Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: MYWAY VILLAGE, INC.

Project Title: Getting Atlanta Low-Income Seniors Online

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

a. The Problem: Only 30%, or 12 million, of America's 40 million seniors (65+ years old) use the Internet. An even lower percentage of poor, lesser educated, or minority Seniors go online. It is estimated that less than 10% of the 2,245 seniors and people with disabilities who live in the 11 low income housing developments of the Atlanta Housing Authority currently use broadband. For all practical purposes, low income seniors and people with disabilities in Atlanta are not using the Internet. There are several key reasons these "vulnerable" populations in Georgia and across the nation are not using the Internet. First, they have not yet been persuaded that they would enjoy practical and relevant benefits from using the Internet. Second, computers are perceived to be difficult to learn and to operate. Third, computers, connectivity and training are perceived to be costly to seniors on fixed incomes, particularly to low-income seniors.

b. Approach to the Problem: We use a proven Internet adoption program called Connected Living Adoption and Sustainability Program ('CLASP') which ties technology, training and support together in a holistic and senior-specific way. This program directly confronts traditional barriers to Internet use by seniors. First, we focus on relevance to the specific priority needs of individual seniors. For each senior, we identify the interests and experiences that can be advanced through the Internet and then illustrate that advancement, whether it is staying connected with children and grandchildren, writing and sharing memoirs, accessing information via the web or accessing health care or government services. We start by teaching the basics of e-mail, web access and practical applications relevant to daily living. Our individual and group training then develops the Internet foundation skills upon which other and more advanced skills and applications can be built. A case management system ensures that the personal objectives of each senior in the program is identified and achieved. Second, we make learning easy and convenient. The CLASP program uses off-line methods (video, individual instruction, discussion groups) as well as a simplified software to draw in seniors and demonstrate the practical benefits of the on-line world. Comprehensive instructional content is oriented to the actual interests of seniors. Finally, Internet awareness-raising and training is conducted by friendly 'Ambassadors' (trainers) in the very housing communities, community spaces and units where residents live, so learning takes place in comfortable surroundings with neighbors in a controlled and semi-social setting. Third, we eliminate cost as a barrier to Internet use. The computer learning center and all of the training are provided by the program and program partners. We also provide a voucher worth $400 toward a free computer and Internet connectivity to each program participant who attends education and training programs and passes an Internet literacy and skills evaluation. Throughout the program, we will make aggressive efforts to minimize the costs of devices, connectivity and instruction during the period of the BTOP subsidy so that seniors will have the advantage of the lowest possible
costs of Internet adoption when they are paying for the costs of service themselves. Our entire program is leading to an 'end game' where seniors acquire and pay for Internet services within the structure of the marketplace. Because subsidized senior housing is present across the country, the experiences of the demonstration projects made possible by this grant have the potential to be replicated (with appropriate local adjustments) throughout the country. We will evaluate the results of the awareness-raising and education and training efforts by creating a 2010 baseline of demographic and computer/Internet experience and use for each senior participating in the program and then use analytics and regular performance evaluations to determine progress and results. We will collect the experiences of each individual housing community so that a comprehensive knowledge-management database can be developed and experiences disseminated, including ideas and demonstrations developed by seniors themselves. c. Areas and Populations to be Served: Each senior building participating in this demonstration has a determinable number of senior and disabled residents. Exhibit B in the Supplemental Materials provides demographic information for and a brief description of each building. d. Qualifications of the Applicant: My Way Village, Inc., has designed and implemented successful training and adoption programs in senior housing settings in Illinois, Massachusetts and New Jersey over the past two years. The company has developed a user friendly "Connected Living Internet Portal" specifically for seniors that is an effective but not exclusive tool in training programs (see www.connectedliving.com). MyWay Village has documented in a very detailed manner its experiences in 2008 and 2009 deploying the same personal, one-on-one and on-line instructional programs that are the core of the proposed program. The company was founded by two entrepreneurs, Sarah Hoit and Christopher McWade, who each have built other companies that deployed large teams of teachers and trainers to multiple sites. e. Jobs Created: Each of the 11 buildings in this project will have a team to plan and implement the outreach, Internet awareness raising and education/training programs in small group and individual consultations to maximize the success of the programs in the building. Two full time Community Program Managers and two full time "Connected Living Ambassadors" will manage the program in the 11 buildings. In addition to these 4 full time time positions, the project will recruit, hire and train 5 part time Ambassadors. Since these positions don't exist in the marketplace at present, it is expected that all of the training managers will leave program employment after one year, placed in a similar position. The expectation is that all of the first and second year training managers at the demonstration locations will move into other senior buildings and provide experienced training services to senior buildings not involved in this demonstration. In addition, the project will support two administrative jobs as well and support external jobs related to the manufacture of equipment and the installation of the networks. The minimum number of full and part time jobs expected to be developed by this program is 9. f. The Cost of the Program: The overall cost of the proposed program will be $1,258,042. The costs of program components, described in great detail later in this proposal, are approximately: Equipment for computer learning centers in 11 building: $215,699 (17.1%) (an average of $19,609 per building); Equipment, broadband access, installation, and technical support costs for individual subscribers -- $494,122 (39.1%); Training program costs -- $494,421 (39.3%); and, Project administration and other costs -- $53,800 (4.3%). Of the total amount, the applicant and its partner the Atlanta Housing Authority are proposing to contribute $381,690 over two years or 30.3% in matching funds.