Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name:  WILDWOOD PROGRAMS, INC.

Project Title:  Wildwood Programs: Broadband Video for Human Services Agencies

Project Type:  Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

Human services agencies nationwide are struggling to meet expanding needs while budgets stagnate or contract. Agencies in New York are facing a predicted 5-18% cut in state funding while costs of doing business continue to rise. Even at current funding levels, staffing in skilled positions is less than adequate. This application seeks to equip three organizations that serve individuals with developmental and neurological disabilities to use broadband technologies to meet three critical challenges: continuing to provide effective services to clients, training and mentoring of staff, and maintaining overall operational efficiency. Wildwood Programs Inc., the applicant, is joined in this project by partners Living Resources and Catholic Charities Disabilities Services. The three organizations have a long history of working together. Each is participating fully and contributing match in proportion to the benefits received. Wildwood and partners provide educational services, family support, supported employment, adult education, day habilitation, in-home residential habilitation, and recreational, residential, service coordination, and educational consulting services to children, youth, and adults with an array of disabilities. Together, they provide services to approximately 3,350 clients, plus their families, in the Capital region of New York. Each agency has facilities spread throughout several counties. Covering an expanding geographic area means significant time and expense lost to travel. It also raises the cost and complexity of essential program supervision and training activities. While broadband is technically available at these facilities, end-user equipment to use it to full advantage is not. This project represents an opportunity to reengineer how human service agencies operate. With BTOP funding, Wildwood and partners will function as a case study, role model, and mentor promoting the adoption of broadband video throughout the human services sector in New York and beyond. Outcomes will include direct job saving and career training for both clients and staff in addition to greatly improved operational efficiency and service delivery. Moreover, this project will have an exponential impact on broadband adoption as our experience is shared throughout the human services industry. Because the need for new service models is acute, we estimate conservatively that 2% of similar agencies in New York will implement broadband video as a result of this project; approximately 14 additional community anchor institutions. Wildwood and its partners will conduct necessary network infrastructure upgrades and implement videoconferencing technology throughout all their facilities. Using interactive video over broadband IP, clients in both home care and residential facilities will have access to increased and improved services, including educational resources and job skills training. Staff will have new access to continuing education, improving their career mobility. Training workshops, program meetings, and consultations among staff will take place with more convenience and less travel. Client consultation services in various areas will be more consistently and comprehensively available. We anticipate that the
nearly all our 1300 clients as well as our 650 staff will utilize the enhanced broadband capabilities, as will the 2050 clients and 1150 staff of our partners. Throughout this process, Wildwood will assess and document the effectiveness of video for improving efficiency and service delivery. We will identify and meet technological and cultural challenges that may arise, accumulating and cataloging lessons learned and best practices. We will directly assist our partner organizations to implement the technology within their organizations and in collaborative efforts. The technology will unlock efficiencies in areas where resources can be shared, such as in delivering training. Finally, we will share our experience throughout the human services sector in our region. We will conduct training sessions on the use of broadband video at the annual conferences of professional organizations, including The NY State Rehabilitation Association, The NY State Association of Community and Residential Agencies, The NY Association of Persons in Supported Employment, and the Learning Disabilities Association of New York State. We will also present at the Annual National APSE Conference and use industry media and PR channels to further spread the impact of this technology nationally. The technology strategy proposed is both highly cost-effective and innovative. One video server hub will serve all three organizations, with network management provided by Wildwood. Four different endpoint technologies will be implemented, so that relative costs and benefits can be assessed. These include a few room style videoconference systems, a small number of executive style desktop telepresence units, and some ruggedized video phones. However, for the most part, the video endpoint technology being deployed consists of standards-compliant software running on conventional personal computers (Tandberg Movi on Macintosh). This approach ensures that a full array of broadband services will be available to the largest number of people, given the federal funding requested. With the technology proposed, staff and clients at the endpoint locations will be able to easily participate in video calls scheduled by others, such as classes, training sessions, and staff meetings. Point-to-point calls can be initiated without assistance from network administrators. If for example a professional therapist is needed for an ad hoc consultation at a residential facility when she is at another location, it will be a simple matter to initiate a video conference. This application requests a total of $855,057, almost all of which is for technology. As the capital investment proposed here yields operational efficiencies, Wildwood and its partners will organically reallocate scarce resources toward job preservation, job creation, and improved quality of service. The number of new jobs directly created within the three partner agencies will likely be modest. Jobs preservation is more likely. However, through this project, 3,350 individuals with disabilities will have new access to innovative and appropriate modes of education and training, which will improve their employment prospects. If an increment of only 5% of them find jobs as a result of this program, that represents an increase of 167 jobs. If, during the project period, as few as 2% of other human services agencies in New York implement similar systems, that number would expand to close to 600 new jobs. Wildwood Programs Inc. administers programs totaling over 30 million dollars in revenue each year. These programs vary in fiscal size from $6,500,000 to $300,000. Wildwood has a long history of managing projects of similar size and complexity to the one proposed. Wildwood also has the technical capacity to implement this project. It is considered by many to be a technologically advanced organization that serves as a model to other human services organizations. In fact, Wildwood's technology team has often consulted with other organizations to enhance their technological infrastructure. Likewise, Wildwood has also presented to organizations throughout New York on the topic of using technology to increase efficiency. This project promotes broadband adoption primarily by
demonstrating its potential to transform the operations and service delivery of agencies serving people with disabilities. It directly expands and enhances access to the hundreds of clients in residential facilities. Movi enabled video on PCs will also open new worlds for the hundreds of clients who live in private homes. This latter point is significant, as the state of New York warns of a staffing crisis in the near future threatening the 24x7 residential supervision model. The partners have long waiting lists of clients seeking residential care, but funding and staffing shortages conspire to push the burden of care back onto families. Broadband video connecting these families to support agencies will open the door to new models of service delivery, while also driving residential broadband adoption. Indeed, NY state agencies have recommended that organizations like Wildwood explore advanced technologies such as broadband video to mitigate the funding and staffing crises. Yet there is absolutely no road map for this adoption and no role models that we know of to serve as guides. BTOP SBA funding will enable Wildwood and its partners to pioneer new solutions and play this critical role for other agencies throughout NY. The national implications should not be overlooked.