Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** EL PASO, CITY OF

**Project Title:** Digital El Paso - Community Infrastructure Expansion Initiative

**Project Type:** Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

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**Executive Summary**

a) This application is being submitted by The City of El Paso (COEP) under the BTOP Comprehensive Community Infrastructure Program (CCI). b) The COEP in collaboration with its partners will provide and establish broadband access to the underserved and unserved middle mile within the city limits. This project will capture areas within the city that are without connection, while expanding to project partner sites among many others, covering 151.54 miles throughout the City. The four service areas are Central, East, Northeast and West. Combined, they include 64 census tracts; 344,443 people; one-half the City population of 107,553 households and 8001 businesses. Demographics: The COEP is the largest incorporated city within El Paso County, sixth largest city in the state of Texas and according to 2008 Census it is now the 21st largest city in the U.S. and the largest city on the U.S/Mexico border. The City's population is estimated to be 644,638 in 2009 and is expected to continue to increase over the next three years [U.S. Census]. According to a Scarborough Study that examined 13 local U.S. markets with higher-than average concentrations of Hispanic adults (80% COEP's population is Hispanic) El Paso, Dallas, Fresno and Harlingen are the least likely to have internet connection. Additionally El Paso and Harlingen spend the least on line as opposed to Hispanics in New York and San Francisco. The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development 2009 study reveals that 60% of COEP households do not have access to internet due to their inability to pay for the services as well as lagging behind the U.S. national average of household with broadband access which is 50%. Poverty Rate: August 2008 census estimates of cities and counties with populations more than 250,000 ranks the COEP 4th among the nation's poorest cities and El Paso County has the 3rd poorest poverty rate. The COEP/County region faces great challenges because of its high levels of poverty, as high as 72% below the Federal Poverty Line in some areas. There's also a vast shortage of computer resources for a majority of COEP and County residents as revealed by the Texas: Frontier of the Future (University of Texas at El Paso: February 2009) study shows that only 35% of households have high speed access to the internet, compared to 67.7% nationwide. Digital El Paso conducted their own door to door survey (August 2009) and out of 2,268 respondents, 20% had a connected PC at home and 80% did not, 3% reported having dial up, 63% indicated that they lacked a PC at home, 56% indicated they would like a refurbished PC and 57% would like to have free computer literacy training. The average rate the respondents are most likely to pay for internet service was $16 per month. And the average they could afford to pay for a PC was $16. The community's poor technology resources are directly linked to the region's lack of financial resources, educational attainment, job access, health disparities and quality, affordable housing. c) There are 107,553 households and 8,001 businesses in the service area. Many of these will receive access to broadband or at least affordable broadband for the first time. This includes HACEP low income
housing communities, which is approximately seven percent of the city’s population. d) This project is a collaborative effort that includes the following partners: COEP, El Paso County, El Paso Community College, Housing Authority of the City of El Paso (HACEP), Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande (Upper Rio), Canutillo Independent School District (CISD), El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), Ysleta Independent School District (YSID), Socorro Independent School District (SISD), University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), Medical Center of Americas which includes, Texas Tech, Univ Medical Center of El Paso, Medical Center of the Americas, also El Paso City Area Libraries (EPAL), El Paso Sheriff’s and Police Department, and a number of businesses throughout El Paso such as El Paso Electric, El Paso Chambers of Commerce, Intel, Cisco, Varay Systems, Cognent, Transtelco, Microsoft, Centro Familiar Salud La Fe (La Fe), El Paso Collaborative, Boys & Girls Club of El Paso, YWCA and various neighborhood associations and faith based organizations. e) Design, plan, build and implement a community wide Middle Mile fiber-based project providing key broadband and high speed connectivity throughout the City of El Paso to key community partners and anchor institutions. This connectivity will deliver high-speed Middle Mile/Backbone service and align with the current Digital El Paso Expansion Initiative to provide broadband service and access. f) Project services will be available to all anchor institutions and others including or similar to those listed above that want to participate. Last mile providers wishing to connect to the project will participate in a nondiscriminatory bid or other selection process established by the City. g) This initiative is part of a comprehensive middle mile plan to take advantage of cost savings and efficiencies of building out and managing a single system through leveraging current infrastructure and planned build out with new extended build out. The network type is a combination of fiber and wireless mesh network that allows the Digital El Paso Collaborative to expand and blanket the city/county area (1250 sq mi). This system will leverage currently existing infrastructure, providing gigabit Ethernet via fiber and allowing up to 54mb speeds via wireless-A/G/N broadband Internet. The technology standard for this network is MetroEthernet for Layer 2 traffic transport and segmentation and wireless mesh from Cisco Systems capable of 2.4ghz, 4.9ghz and 5.8ghz connectivity. Also this design will allow several types of networks to run on the same network via Separate SSIDs. This collaboration would allow each entity to have their own network segment while on the same technology thus improving connectivity, interconnection and an overall end user experience. h. The Director of IT at the COEP and the El Paso County/City CTO will lead the project along with their Network Planning Managers and other key IT staff at the COEP. The PC Lan Specialist III and Network Systems Manager will provide the technical oversight of the project. Both have the required expertise based on the fiber installation and connectivity work they have been involved in for the past 3 years, successfully connecting 26 facilities including public safety and other government facilities. The IT staff at EPCC was responsible for the design and development of the Orion Project which provides fiber optic connectivity to major K-12 and post-secondary educational institutions in the El Paso area. The County of El Paso’s IT Department was instrumental in the initial design, installation, implementation and the launching of the Digital El Paso Project. EP County continues to provide network operations, maintenance and technical expertise. This County Department offers services to the entire County ranging from help desk, technical support, business analysis, network design and web-team. Financial/Grant Management Qualifications: The COEP Financial Services Department receives federal awards, it is responsible for ensuring that adequate internal controls are in place to comply with applicable laws, regulations, contracts and grants related to those programs. A separate report is issued that includes a schedule of expenditures of federal awards,
findings and questioned costs and the independent auditors' report on compliance and on internal control over financial reporting. The City's Internal Auditor's Office reports directly to the City Manager. The internal auditor's primary responsibility is measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of the City's accounting and administrative controls. The City's internal accounting controls adequately safeguard assets and provide reasonable assurance of proper recording of financial transactions. The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the City of El Paso for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended August 31, 2007. i. Total cost of the Digital El Paso ' Community Infrastructure Expansion Initiative is $28,766,886 of which $28,766,886 is federal, $5,432,837 is cash match and $3,287,163 is in-kind match., for a 30.3% match. j. Expected subscriber projections include 105,516 households. k. Using methodology suggested by the Council of Economic advisors, 313 direct job-years, 200 indirect jobs and 113 induced jobs will be created.