

## Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** NEW YORK, CITY OF

**Project Title:** NYC Connected Foundations

**Project Type:** Sustainable Broadband Adoption

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### Executive Summary

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Although broadband can play an instrumental role in the economic and social well-being of New York City, the most vulnerable NYC populations are far behind in adoption rates. For example, the City's Broadband Needs Assessment found that in 2007, the citywide average adoption rate was 47%, comparable to national averages, but adoption by low-income residents was strikingly low at 26% as compared to 54% in other income groups. Given the size of the City's low-income population compared to the total population of almost every other city, this disparity demanded action. In response, the City crafted a Broadband Action Plan in 2008, calling for a set of aggressive programs to spur broadband adoption by its vulnerable populations. However, the plan could not be implemented given the economic downturn and severe budget cuts. Among the most vulnerable of NYC's under-served population are young people between the ages of 16 to 21 who have become disengaged from high school and are not on track to graduate. Many of these students are at least two years off-track relative to expected age and credit accumulation toward earning a high school diploma. These students are referred to as over-age and under-credited (OAUC). Historically, once a student attending a traditional comprehensive high school falls significantly behind, s/he graduates at a rate of only 19%. Conversely, 93% of dropouts in NYC have a history of being OAUC. To address the needs of youth in danger of dropping out, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) established the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG) in 2005. OMPG's focus is to create a portfolio of recuperative school models and programmatic options to help OAUC students get back on track to graduate. The Multiple Pathways initiative broke ground when it developed the new Transfer High School Model and over the next three years created 27 new small transfer high schools, for a total portfolio of 43 schools. The current system of transfer schools demonstrates significant recuperative power for academically struggling or disengaged students, with transfer schools generating 37% more graduates out of the OAUC population than the traditional high school. The students served by OMPG are vulnerable in several dimensions. In addition to being behind on credit accumulation, 71% of transfer students score significantly below grade-level on the NYS 8th grade ELA exam, 14% are English Language Learners, and 10% percent receive special education services. More than 90% of transfer students are estimated to be on Free or Reduced Lunch, the indicator of poverty recognized by the Federal government. The transfer student population is 44% African American, 39% Hispanic, and 11% Asian. NYC Connected Foundations will dramatically increase broadband adoption by this vulnerable population through two mutually reinforcing program components: (1) the Connected Foundations course, a credit-bearing broadband education course, and (2) the Family Broadband Engagement Program, an innovative approach to ensure sustainable broadband adoption by students and their families. Built around OMPG's research,

this initiative will effectively address the four key broadband adoption barriers identified by the City's Broadband Needs Assessment Study: (a) insufficient skills required to leverage the Internet as a tool for greater social and economic opportunity, (b) incomplete view regarding the benefits derived by broadband access, (c) limited access to computing devices, and (d) the cost of commercial broadband service. The Connected Foundations Course The DOE is partnering with leading subject-matter experts across the country to develop Connected Foundations, an academic course to be piloted in 43 NYC transfer schools next year. The course scope-and-sequence is aligned to New York State's Math, Science and Technology (MST) standards and will provide students with either a math or science core credit needed for high school graduation. The goals of this course are to help all NYC transfer school students develop the key foundational skills to 'live, learn, earn, work and play' on-line and in their neighborhoods, skills that are necessary not only for graduation, but also for successfully transitioning to an appropriate post-secondary pathway (e.g., college or a career). Students will, in turn, be able to provide on-going support to their families for leveraging broadband access and on-line resources to best meet their needs. The Connected Foundations curriculum will focus on five thematic units mentioned above. Each unit will incorporate content developed by leading industry or government partners: ' Live: Using online tools and broadband to support personal wellness (NYC Dept of Health and Mental Health). ' Learn: Using online tools and broadband to become tech savvy and self-directed online learners (OMPG, Good Shepherd Services, New Visions for Public Schools, Diploma Plus and Common Sense Media). ' Earn: Using online tools and broadband to protect and manage personal spending and saving (Capital One). ' Work: Using on-line tools and broadband to become college and career ready for 21st century work (NY State Department of Labor, The Univ. of Chicago Urban Education Institute). ' Play: Using on-line tools and broadband to find great cultural and recreational opportunities near schools and across the city (Alliance for the Arts). All aspects of the Connected Foundations course are designed to leverage NYC's strategy for virtual and blended on-line learning including using DOE-created/supported Learning Management Systems (LMS); taking DOE-sanctioned on-line credit recovery courses; and, connecting with adults and other professionals (i.e., mentors) outside of school. The Connected Foundations course will be designed to provide differentiated supports to a variety of learners so that it might be scaled up to all 6-12 grade students enrolled in NYC public schools. Currently, there are over 540,000 students in grades 6-12 in the NYC public school system. Family Broadband Engagement Program The Family Broadband Engagement Program is built upon best practices for ensuring sustainable broadband adoption by families. Students who successfully complete the Connected Foundations Course will attend a three-hour Family Broadband Training Session along with their parents/guardians. Families will receive intensive training in using a computer and the Internet safely and securely around the core areas of Live, Learn, Earn, Work, and Play, with specific training components led by the students themselves to demonstrate work they completed during the Connected Foundations course. All families will receive a free broadband-enabled computer for use at home, along with broadband enrollment information and training in order to encourage adoption by families who are not current customers. Families will receive a subsidized broadband account from participating broadband providers and also will have ongoing access to a 24x7 bilingual Help Desk, which will provide information to families about how to handle computer- and broadband-related issues. Together, the Connected Foundations course and the Family Broadband Engagement Program will empower families to adopt and sustain broadband, providing them with the expertise and motivation to use broadband

most effectively. The Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) will oversee the Connected Foundations initiative and lead program measurement activities in accordance with the City's larger broadband goals. The DOE will implement the program by drawing on technical expertise from the DOE's Office of the Chief Information Officer, which is leading many of the district's enterprise technology initiatives, and programmatic expertise from the DOE's Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG), which is nationally recognized for its innovative approach to recuperative high school education in an urban district setting. NYC Connected Foundations will serve 43 schools located in the City's highest-poverty communities. The program will span two academic years and will cost a total of \$8.571M, and the City and its partners will provide \$2.61M in match funding, or 30.4% of total program costs. The 54 hour Connected Foundations course will graduate approximately 5,160 students, who will also attend the 3 hour Family Broadband Training Session with their families. 7,224 family members are expected to the Family Broadband Training Seesion. The program will impact 20,640 household members and generate an estimated 13,208 new broadband users. The program will create 23 full-time jobs. NYC Connected Foundations represents a truly innovative solution for national replication for increasing broadband adoption in vulnerable populations and enhancing educational outcomes. Funding from BTOP is critical to serving these critical goals.