Executive Summary

This Community Broadband Learning Program for Older Adults will provide connected learning resources and training programs, focused in California but readily spread across the entire ARRA US landscape through interested community partners. It will target the 22% of US adults are non-Internet users (Pew, April 2009), and especially the 45% of that group that is over 65 (Pew, April 2009).

Nonusers are not online for core challenges of relevance and perceived benefits:

As a non-user, why not go online?

- 22% say they are not interested in getting online (down from 33% in 2007).
- 16% say they can’t get access where they live.
- 10% said it was too expensive.
- 7% said they believe the internet is difficult to use.
- 6% say they don’t need or want it.
- 5% said they don’t have a computer.
- 4% said they were busy or have no time for the internet.
- 4% said they think the internet is a waste of time. (Pew, April 2009)

How do we make the web more relevant to non-users? How do we bring them connection to the world through their local lives?
Connection information and anxiety-reducing tools and training exist – but aren’t widely available in seniors’ lives. There are lots of great resources online and in-person to teach seniors about the web, but are not necessarily easy to use, easy to find, or self-paced. There are books and community programs available, but not widely distributed or used. Adult learning theory emphasizes anxiety-reduction and self-paced learning, but many current broadband learning modes don’t deal with these issues. And lots of learning tools are available free online, but it is a bit ‘chicken and egg’ – if you don’t know how to find them, you would never think to seek them.

Approach and Innovation:

With this Program, we want to bring all the great tools – often now inexpensive and/or open source – into the context and lifestyles of local users. The innovation here is in connecting the digital dots.

• Connecting the resources – a wide variety of “how to” resources are available, but not widely disseminated on a uniform quality of delivery to communities
• Connecting the partners – this program can bring in a wide variety of experts and resources, to which communities do not now have access
• Connecting the tools – open-source management systems now make this a cost-effective delivery versus custom systems even 1-2 years ago
• Connecting ARRA partners – with so many great programs launching from this initiative, this provides a timely expansion into each of these community partners

Using Maremel’s expertise in community training, video, and online tools, we will put together a cost-effective and engaging learning program that community groups can launch to deliver education through live programs and online:

• Introductory DVDs for older adults to watch in their own home (98% DVD household penetration rate)
• Monthly live workshop/seminar packages for live community partner programs, delivered through community organizations via our “train the trainer” programs
• Free online monthly webinars for personal learning at home at their own pace
• Mentor programs for new learners, senior to senior
Online, self-paced learning programs (using many open source tools to keep the costs down)

Pre-structured open-source driven Web portal with custom areas for each program and ability (Year 2) to create user generated learning modules for their own and other communities to share.

All of these programs will have pre- and post-test to measure impact, as well as gather data on the types of issues and solutions that work in diverse communities.

Areas, Targets, Reach, and Effect: Our initial target is adults 65 and older, the group with the largest penetration gap; however the same delivery can reach adults in their 40s and 50s as well. Of our 3.9 million seniors just in the state of California (10.8% of the population), we assume from the Pew data (2009) that 70% of California seniors are not Internet users (est. 2.7MM). We will focus on Southern California for our primary efforts, targeting approximately 200 seniors groups with direct program availability and another 200-300 libraries, targeting 13,500 potential new users reached by our training 360 trainers by the end of year 2. We conservatively assume that without direct train-the-trainer activities, another 450 organizations will disseminate our resources outside of Southern California, with lower results but lower costs, with direct impact. We assume with just this propagation, the program will generate 108,075 new broadband users. However, we assume some multiplier from older adults teaching each other and related attitude shifts, which should have an amplifying network effect in bringing more older adults online. The program also can gain reach through the other ARRA Broadband partners, as well as parents and teachers, for minimal variable cost.

Applicant Qualifications: Maremel has been producing live and broadband learning content on digital media tools since 2005, and its president has launched two video portals for clients in the past 2 years. Maremel also has relationships with top research institutions and senior leadership with insight and energy into community learning. Its president, the primary creative and technological force in this endeavor, brings extensive experience ranging from video production through live community educational programs through adult-focused education at UCLA for many years.

Jobs to be saved or created: Directly, the program will provide 3 fulltime and 7 part-time jobs. However, as local users of the programming expand these programs, they could create jobs in the local community. These programs also will provide training opportunities for both community instructors and older adults in developing skills.

Overall Cost: $1,189,313 -- $853,063 BTOP