Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: CONSORTIUM FOR WORKER EDUCATION, INC.

Project Title: CWE/CUNY New York City Broadband Training and Adoption Program

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _________________________

In the New York City boroughs of the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn more than forty percent of the population live in poverty with an average unemployment rate above 20 percent. This targeted population equals 1.65 million residents. In these three Census Tract target areas broadband adoption and digital literacy rates are estimated to be below twenty percent. Focusing primarily in these poverty stricken Census Tract areas, an innovative partnership led by the union training umbrella organization for New York City, the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) and the City University of New York (CUNY) Community Colleges representing these areas will provide the full range of education and technology supports necessary to educate over 27,000 residents who currently have a lower exposure to computers and broadband into a lifelong, effective broadband user. Participants will receive broadband education, skills training, educational and appropriate content, 3500 will receive a computer and broadband connection in the home, and all 27,000 targeted residents will receive ongoing broadband education support. This Sustainable Broadband Adoption project, called New York City Connects to Broadband, Training and Adoption will serve over 27,000 residents for $8,179,903 in federal funds.

A. Statement of Problem/Need In New York City CWE and CUNY have documented that public computer centers and training programs are oversubscribed; there simply is not enough capacity to help the millions of people in the city become and remain broadband users. Without ready access to a computer and broadband, the residents in the poorest Census Tract areas can not compete in the global economy without support to become a broadband adopter. In all 150 target training sites operated by CWE, program participants put the computer labs to heavy use. Thousands of residents in the poorest communities are on waiting lists for needed career and technical training and broadband/computer training at any one given time. Given the overall population of the city is over 8.4 million and the target Census tract areas in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn are over 1.65 million, the overwhelming need for these services is self evident. However, when one considers that the targeted population of 1.65 million New York City residents has an average poverty rate in excess of 40 percent and the unemployment rate in these areas exceeds 20 percent the need to 'Bridge the Digital Divide' becomes even more glaring. CWE and CUNY’s computer training capacity is severely over-subscribed. Even with other community-based non-profit computer training centers, resources are insufficient, training classes are oversubscribed, and capacity is inadequate for the demand.

B. Overall Approach True broadband adoption is the creation of new broadband users who persist in their Internet use and realize the social and economic benefits such use offers. A computer is not enough, and neither is a broadband connection. To create a new broadband user, one must provide awareness of the benefits of broadband adoption, training, appropriate and valuable content. The CWE/CUNY project will provide all of these
elements, as well as ongoing support, to a targeted 27,000 residents. The CWE/CUNY includes two related programs; one focuses through CUNY community colleges from the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn targeting seniors, the disabled, at-risk youth, foster children, and the Hispanic community; the second through CWE, will target low-income residents in the Census Tracts identified in the grant proposal. Between the two programs, CWE/CUNY will train and provide free computers and broadband access to 3,500 participants. In addition, awareness and educational resources will be provided to over 23,500 more, reaching a total of over 27,000 New York City residents in the poorest communities in the city. The CWE/CUNY proposal attacks broadband adoption by not only teaching eligible residents how to use a computer, but it provides the content they need to maximize the value of their new skills, and then provides them the hardware and broadband subscriptions they need to adopt broadband in the home. With adoption in the home, residents can spend time learning and benefiting from the power of broadband. CWE/CUNY then will provide ongoing support for participants. Of the 3500 participants who will receive broadband installation, 600 will also be trained to receive smart grid electric meter or broadband installation certification. C. Area and Populations to be Served The CWE/CUNY project will serve the Bronx through the partnership of Bronx Community College and CWE, Manhattan through CWE, and Brooklyn through the partnership of Kingsborough Community College and CWE. Dozens of other partner community based organizations will support the outreach and support for this project throughout the Census Tract catchment areas. Services will target English Speakers of Other Languages (particularly Spanish speaking populations), the unemployed, those on social services, the disabled, seniors, and at-risk youth. The CWE/CUNY project will drive broadband adoption not only at 150 CWE locations and dozens of CUNY locations but also at public housing locations throughout the targeted Census Tract areas. This project has been given particular support from the borough presidents who understand the high need for broadband adoption for their residents to be able to compete in the global marketplace. All of these locations are used by students to receive education services and to develop the skills necessary to enter the job market. The end-to-end broadband adoption programs provided by this CWE/CUNY partnership project will spur the demand for broadband in the poorest sections of New York City and help provide a key ingredient for economic growth: a more knowledgable workforce. D. Qualifications of the Applicant CWE/CUNY offers the qualifications of two well established education anchors in New York City: the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) and the City University of New York (CUNY). CWE serves over 90,000 New York City residents a year in training programs and has facilities and equipment in 150 sites throughout the city to support these students. CUNY has campuses conveniently located throughout the City serving over 500,000 students a year. As the umbrella training organization for unions in New York City, CWE has a budget of more than $32 million dollars and is the largest adult career and technical training agency in New York State. CUNY is the sole public sector college system which serves all five boroughs in New York City. Only a partnership of the size and scope of CWE/CUNY is ready to accept thousands of students upon receipt of funding and have the capacity to sustain these efforts after the completion of the grant. E. Jobs Saved/Created This CWE/CUNY project will directly and indirectly save or create a total of approximately 1,000 jobs. F. Overall Cost The overall cost of the project is $13,029,894, of which the CWE/CUNY partnership will provide a 37.2% match, requesting a total of $8,179,903 in federal funds. Serving 27,000 eligible New York City residents will result in a per participant cost of $482 including match and $303 per federal SBA dollar granted.