

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** SLB Radio Productions, Inc.

**Project Title:** Original Urban Radio (OURadio) Initiative -- Community-Created Radio via Broadband

**Project Type:** Sustainable Adoption

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### **Executive Summary**

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The Original Urban Radio (OURadio) initiative uses Internet Radio as a driver for broadband adoption as well as community expression and connectedness. SLB Radio productions, Inc. (SLB) proposes to work with the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) to create community radio stations for two public housing developments, train youth to program/operate the stations, and distribute Internet radio devices to residents so that listening via broadband is easy.

We believe that locally produced content – combined with simple-to-use devices – will make broadband an essential resource and tool for the communities and, moreover, will provide a cutting-edge (yet strikingly simple) way of getting people of all ages engaged in a way that mere PCs and ISPs cannot.

SLB and HACP propose to partner to develop and execute this new program. OURadio will use broadband services to create localized radio stations in existing youth centers at Bedford Dwellings (on Pittsburgh's North Side) and Northview Heights (in Pittsburgh's Hill District). Broadcasts will propagate through broadband Internet, and be heard on computers, telephones and – most importantly -- Internet radios. Each station will broadcast poetry, music, essays, reflections, interviews, public affairs and other similar content created by and for youth and others who live in the community. The operation would include a studio and production/editing equipment; field equipment for youth to use in the neighborhood; computer-based audio servers for creation of the programming stream and staff to provide oversight and training. In addition to broadcast and production skills, training will emphasize core life skills including verbal literacy, listening skills, writing, ethics and general communications.

Method of transmission will include live Internet streaming using a method that allows listening not only on conventional computers but on Internet radios which will be provided to homes at no charge. Internet radios are simple devices that look very similar to conventional AM/FM radios yet can be configured to receive streaming audio programs. This technology is critical as it will enable people of all ages and backgrounds (especially older community members) to tune in.

We have selected radio because we know that youth have a lot to say and want to be heard. "Youth Radio" is not simply about creating radio targeted to youth; rather, it focuses on disseminating the voices of youth while promoting intellectual, creative and professional growth through training and mentoring in "life skills" such as verbal expression, listening, self-confidence, writing, computer technology, critical thinking, and conflict resolution. Youth Radio is a transformative medium -- its creators and its audience grow.

Northview Heights and Bedford Dwellings are each in Congressional District 14. Each community is nearly 100% African American. Northview Heights is comprised of 379 households, 289 of which have household incomes that are less than 30% of the median income of homes in the surrounding community (with 65 households at less than 50% and 21 at than 80%). Bedford Dwellings is comprised of 376 units with 328 units having household incomes less than 30% of the median income of homes in the surrounding community (with 30 households at less than 50% and 15 at less than 80%).

Founded in 1978, SLB has been at the forefront of radio and audio for over 30 years and owns and operates a \$250,000 digital broadcast studio and training facility in the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh. After incorporating as a 501(c)(3) in 2000, SLB live programming has expanded from one to six radio stations, organizational staff has grown to 4 full-time and 2 part-time employees, and budget has grown from \$7,500 to \$200,000. SLB staff is committed to use of audio and radio to promote verbal literacy, listening skills, and respect for the ideas/backgrounds of others. SLB staff conducts Youth Radio workshops year-round in our state-of-the-art and in schools. In 2008, approximately 2,000 children were served by these workshops. Innovative programs have included GirlTalk Radio (a gender equity project in which teen girls profiled women with careers in math and science) and Allegheny Voices (in which teens profiled community elders, many over 80), both of which have been widely distributed.

The estimated cost ceiling to accomplish this project is \$300,000, including (i) \$60,000 for acquisition of studio and field equipment, (ii) \$60,000 for acquisition and distribution of 600 Internet radios, (iii) \$60,000 for managed audio server bandwidth during a 2-year period, and (iv) \$60,000 for training and instruction over a 2-year period. While we estimate that one full-time equivalent employee will be supported for two years, the most significant employment aspect of this program is the provision of core skills to participating youth.