Applicant Name: DIGITAL DIVIDE PARTNERS, LLC

Project Title: NYC Comprehensive Community Broadband Lifeline Network

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

Executive Summary

The Digital Divide Partners (DDP), and its public/private collaborative, seek to address the lack of significant broadband penetration and adoption in perhaps the single largest underserved community in the nation - the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the more than 600 Community Anchor Institutions located within the proposed Service Areas. The Community Anchor Institutions (CAI's) include public housing developments, resident associations, community centers, day care and senior centers, health care facilities and public schools that provide services to 112,000 families and over 300,000 people. Many of these institutions are without broadband service, and many others have inadequate capacity, applications and broadband support services. Furthermore, many of the CAI's with broadband service are unable to effectively deliver services to their constituents because 74% of the residents served do not have broadband at home. This is a compelling problem for the Anchor Institutions that is exacerbated by a low-income, vulnerable constituent population with an average family income of $23,187 and unemployment at a staggering 52%. Mere availability of traditional commercial broadband service has not, and cannot, solve this problem. What is needed is a holistic, community-centric approach to broadband deployment that takes the needs of the entire community into consideration with a strategic deployment of technology, applications, services and support systems. The NYC Comprehensive Community Broadband LifeLine Network solution proposed by this project has the potential to make a substantial impact upon this problem, and if effective, can be replicated for the other 148,000 NYCHA families in New York City, as well as in public housing and low-income urban communities across the nation. This project will bring affordable broadband, applications and services to 65 Service Areas located in 50 low-income neighborhoods in New York City. The Service Areas are densely populated, urban communities, consisting of 1,250 public housing high-rise buildings. The Community Broadband LifeLine Network will connect 607 Community Anchor Institutions that include 105 NYCHA resident associations and site manager offices, 73 community centers, 62 senior centers, 59 day care centers, 14 pre-schools, 126 public schools, 17 libraries and literary centers, 12 adult and child health clinics, 23 public safety agencies and 5 mental health clinics, among others. The DDP currently has a demonstration project up and running in four (4) NYCHA developments and 30 buildings, providing broadband services and unique applications targeted to the specific needs of the anchor institutions and residents. The DDP has partnered with both the South and North Bronx Citywide Council of Presidents which together represent all of the more than 80 NYCHA developments in the Bronx. They both are working with the DDP to expand the broadband pilot in association with other resident associations throughout NYCHA. The DDP is also working with its partner Per Scholas and their Comp2Kids program in the project's Service Areas. The Comp2Kids program bundles free computers for
middle school children with free Internet access at home provided by the DDP. Currently in 28 schools, Per Scholas and the DDP are targeting 126 schools located in the project Service Area for involvement in the program. The DDP Community Network delivers critical services and applications that enhance the entire broadband ecosystem for community institutions and the local populations they serve. The wireless network segmentation capability permits the sign-on portal, capacity and security protocols to be customized for up to 16 distinct user groups (SSID’s), including schools, healthcare services, resident associations, senior citizens, public safety agencies, local government services and other community-based user-groups. Applications and services developed with DDP partners will further differentiate the broadband service and begin to create broadband communities. For instance, One Economy has developed a number of award-winning broadband applications and programs targeted to vulnerable populations which provide information and resources regarding healthcare, jobs, education, housing and financial management for low-income residents. Per Scholas will provide technology training and help desk support, and SoBRO will provide distance learning opportunities, including G.E.D. and adult education curriculum on-line. The DDP partners will create communities of broadband users organized around common interests and needs. These broadband communities will have easy and direct access to specialized sites, services and applications that encourage broadband adoption and use in a holistic, community-centric context. The Community Broadband LifeLine Network will enhance the quality of life, creating economic, educational and employment stimulation and opportunity that is not and cannot be provided by the incumbent commercial operators who must be accountable to their shareholders, not the Community Anchor Institutions and their constituents. The DDP Community Network provides a LifeLine broadband service to CAI’s and underserved residents that permits them to access governmental and emergency services at no cost. The LifeLine broadband will encourage further broadband usage and stimulate adoption of the basic affordable broadband available on the Community Network. The DDP will offer two levels of service to each Community Anchor Institution, including a basic 50 Mbs service and an enhanced service of 100Mbs capacity to each CAI. The DDP’s residential broadband service is priced at $15 per month and includes Internet access, video intercom service, and broadcast digital TV channels, an important feature since the switch to digital inhibits reception in high-rise buildings where roof antennas are prohibited. The Applicant’s common carrier, open network, and application-neutral methodology is consistent and intended to exceed the obligation of interconnection and non-discriminatory access as contemplated under the NOFA. The current interconnection and non-discriminatory policy has the following characteristics: (1) wholesale access to all end users, (2) unfiltered bandwidth service, and (3) open interconnection. The DDP encourages interconnection of all types where technically feasible, is application agnostic, and neutral. High-capacity licensed and unlicensed radio links will provide 'Middle Mile' Internet capacity to CAI hub-sites located in targeted Service Areas. This wireless network will be augmented with new fiber network facilities and dark fiber made available from DDP partners for high-capacity redundancy and backhaul. The DDP will deliver 'Last Mile' service to end-users in a variety of ways, including wire-line and wireless access technologies. It is estimated that 15-20% of the target buildings are already wired with coax, CAT-5 and fiber optic cabling options. In other locations, the DDP will use wireless mesh technology to deliver broadband service. The project will also create Open Space Wi-Fi Cloud Corridors that cover each CAI service area, including common grounds and subsidiary CAI’s. The DDP collaborative includes a seasoned group of technology specialists with decades of experience in building, maintaining, and operating networks in underserved
areas. DDP team members include: Per Scholas, a award-winning technology training institute and the nation's leading nonprofit provider of recycled and refurbished computers, One Economy, the largest digital adoption organization in the country, Urban Communications Transport, a community-based ISP, the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Organization (SoBRO), a prominent, community-based development organization; City College of New York's WHCR Harlem Community Radio Station, Home Networking Services (HNS), a community network construction, installation, maintenance company, the South and North Bronx Citywide Council of NYCHA Presidents, and others. The DDP members have worked together on implementing broadband projects in undeserved New York City communities for the past five years, and individual team members have worked in the broadband, network and cable television industries for more than 25 years. The DDP was recently awarded a grant from the New York State CIO/OFT to expand their hybrid fiber/wireless broadband network to bring broadband service to 10,000 NYCHA homes in four boroughs of the City. The DDP projects that it will acquire 304 CAI customers by the end of the project period (Year 3), and 45,000 residential subscriber. The project will stimulate the creation of jobs and economic growth in the target service areas. The project will create 234 total jobs, including 75 directly and 159 indirectly and induced. The total project cost is $18,991,053.