Applicant Name: Elauwit Community Enhancement Foundation LLC

Project Title: The Elauwit Foundation Broadband Adoption Project

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

The business of being a citizen is increasingly conducted online. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 69% of American adults have used the Internet as means of dealing with the current hard economic times. They have gone online to search for employment, housing, bargains, training and education, financial advice and to track government benefits. (“The Internet and the Recession” by Lee Rainie and Aaron Smith, July 15, 2009)

As of April 2009, 63% of American households claimed broadband adoption. Yet, only 35% of Americans households with annual incomes of $20,000 or less enjoyed the benefits of life online, according to Pew. (“Home Broadband Adoption 2009” by John Horrigan, June 17, 2009) This Digital Divide is real and vast, though in the case of many communities it can be measured in terms of city blocks.

Housing Authority populations confront several obstacles to broadband adoption. Survey respondents often cite lack of computer ownership, prohibitive subscription costs and lack of computer literacy as reasons for reticence concerning the Internet. They also attributed a much lower value to the Internet than those in other communities.

Elauwit Community Enhancement Foundation, LLC is a nonprofit formed to leverage its expertise in providing cost-effective broadband solutions to vulnerable populations. We have previously applied for and implemented approximately $100 million in grant awards for 50 non-profit entities, and we are one of the few providers experienced in deploying a wireless architecture for Housing Authorities, having done so as recently as August 2009 for the Columbia, SC Housing Authority. Project management is in place, able to implement BTOP grant awards utilizing local vendors for equipment installation.

Elauwit is seeking $151,948,822 total funds to provide wireless mesh networks and stimulate their utilization, $42,658,850 of which will be used to establish Public Computer Centers. Our integrated approach seeks to reach an estimated 117,010 potential subscribers across 93 Housing Authority affiliates, community anchor institutions and public safety agencies. By adopting this consortium strategy, Elauwit will be able to negotiate superior purchasing arrangements, eliminate significant on-site management costs and concentrate accountability in a single entity.
Thirty-three percent of Housing Authority residents live in buildings with 300 units or more. Only 12% of residents live in buildings of 50 units or less. These individuals live in centralized, densely populated and pre-existing communities. They are high in lack-of-use predictors and face overlapping needs, but their concentrations also provide a perfect opportunity to efficiently usher underserved citizens into the information age.

As experience and research have shown, broadband access does not equal broadband adoption. At a June 17 symposium hosted by the Internet Innovation Alliance at the Washington Newseum, a panel discussion reached consensus that, not only should the Department of Housing and Urban Development include broadband installation in all public housing renovations, but that broadband access should be accompanied by educational programs stressing the relevancy of the Internet to individuals’ lives.

Embracing that conclusion, Elauwit will establish and staff Public Computer Centers, open to all Housing Authority residents. These centers will create 2,709 new workstations and serve 127,009 residents across 49,267 households, acting as access points to the Internet, as well as classrooms.

Elauwit, in conjunction with Housing Authorities, has developed several programs designed to promote sustainable broadband adoption. These strategies complement the infrastructural development and establishment of Public Computer Centers and are tailored to the characteristics of individual Housing Authorities. Each institution will have its own Web portal. More than a homepage, the portal will feature a dashboard layout, easing navigation to relevant community resources.

Elauwit’s proposal includes a Laptop Administration Pilot Program (LAPP) for 10% of household units per Housing Authority. Residents in these communities will have the opportunity to enroll in courses, working toward a proficiency certification. Upon completion and certification, residents will be supplied with their own laptops. The LAPP process is designed to boost the profile of computing within the community, to highlight its usefulness when integrated into one’s lifestyle and to create a core group of high-level adopters within the area.

Elauwit’s proposal also addresses the complementary issue of public safety, giving Housing Authorities the option of requesting Broadband-integrated security cameras, which would enable police and other first responders to view the camera feeds in real-time or call up past recordings, giving them a hefty advantage currently unavailable.

Elauwit has incorporated three years of free broadband access and maintenance into our proposal. Bandwidth, maintenance and staffing costs beyond the three-year period will be maintained through a combination of savings to current Housing Authority telecommunications budgets, Web portal advertising revenue and the eventual subscriptions of individual community members. After the initial three-year period, Elauwit will provide subscription Internet service to the community at approximately 33% of the cost compared to national providers. Due to the bolstering of access, education and perceived value, we believe that adoption rates within these communities will correspond to existing national figures as will the desire to invest in the services.
Elauwit estimates that 1,844 jobs will be created or saved in Year One, 1,737 of them for high-wage engineers. Three hundred and sixty-three positions, 148 engineering positions and 215 computer instructor jobs, will continue and are sustainable in Year Two and beyond.