Executive Summary

a) Problem Addressed - The City of El Paso is located in El Paso County, TX, the county seat. El Paso is the 6th largest city in Texas, 22nd largest city in the United States and the largest US city on the 2,000 mile US/Mexico border. According to the US Census Bureau American Community Survey Profile 2005:

- El Paso County is the 3rd poorest large county in the US, City of El Paso, 4th poorest city
- 26% of families are living below poverty level vs 14.2% in TX, 10.2% in the US.
- The population of E Paso County is 708,319, about 81.7% are Hispanic – Mexican/American
- Median household income is $32, vs $44,000 in TX and $48,000 in the US
- 76% of the population, over the age of 5 speaks a language other than English at home

Broadband adoption rates in El Paso have been historically low. The IPED survey using telephone call methodology reported that of 609 residents polled, 56.9% listed cost as a reason they did not have a home PC connected to the Internet, and 71.6% used dial-up Internet access.

We did 2,268 face to face surveys to supplement the IPED study, to include Colonias. These areas are considered below the poverty level with the median income being $25,275. Survey results show that 80% do not have PCs connected to the Internet at home, 63% would like to have an Internet connected PC at home, 57% are interested in free training and 56% are interested in a refurbished PC. They are willing to pay an average of $15 per month for Internet access and $15 per month for a PC. This clearly shows that access and cost of Internet service and PCs and lack of training are significant barriers to entry.

b) Overall approach to addressing the need and our innovative approach - EPCC is a key part of the Digital El Paso Pilot (Pilot). Launched in Nov 2007, the Pilot provides free wireless Internet access to about 5,000 previously unserved residents in a 3 sq mile area of downtown El Paso, in the 79901 zip code, the 2nd poorest zip code in the US. The goal was to understand broadband adoption and benefits. The programs developed to support the Digital El Paso Pilot are the foundation for our plan. This innovative plan expands and enhances established programs includes collaboration with key community partners to provide the following services to support and drive broadband adoption:
1) Orion 501 (c)3 is a Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR) EPCC students refurbish PCs, load MS OS/office suite, add a wireless card and recycle PCs to be used by the community.

2) Refurbished PCs tied to completion of computer literacy training are offered as loaners to the community.

3) Tech Counseling Service will provide the community with a knowledgeable advisor to help them understand how to buy the best fit PC, based on the intended use and their budget.

4) Technology Empowerment Program (TEP) ties PC loan/purchases to to completion of financial literacy training for individuals who qualify under federal poverty guidelines and meet credit worthiness, using the El Paso Collaborative for Community & Economic Development Funding Institution (CDFI) revolving loan fund.

5) www.digitalelpaso.com connects users to a community Intranet with local content, resources, and services with links to national and global content and resources. Content includes diet, wellness, and access to healthcare and will be provided in Spanish/English. EPCC Student Technology Services (STS) will provide help desk and tech support in Spanish/English.

6) Community Training Centers will provide credit and non-credit training and certifications for high tech, high skill and green jobs. The addition of high quality video conferencing will create virtual communities between geographically dispersed El Paso locations. Existing training centers at key partner locations will provide additional access points for all citizens.

7) Marketing and Outreach will use all services described above as channels to deliver Digital El Paso print and media messaging.

8) Content created by EPCC will be developed and offered online to train workforce for 21st Century high-tech, high-skill and Green jobs. Tuition assistance will be offered.

c) Area(s) to be served/Population Demographics - This project will serve El Paso City and County, a combined population of nearly 750,000, expected to increase to 850,000 by 2012 with the expansion of nearby Ft. Bliss. El Paso’s population is approximately 80% Hispanic, with a per capita income of $19,186. We believe that because we are leveraging and expanding proven programs, we can quickly find routes to market and serve households and small businesses with our plan. Our target areas are the communities surrounding 6 EPCC Campus sites, 5 Upper Rio Grande Workforce Solutions sites, 5 HACEP, 78 Colonias in 11 unincorporated communities, Federal Empowerment zones located within El Paso County, and the Tigua Tribal Business Center. Our wireless Internet access will provide mobility access for fire, police, sheriffs, emergency responders, and homeland security.
d) Qualifications of the Applicant – El Paso Community College (EPCC) has demonstrated leadership in technology adoption and the infrastructure, capacity, experience, and expertise to provide program support and reporting to gauge progress. The experience gained with the Digital El Paso Pilot and the community partnerships that EPCC brings to the table provide the solid support needed to drive broadband adoption and sustain programs that will leverage community resources to bring El Paso into the 21st Century.

e) Jobs to be saved or created – estimated 61 FTE Direct; as workforce programs ramp up we will expect indirect job creation for % increase in broadband adoption.

f) Overall cost of the proposed project – $9,564,457 ($7,880,798 + $1,683,659 Match)