Of the District of Columbia's eight wards, three wards comprise the most distressed part of the city. Almost 40 percent of the residents of the District of Columbia—225,000 people—live in Wards 5, 7 and 8; in those wards, one in five people is unemployed. Not surprisingly, broadband adoption and digital literacy rates are also extremely low. Focusing primarily in these wards, the District of Columbia, through two broad and innovative partnerships led by the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) and the Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC), will provide the full range of elements necessary to transform a person with no interest in or knowledge of computers and broadband into a lifelong, effective broadband user. Participants will receive broadband education, skills training, educational and appropriate content, a computer and broadband connection in the home, and ongoing support. This Sustainable Broadband Adoption project, called DC Broadband Education, Training and Adoption (DC-BETA) will reach 6,800 residents for only $4,650,000 in federal funds.

A. Statement of Problem/Need

The District's computer training capacity is severely over-subscribed. DCPL provided computer training to 7,600 customers in 2009. Even with the help of community-based nonprofit computer training centers, resources are insufficient: training classes are oversubscribed and capacity is inadequate for demand. For example, when DCPL, in partnership with local nonprofits, including training provider ByteBack, announced a new training program for senior citizens that would provide content, a computer and broadband service in the home, nearly 200 responded within days. Even with the addition of more seats, people had to be turned away. 'We just don't have enough seats,' said Kelley Ellsworth, director of ByteBack. 'Training is always in demand, but when people understand the benefits of a true end-to-end, all-inclusive program, they come out in droves. They really see how it will help their lives.' The root of the enormous need for training and broadband access in DC is easy to understand. At 15.8 percent in December 2009, DC has one of the worst state unemployment rates in the country; in its underserved area (Wards 5, 7 and 8), 21.5 percent of residents are unemployed. In Ward 5, per capita income was $21,551, or 68.1 percent of the national average (based on 2003 data, the most recent available). In Ward 7, per capita income was $19.035, or 60.2 percent of the national average. In Ward 8, per capita income was $14,137; only 44.72 percent of the national average. At such low income levels, the decision to purchase a computer and broadband Internet access is understandably one that many District residents cannot afford to make. They currently rely on publicly available computers.

B. Overall Approach

As the community made clear at the District's Community Broadband Summit in February 2010 (http://octo.dc.gov/DC/OCTO/About+OCTO/Opportunities/DC+Community+Broadband+Summit), true broadband adoption is the creation of new broadband users who persist in Internet use and realize the social and economic benefits offered by that use. A computer is not enough, and neither is a
To create a new broadband user, one must provide awareness of the benefits of broadband adoption, training, appropriate and valuable content, and a home-based computer with broadband connection. DC-BETA provides all those elements and ongoing support, for free. DC-BETA includes two related programs. The first program, through District of Columbia Public Libraries (DCPL), is focused on seniors, the disabled, at-risk youth, foster children, and the Hispanic community. The second program, through the Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC), is focused on low-income DCPL locations and five CCDC locations, all of which serve Wards 5, 7, and 8. Students use these locations to receive education services and to develop skills necessary in the job market. DCPL estimates that because of DC-BETA, it will increase the number of District residents it trains by over 20 percent, to 9,683 residents per year. This includes a 150 percent increase in number of disabled residents trained. End-to-end broadband adoption programs provided by this DC-BETA project will spur the demand for broadband in the District and help provide a key ingredient for economic growth: a skilled workforce.

D. Qualifications of the Applicant
Both DCPL and CCDC are established anchors in the nation's capital. In partnership with ByteBack, One Economy, First Time Computers and Cricket, DCPL is already training 400 senior citizens, providing content, computers and wireless broadband in the home, a model of what DC-BETA proposes. DCPL has 26 branches throughout the District serving 230,000 residents a year. CCDC serves over 4,000 residents annually in training programs and has facilities and equipment to support these students. CCDC also has a $144 million annual budget that provides for nationally recognized educational offerings. As one of the original grantees of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, DCPL has provided public access computers for over a decade. With a highly skilled Information Technology Department led by an experienced Chief Information Officer, and fully staffed by Microsoft certified systems engineers, DCPL has experience managing over 1,000 desktops and training 8,000 residents per year. DC-BETA will provide service to approximately 6,800 residents in the poorest sections of DC. Both CCDC and DCPL are ready to accept students immediately and have the capacity to sustain these efforts after the completion of the grant.

E. Jobs Saved/Created
DC-BETA will create 73 jobs, based on guidance provided by CEA.

F. Overall Cost
DC-BETA project cost is approximately $6,726,000, of which the District will provide a 30.9% cash match. The District requests federal grant funds of $4,650,000.