

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Syndign Company

Project Title: Assist Businesses and Consumers with Network, Technical, and Computer Options

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

Statement of the Problem

Adoption of broadband has been hurt by the amount of technical expertise that a user needs to understand in order to implement a working system. Many early adopters who considered themselves technically savvy abandoned broadband because they could not overcome the technical hurdles of putting together a network or even a computer system that would successfully connect to the internet and then provide a satisfying experience. Because of these early adopters' frustrations, others who listened to their horror stories then decided to wait until they felt the technical bugs were worked out. However, implementing these systems so that they perform reliably depends on having people that understand how the systems, security, connectivity, hardware, and applications work. As an information technology manager, I have found that many people understand the jargon and can pass themselves off as an expert in information technology; however, many of these people lack the hands on skills needed to successfully implement networks that work. We need to provide direct technical assistance to both home and business users to implement broadband systems and then assist with the day to day operation of the systems to ensure they operate reliably.

We need to provide technicians that will go into the homes and into the businesses to meet and work with the users so the users will know their options. Our approach needs to go beyond providing verbal expertise and support. We need to implement the systems, get them working, and then support them as necessary to ensure they continue to operate reliably. For consumers this may mean explaining to them the options of broadband that they have in the area, and what systems they need to access the internet. This could be a computer, a handheld device, or even a network (wired or wireless) so they can access the information they need. And then helping them implement their system. Over time, many home systems are affected by the degradation of their systems due to malware, security problems, viruses, hardware problems, software problems, drivers, etc.; and these users need to be taught how to protect and service their equipment. Because many users cannot solve these problems on their own, they need to have technical experts that can assist them either onsite or remotely to keep their systems running optimally.

For small businesses, working on systems usually falls to the most technically astute person in the office and they may or may not really understand the systems, applications, and backup/disaster recovery systems needed. Besides, it is usually a side job that they perform and is not their primary expertise. As complicated as home systems may be, business systems are usually much more complicated because of the need for increased security, sharing of data, interaction of applications, and backup/disaster recovery plans. Many businesses may even have a server that needs to be implemented or supported. The most technically astute person in the office usually does not have the technical training or expertise to understand all that is required to successfully protect and operate the complicated systems needed to run the business. Especially with the push for health care providers to now implement electronic health records, the existing systems in most physicians' offices cannot be expected to handle the applications and communications necessary to successfully implement these applications.

Increasing the Acceptance and Implementation Rate

Using over \$3 million to hire technicians to help home and business users select their broadband options and to set up their internal systems; their broadband connectivity will be more useful and less frustrating. Rather than trying to always fix the technology problems, they can concentrate on using the systems to gather and disperse data. After implementing the systems for the users whether home or business, we would provide support to keep the systems operational either by onsite visits or by remotely accessing the systems. While this expertise may be available in many areas, it is usually very expensive to both home users and small businesses to contract these services and in most cases exceeds the cost of the systems themselves. By using this stimulus money to help offset these labor costs up front, the users can ensure that they have systems that will work and that are maintained. Information technology specialists charge from \$75 - 150/hour for this type of assistance. Using the stimulus money, the labor charged to the users will be reduced by 70-90% to enable them to afford the service and get the technical expertise they need.

Areas to Be Served

Our target area will be Georgia, Tennessee along the I-75 corridor, and Alabama along the I-20 corridor. In both the I-75 and I-20 corridors, the population is expected to grow due to the building of new automotive plants. This means more users and small businesses will need expertise in communicating using the internet. Many parts of Georgia are very rural and lack any technical experts necessary to help home and business users implement broadband.

We plan to work with the chamber of commerce's in each location to set up awareness seminars in their town. We will do at least one seminar per technician per month and expect about 30 potential users to attend each of the seminars. This will help spread the word about our program and enable our technicians to then work one on one with home users and business users. With fifteen technicians, our awareness training could be presented to over 10,000 users in a two year period.

Qualifications

As an information technology manager at a major university and information technology business owner, I have the expertise to understand what is needed to implement information technology and to keep it working.