbow Push
- o National Action Network
- o Target Market News
- o African American religious organizations
- Public Relations
- o Speaker series
- o Editorials
- o Op Ed Pieces
- o Press briefings
- o Press releases
- o Database marketing
- Digital Marketing
- o Microsite
- o Streaming Media
- o Interactive Kiosks
- o Social networking widgets

The Minority Broadband Outreach Program will address the following:

- ? Encourage extension of access in African-American and Latino neighborhoods in cities where they are underserved.
- ? Devise creative partnerships to encourage broadband access for low-income households. Public-private partnerships have subsidized broadband, equipment, training, and websites for public and other low-income housing. Other possibilities include low-cost wireless services being considered by municipalities such as Philadelphia.
- ? Promote effective use of broadband at public access sites and within schools.
- ? Educational uses such as videoconferencing can open the world to students everywhere, including those in rural areas and inner-city neighborhoods. Public access sites such as libraries and community technology centers can provide high-speed connections to those who are not able to currently afford them.

FINDINGS This report compares broadband access in 2001 using the data from Mossberger, Tolbert and Stansbury (2003) with more recent data from a Pew survey conducted in 2003. These disparities are evident after controlling for various demographic factors that affect access, including Internet use at work that is not included in many previous studies on the digital divide.

- ? Gender matters for broadband access (although the gender divide has disappeared in Internet access generally).
- ? Other factors commonly associated with the digital divide are replicated in the broadband divide, including disparities based on income, education, age and race/ethnicity.
- ? Inequities have not diminished over time. The analysis based on multinomial logistic regression reveals similar disparities in broadband access in 2001 and in 2003, despite a growing population of Americans with high-speed home access.
- ? Analysis of the 2003 Pew survey finds that those least likely to have broadband Internet access at home are the poor, older, less educated, Latinos and African Americans (compared to whites), females (compared to males), and those respondents with less exposure to the Internet at work. The disparities in home broadband access are the largest based on age, followed by income, work exposure, education, race/ethnicity, geography and finally a small access gap based on gender. Interestingly, females are more likely to have dial-up home Internet access than males, but males more likely to have home broadband access.
- ? Broadband access at home is associated with more “digital experience,” including engagement in political and economic activities online. A strong argument can be made that expanding broadband access is related to increased skill acquisition in conducting activities online.