Applicant Name: Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio Inc

Project Title: Broadband Education and Empowerment Project

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

There is an impending need across the nation and in Ohio to increase both the awareness of the benefits of broadband and training efforts to educate the public on how to effectively utilize the robust resources provided by it. Nationally, consumers are saying “I don’t need broadband.” (Consumer Insights to America’s Broadband Challenge A Research Series from Connected Nation, Inc. October 13, 2008). The state of Ohio claims “The largest barrier to broadband adoption is a lack of awareness about broadband benefits”. Over three quarters of Ohio’s residents that have broadband access claim they will not upgrade to broadband while another 12% of Ohioans don't even know if they have broadband available to them.

Western Reserve Public Media of northeast Ohio, Southwestern Ohio Instructional Technology Agency (SOITA) of Dayton, WGTE Public Media of Toledo and Instructional Technology Services of Central Ohio (ITSCO) of Columbus currently provides technology integrated professional development workshops to K-12 educators. In partnership, these four 501 (c)(3) organizations propose to expand their workshop offerings to the general public through an initiative titled, “Broadband Education and Empowerment Project” (BEEP). The project partners form a collaboration of two Ohio public television stations and two Ohio Educational Technology Agencies, uniquely positioned to establish BEEP and advance the BTOP statutory purposes to provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions, job-creating strategic facilities and vulnerable populations as well as stimulating demand for broadband access.

BEEP will develop and facilitate free, hands-on training workshops that will educate and empower Ohioans in the value and use of broadband technology emphasizing the value of broadband in everyday living. A project team of Education Directors from the main project partners will lead the initiative. A Program Manager, four Regional Coordinators and Training Facilitators will be hired to manage, coordinate and conduct the training and promotional efforts. Twenty regional outreach sites, located throughout the state at existing Educational Service Centers, County Workforce Development Agencies, Universities and Career Centers, will offer a suite of broadband workshops designed to increase a person’s knowledge about specific broadband applications and giving the necessary skills to effortlessly and effectively utilize the applications. BEEP has the following integrated goals:
1. establish a network of potential adopters and under-users of broadband

2. educate users on the value and ubiquitous nature of broadband

3. empower users to utilize broadband to meet their individual needs

4. immerse users in hands-on interaction with broadband applications

5. build 21st century skills to promote personal and professional growth

BEEP training sessions will target educators, job seekers and seniors focusing on two main themes to meet the needs of the audiences: global communication (e.g. social networking and bookmarking, videoconferencing, shared documents, etc.); and life skills (e.g. email, internet searching, health and government information, workforce essential skills such as resume building resources, career/employment research, etc.). Sessions will take on various forms, some as stand-alone single sessions others via a multi-session series format. Continued support for these new adopters will be in the form of a unique broadband enhanced portal which will include video tutorials, web-based “refresher” classes to further explore concepts presented in the face to face classes and worksheets with instructions for using specific tools (e.g. email). To further model direct broadband applications, additional digital resources and communication tools will allow for interaction (e.g. Q&A) among end users and project team well beyond the class. This sustained approach not only encourages deeper understanding of applications but will promote ongoing utilization of broadband beyond the classroom into users homes and businesses.

BEEP partners also propose an extensive outreach component that combines television broadcast promotion with print materials. Promotional efforts will build broadband awareness and promote BEEP classes to the over 4.2 million urban and rural residents within the target areas of the project who are non adopters of broadband and the more than 118,000 residents who do not have broadband available to them. These established distribution channels of the project partners will reach community members representing all ages, incomes and educational levels representing African-American, Hispanic and Caucasian populations. It is anticipated 62,500 residents and businesses will either become a new adopter of broadband service or become a new broadband end-user through the life of this project at an estimated cost of less than $33.00 per new subscriber.

Each BEEP partner has over 40 years of providing resources and training to K-12 educators in the state of Ohio. Traditionally the state of Ohio, through eTech Ohio, provided a large percentage of each partner’s funding. Due to the severely recessed economy and a state budget deficit, each partner agency has
experienced budget reductions of nearly 50%. This proposal intends to expand the partner’s traditional K-12 educator client base into a more general public client base. All Ohio citizen’s, including displaced workers seeking to improve their workforce skills and community members in the senior population that have limited options in learning broadband applications will have equal access to broadband technology and applications workshops. Beep’s total project costs are 2,025,058 million dollar over a two year period and will create 13 new jobs. Combining workshop fees, additional regional outreach sites and private support grants will sustain the project beyond BTOP’s funding.