Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name:  MPT SERVICES, INC.

Project Title:  Piece of Cake

Project Type:  Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary_______________________

Piece of Cake, whose acronym is a play on the computer term, 'personal computing,' is a PC broadband connectivity project for the elderly aged 65 and older living in U.S. cities and tribal communities. Operationally, Piece of Cake seeks funding to extend its collaborative broadband access footprint beyond Virginia into fourteen U.S. counties and tribal communities in Maryland, Massachusetts, Florida and the District of Columbia with a combined total of 1.8 million seniors aged 65 and older. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 6/17/2009, broadband usage among adults age 65+ was 30% in April 2009. This sends a very clear message -- 70% of Americans age 65+ have NOT adopted broadband and are being left behind. For these 5.7 million, often low-income seniors with no access to broadband internet, Piece of Cake is their answer to affordable, 24-hour access, to vitally important information including Medicare, Social Security and vital electronic medical records online. The dual purposes of Piece of Cake are to: (1) reach, teach and provide broadband internet skills and connectivity, as well as elderly-appropriate, PC equipment-for-purchase, to 180,000 low-income households aged 65 and over; and (2) expand its elderly-focused, broadband access footprint nationally through collaboration, curriculum and common sense. Key to both purposes and sustaining growth beyond BTOP's funding period, is the strength of Piece of Cake's community support, experience and eldercare partnerships. The project's three leading partnership organizations -- Alzheimer's Association/NCA, Brandeis University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (BOLLI) and Microsoft's Senior Computing Unit -- are strong organizations deeply committed to serving seniors aged 65 and older. In addition to its community outreach work with Piece of Cake in Virginia, these partner organizations already provide a variety of eldercare education, information, training and support to seniors age 65+ through hundreds of local chapters, universities and affiliates across the country. Therefore, replicating the Piece of Cake project nationally is easily and efficiently accomplished because of existing relationships, best practices and solid community support. More specifically, the overall project cost is $17,644,600 with a match contribution of 27.4 percent. The cost per new subscriber or new end-user is $52.37. The project also will generate 180,000 new household accounts, and train 64,500 seniors aged 65 and over during the project. We offer portable/mobile computer classes to teach older adults (aged). We remove barriers to entry such as limited personal mobility and lack of transportation, to encourage adults age 60+ to get online and stay there -- cost-effectively and in an age-appropriate manner. Portable computer classes serve a wide area of students by moving to where groups of students are. One day, a center can be in a retirement community; the next in the community room of a mall; after that, in a restaurant or coffee shop. Our innovative approach is based on lessons learned through our experience working with older adults. Too often, older adults are left on the wrong side of the digital
divide due to factors not traditionally considered in broadband adoption programs like transportation. According to a 2007 Harris Interactive Poll released on the APTA website (www.publictransportation.org), two thirds (66%) of older Americans believe that their community needs to provide more transportation options for older adults such as easy-access busses and senior citizen mini-van services.

Our mobile classrooms mitigate this challenge. By using laptops and wireless broadband, we move our computers with our instructors. Instead of having to build multiple centers, we have the same "center" serve multiple communities and reach a wider audience with the same amount of equipment than we would in a traditional classroom design. But, bringing the computers to the students is only the first step. The second is making sure that the curriculum meets the needs of our students and the goals of BTOP. Our exciting, project-based curriculum drives the need for broadband in addition to the basics of "how to use a computer." We offer social networking and other "fun" things like sharing photos, video-conferencing, etc. We have classes and webinars on using the Internet to reach Medicare, Social Security, and other government agencies, on electronic medical records, safely surfing the Internet, shopping online, and more. The Alzheimer's Association/NCA's brain health website, being produced in partnership with the Society of Consultant Pharmacists; the courses currently offered in the Lifelong Learning Program at Brandeis; and Microsoft's innovative courses taught on cruise ships are the basis for the courses we intend to expand with BTOP funding. Our intergenerational component using the computers to entice teenagers to work with older adults to teach/learn social networking, etc., encourages a two-way mentoring relationship. Our teaching methods include classroom instruction, computer lab time, and webinars. The third component is community outreach. We are assertive in our "drive to the web" and our commitment to ensure that older adults no longer are left on the wrong side of the digital divide. We have a strong presence in each community proposed for this project and leverage that presence to reach out to older adults. Our partners: Alzheimer's Association: We are proud to partner with the Alzheimer's Association of the National Capital Area for community outreach and supporting continued development of projects in partnership with the Society of Consultant Pharmacists. Their strengths include: Online education and support available for seniors, boomers and caregivers Brain Health Stimulation through games and activities Participating in online Advocacy initiatives to support aging issues Education on creating a safe living environment for Seniors Engagement and outreach around E-health: NOVA RHIO taskforce Brandeis University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (BOLLI): Three members of our team are Brandeis University alums, and we are especially proud to partner with BOLLI. In 2000, Brandeis recognized the still unfulfilled demand for educational and intellectual stimulation for adults who are beyond the traditional university years. To help fill that need, the university established the Brandeis Adult Learning Institute (BALI). In 2004, the program became the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Brandeis (BOLLI). BOLLI, one of 122 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes throughout the nation, offers a broad range of noncredit educational activities for retired, semi-retired and other adult participants. The program emphasizes peer leadership, individual and group participation and research, and an atmosphere of sociability and mutual encouragement. Microsoft: Microsoft is a leader in making technology available to everyone, including older adults and people with disabilities. We have partnered with Microsoft for a number of purposes: configuring computers to be user-friendly to our community of older adults (including any necessary accessibility modifications), assisting in course development, and allowing students who have completed our courses to receive a discount on the purchase of a computer (similar to the ones they
have learned on so there is less intimidation in using it). We also work with broadband providers and have negotiated a discount for our students. Our goal is to remove the intimidation factor and make the purchase of computers and broadband access easy. Our end result is that we have educated students, an easy way for them to get online, and creative course offerings that teach them to safely use all that the internet has to offer. Our system is replicatable and can be scaled and shared with other organizations. Our curriculum can be licensed. Our bottom line: portability, flexibility, ease of use, and high quality instruction and programming combining to result in older Baby Boomers and the aged adopting broadband.