Applicant Name: National Black Programming Consortium

Project Title: Public Media Corps

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

The Public Media Corps builds upon innovative initiatives that expand the reach and impact of public media in the form of a new, national service driving greater demand for information and resources that can only be delivered via broadband. Over the last 4 years, the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) has convened over 500 media professionals in its innovative New Media Institute (NMI), a resource for emerging and transitioning media makers from diverse communities. Since its inception, the NMI’s mission has been two-fold: building capacity in a new generation of creators of social issue media and broadening the pool of stakeholders in institutions of public meaning.

We seek now to extend that impact into strategies to encourage sustainable broadband adoption for the hardest-to-reach populations in our societies. This includes communities of color—Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, African American and Asian American—as well as Americans with low incomes and senior citizens. We see our goals of capacity-building, information access and leadership as inextricably linked with that of sustainable broadband adoption. By training and employing 200 media makers and citizens from such diverse communities and placing them back in those communities to build tools and expand knowledge, we aim to demonstrate the power and pertinence of broadband technology.

The reasons cited for non-participation in broadband are far-reaching, with cost and availability on one side of the spectrum, and a lack of interest in or perceived lack of value from these new services aligned on the other. The lack of perceived relevance is the most vexing for those of us who feel strongly that equal opportunity is and has always been inseparable from equal access to information. This is the reason that public education so animated and shaped civic discourse in the last century and that the Internet and other information systems derived from it will continue to do so in this one. This is also why we seek to combine the resources of our public media partners throughout this targeted campaign to bring the tools, conversations and new broadband entry points into living rooms, community halls and public radio and television stations across the country in meaningful ways.
With 30 years of relationships with independent producers, national public radio and television stations and organizations serving the wider public media system, NBPC and its partners are well-positioned to leverage these assets, into a new service to powerfully impact those communities persistently underserved by traditional information access systems by building awareness and broadband adoption strategies.

The purpose of each of the scalable and targeted engagement campaigns designed by PMC Fellows will be a) digital literacy and awareness; b) access to life-improving information; and c) capacity-building and expanded employment horizon for a new cadre of Americans looking for pathways to building a better quality of life.

Our partners bring many valuable resources to the table in the form of proof-of-concept initiatives that have been successful. We now seek to give these projects national scale. One example is a dynamic Bay Area project initiated by our partner KQED, “QUEST,” a science project that includes many content modules of inherent interest to low-income families. Content about children’s exposure to lead paint or environmental equity and rights, in this example, form the basis of a potentially robust resource to engage our target populations and create demand for even richer resources. PMC Fellows can build on and train around these resources, extend them into communities and connect them to other public institutions across the country. QUEST has also proven that its compelling model can move people online. Since it’s inception in 2007, QUEST media have had a total distribution of more than 25 million viewers/listeners-3.8 million via new media/online distribution mechanisms. In an impressive expansion, QUEST’s web audience grew from 18% of its total audience in Season 1 to 33% of its total audience in Season 2.

In other words, the PMC seeks to strengthen adoption by starting in familiar terrain—a community or broadcast setting—and then show how broadband delivers a deeper dive into topics, issues, and debates. Traditional broadcast content delivered on broadband platforms is only the beginning of what is possible. Campaigns will be accompanied by mobile applications, social networks and extensive community mapping projects as needed and appropriate.

We are pleased that our partners represent the vast diversity of the populations we seek to impact as well as those that make up our nation. Many of them are well known for the extraordinary and pioneering work they have done in service to American families. Others, such as American University’s Center for Social Media, are leaders in new media and ethics and will provide a rigorous focus on impact measurement, sustainability and accountability.
Covering fifteen geographic areas from around the United States with a total population of approximately 41.6 million people, PMC activities will attempt to generate 3 million new broadband subscribers and encourage nearly a million individuals to become regular users of public computing facilities. Using a grassroots outreach campaign strategy, PMC Fellows, working with stations and local organizations and armed with locally specific digital media toolkits, will meet the targeted community members where they live, play, learn and work. In addition to employing 200 Fellows, the PMC will save two jobs and generate seven new ones and support a variety of small businesses that will provide accounting, human resource and technology services to the project.

We have determined the cost for PMC to be $13.8 million to launch and implement the program to its fullest capacity. We respectfully request $11,571,886 from BTOP.