Executive Summary

Problem and Need An appreciation of the importance of broadband connections is gaining momentum among disadvantaged urban populations. However, there is a need to expand exposure to broadband applications that can make a difference in individual lives and improve economic and social conditions in urban communities. Such experiences will incent residents and businesses in these communities to prioritize their own investments in broadband connections or invest their time to access public computing resources. The development and promotion of ‘golden applications’ related to education and employment can make an impact in disadvantaged urban areas and encourage their residents to use them effectively in their own lives. Additionally, state and local governments are increasingly providing direct services through the Internet, causing those who are unconnected to miss on essential government services or to miss the efficiencies of accessing these services online. Our statewide proposal is a partnership with Michigan's high schools, community colleges, youth education programs, economic development organizations, and state government agencies. The focus is on Michigan's Cities of Promise and other urban core communities, with an emphasis on low income minority populations, who are particularly challenged by structural changes in the economy. Data indicates that there is access to broadband in these regions and that individuals are willing to pay for communication services, but that a lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of broadband may be a barrier to adoption. Approach Our approach will provide a program that is both statewide in scope and yet local in implementation. As a statewide program, we leverage economies of scale with high-quality online education materials and other shared curriculum, that are useful anywhere, and which are transmitted at minimal cost to our partners and consumers. Our emphasis is on educational applications, including the delivery of community college and adult education courses online and the development of community-oriented projects by high school students. We will hire community organizers and trainers to coordinate the development of local broadband content, user training, and promotion. Student interns will also work with the paid training staff to increase effectiveness and achieve maximum impact for budgeted expenditures and to provide hands-on information technology training for the next of technology workers entering the workforce. In our pilot studies we have found that youth can be especially effective in connecting with local groups and creating local online content. Through the efforts of our community organizers and our previously established relationships with media and community organizations, our public awareness campaign will reach tens of thousands of potential broadband adopters. We will supplement those efforts with paid media coverage. We will stimulate demand by steering adopters to online tutorials in local community computer centers that will help them
experience the benefits of home broadband connections, and develop the skills and confidence to achieve those benefits for themselves. These programs will focus first on training high school students in creating online media and other content development. Then these students will work as interns with business and nonprofit organizations in their neighborhoods to enhance those organizations' online presence. This will result in greater local online content, enhanced job skills for high school youth, and increased use of the Internet for marketing and commerce by local businesses. This work will be developed in conjunction with Allied Media Projects, a Detroit based organization with over a decade of experience in providing youth education. Allied Media Projects will take the lead in our Detroit initiatives, which will include in-school programs, after-school programs, and teacher training programs.

A second set of training programs to be offered is e-entrepreneurship programs that will be coordinated with Michigan's Small Business and Technology Development Centers (SBTDC). The SBTDC already provides training programs, helps entrepreneurs start businesses, and helps existing small businesses expand. Part of this includes classes and consulting advice in the use of technology to start and grow a business. The SBTDC will also deliver courses that cover topics beyond that offered in traditional business courses, such as e-commerce applications and the use of social networking and social media in a business context. Part of this proposal will also help to enhance and expand on this existing curriculum. We have also established partnerships with community colleges to provide two forms of adult education programs. One set of programs will provide basic technology training for displaced workers. The goal of these programs is to provide an introduction to the skills necessary to obtain work in an increasingly technology dependent workplace. The second form of adult education program is designed to create a bridge to a community college or university education. These programs are intended for individuals who require retraining, or would like to return to college for an advanced education, but have been out of school for so long that they first require remedial classes. Although the funds requested for this program will enable a surge of training activity in these areas, the benefits will outlast the two years of this program. We will be developing curriculum that will be integrated into the standard activities of our community colleges and other training partners. After the end of our high school programs, the schools will be able to continue to use that curriculum and class design in future classes. Also, where technically feasible and pedagogically appropriate, we will be making our materials available online for future use.

Target Areas Our proposal targets Michigan's most economically challenged urban centers with the goal of helping build capacity for 21st century jobs. This includes the cities of Benton Harbor, Detroit, Flint, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Muskegon, Pontiac, and Saginaw, and their surrounding geographic areas. Our primary targets are the cities above, but the benefits will extend beyond the city limits. The counties around these cities are home to approximately three million people as of the 2000 census. Of this total population, we expect to include over 4,000 people in our high school and adult training programs. Qualifications Michigan State University is well positioned to administer this program based on our prior experience with related projects, and a demonstrated institutional capacity for grant administration. We are a Round 1 Computer Center award recipient, providing us with experience managing this type of award. Furthermore, last year, MSU managed $405 million in externally funded projects. The department of telecommunication has been working for several years in related fields, providing experience in how to stimulate adoption in the most efficient and cost effective way. We have undertaken USDA and Kellogg Foundation funded projects to facilitate and study broadband use and adoption. Additionally, we have
established partnerships that provide additional capacity, expertise, and local knowledge. Our partners in the Detroit region led by Allied Media Projects have over 12 years experience providing youth training. We are also partnering with the Information Technology Empowerment Center, Jackson Community College, and Lansing Community College to help with our adult education programs. In addition, we have established partnerships with Michigan's libraries through our first round computer center grant and second round computer center proposals. This will provide us with additional computer center access for the delivery of our training programs. Furthermore, even though we are focusing on certain urban regions, we will be making many of our materials available online, so that others around the state can access the training materials through these public computer centers. Jobs Created Based on the formula from the Council of Economic Advisors, the proposed program will create 72 new jobs. This is broken into 20 direct jobs, 26 indirect jobs created and 26 jobs induced. Cost The total cost of this program is $6,637,804, which is broken down into $5,216,094 in requested funds and $1,421,710 in matching funds.