

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** OneCommunity

**Project Title:** Connect Your Community

**Project Type:** Sustainable Adoption

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### **Executive Summary**

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The Knight Center of Digital Excellence, a project of OneCommunity supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, seeks funding for Connect Your Community (CYC), a collaborative effort with organizations in ten U. S. cities ranging in size from Detroit and Miami to Aberdeen, SD and Zanesville, OH. CYC's broad purposes are to: a) directly assist more than 38,000 disadvantaged households to cross the digital divide from disconnected to broadband-connected; b) demonstrate the efficacy of a community-based approach to drive broadband adoption in low-income, low-education, and disadvantaged populations in varied community settings; and c) develop and share curriculum, tools, best practices, and collaborative relationships for ongoing work in these and other communities.

The Knight Center and its partners incorporate the experience and guidance of Community Technology practitioners in an approach that's high-touch and intensive on a local scale but broad-reaching and replicable nationally. The 10 Lead Community Agencies (LCAs) named in this project are strong organizations, committed to serving vulnerable and disadvantaged clients in their communities. LCAs include Urban Leagues, libraries, educational institutions, economic development agencies, human service and housing organizations. Thanks to the strength of the Knight Center and these local partners, CYC has deep community roots, experience built on existing relationships, and the ability to sustain growth well beyond the project's funding period.

Community support and best practices are part of the mission of the Knight Center which was funded by the Knight Foundation with a five-year \$25M grant. The Center is working with communities across the country to develop public-interest broadband projects, promote community-aligned applications, and make resources broadly available to others. The Center will provide program guidance, reporting and strategic resourcing for all partners.

National Collaborators supporting key aspects of CYC include the Benton Foundation (best practices), Alliance for Community Media (online content/collaboration), PBS (marketing awareness and content hosting), Angela Siefer (training content and policies), Jim Baller (municipal access), Karen Peltz Strauss (accessibility tools and practices), PC Rebuilders and Recyclers (affordable hardware) and TechSoup

(technology guidance and software). Dr. Kate Williams, Assistant Professor at the Univ of Illinois, a leading authority on program evaluation, will design evaluation methods for the project.

Pew Internet & American Life Project continues to report a digital divide in America, especially among people over 65, those with little education, with household incomes of \$25,000 or less, people with disabilities, African Americans, and those in rural areas. These are precisely the people that will be directly served by the CYC project through neighbor-to-neighbor programs in 10 diverse communities. CYC will support communities with a combined population of 3.3 million people: larger cities like Detroit, Miami, Cleveland, St. Paul, smaller cities like Akron, Biloxi/Gulfport, Lexington and Bradenton, and rural regions like the 12 counties around Aberdeen and 10 counties in Appalachian Ohio. Together the residents of these communities are 35% African American (compared with US 12.4%); 32.9% have household incomes of less than \$25K (compared with US 22%); 52.6% have a HS degree or less (compared with US 45.5%). Proposal details will describe how the Detroit and Appalachian projects will support communities where 55.1% and 63.6% of the populations have a HS degree or less. The Aberdeen project supports a region with only 6.1 residents per square mile. The Miami project will outreach to a community where 44.1% of the households earn less than \$25K a year. A partnership with the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technologies will ensure that all projects include provisions for serving people with disabilities.

The LCAs and their community partners will operate 22 local CYC Work Groups, each with a team of 5 CYC Corps members, a supervisor, a training facility and a distinct geography or constituency to serve. Using a case management approach, each Work Group will ENGAGE, TRAIN, EQUIP and SUPPORT between 1250-1750 disadvantaged households during the project with near equal weight placed on each element of the adoption process.

In 8 of the CYC communities, collaborations have already produced plans for public interest broadband projects that will provide affordable access, a critical element of this adoption plan. Network builds with free service tiers are already funded and being developed in portions of Akron, Lexington and Cleveland. Planned broadband pilots in Detroit and Miami will directly align with this project. BIP/BTOP network expansion proposals are being submitted for northern Ohio (including Cleveland, Zanesville and Akron), Miami-Dade County, NE South Dakota and Detroit/Wayne County, with all proposals including stated community benefits and CYC endorsements. St. Paul is working on a Round 2 BTOP submission.

CYC will recruit and train at least 38,000 people, employ a staff of 136, generate approximately 50 indirect jobs, and prepare participants to be competitive in today's information-centric workforce. Overall cost of the project is \$31,894,873 with an average BTOP household cost of \$666 including a

\$125 set-aside for LCAs to use to directly support home adoption and a cost per person served of \$303. CYC partners will work to reduce that cost and raise the program's value through collaborations with suppliers and local funding resources.

CYC maximizes sustained home broadband adoption to the most vulnerable citizens in America through a network of urban, suburban, and rural partnerships. It leverages, to the best possible degree, Recovery Act projects that are expanding technology accessibility to the CYC regions.