Applicant Name: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

Project Title: Innovative Web Education System for DC Housing Authority Residents

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

The District of Columbia Housing Authority's (DCHA) BTOP application is for an innovative project that will provide broadband Internet access, training, and educational resources to 47,687 public housing residents in our nation's capital. These residents are missing out on the substantial advantages of broadband for education, jobs, and life skills. DCHA will directly address the barriers to broadband adoption cited in the FCC's February, 2010, report entitled 'Broadband Adoption and Use In America' with particular emphasis on the lack of digital literacy among non-adopters and a perceived lack of relevance to the non-adopters' lives. DCHA will take several innovative approaches to overcome these barriers, while addressing the Recovery Act's goals of creating jobs and stimulating economic activity:

- Provide a customized Web Education System of educator-reviewed, highly relevant Web resources and activities that align directly to DCHA's existing educational programs, with particular emphasis on Early Childhood, Parenting, K-12 Academic Enrichment, and Workforce Development (see Supplemental Information upload named 'Sample Screens')
- Provide 4 Mobile Computer Labs for DCHA properties that currently do not have public computer centers
- Hire 30 DCHA residents as part-time Attendants for the Mobile Computer Labs, whose duties will include providing on-demand digital literacy training to residents

Project Need: DCHA provides affordable housing to residents in the nation's capital, including low income families, seniors, and people with disabilities. The parts of the city where the majority of DCHA properties are located have unemployment rates of 20% and higher (vs. 7.5% for the region) and high school graduation rates under 50%. DCHA residents, who have an average household income of $13,731, lack basic digital literacy and do not see the relevance of broadband in their lives. Every day the Internet offers more resources that aid career, health, and education, yet DCHA residents miss out. Digital literacy and relevance represent the reasons why 22% and 19% of people in the U.S., respectively, do not use broadband (FCC, 2010). DCHA residents have even higher non-adoption rates of more than 99%. Through training that provides digital skills and integration with DCHA educational programs, we will make broadband a necessary part of our residents' lives. Solution: By using a proven broadband educational technology platform, DCHA will create a customized Web Education System (WES) to:

1. Increase from 0.7% to at least 15% the number of residents regularly using broadband
2. Simplify the productive use of the Internet for those who lack digital skills
3. Integrate curriculum developed by DCHA and our community partners with broadband content to extend and enhance existing educational programs, making them available anytime, anywhere
4. Make broadband a necessary, relevant, and beneficial part of residents' lives

Our solution will continually reinforce both digital skills and broadband benefits to sustain adoption. The resources and activities available in our WES will be aligned to the curricula of our program partners, and
additional customization will assure that our program participants will find high-quality and relevant Web-based educational resources. To address digital literacy, program partners will promote the use of the WES and its Web-based resources so that traditional classroom resources can be combined with broadband resources. To address relevance and to increase broadband demand, the courses will rely on broadband content in WES for the course materials. Outside of the formal course programs, other resources will be provided on education, healthcare, and public safety, to make broadband even more relevant to residents. This approach meets BTOP's statutory purposes by integrating training to improve digital skills, fostering demand by getting residents to personally experience broadband's benefits, increasing access to unserved and underserved populations through the new Mobile Computer Labs, and providing a communication channel to help DCHA's police force reach residents in new ways. This project also supports other Recovery Act programs, especially in the areas of education, housing, and health. Approach: Our solution requires an innovative approach because 100% of DCHA residents represent vulnerable populations, from the 60% that are low income and 40% that are unemployed to the 42% who are youth. DCHA residents are beginning broadband adoption at a huge deficit compared to the rest of the nation. Our comprehensive approach overcomes these core barriers to broadband adoption by integrating with our residents' daily experiences at DCHA. Currently, about 350 DCHA residents are sustainable users of broadband - only 0.7% of the total DCHA population. With this project, DCHA expects that 15% (7,050) of DCHA residents will become sustainable broadband users. This will be primarily measured by tracking the number of residents who use DCHA's WES. Additionally, DCHA expects that 98% of these adopters will continue using broadband after transitioning to independent living. By integrating our programs with WES, DCHA can extend, scale, and replicate the solution to reach more people while serving as a model for use by other government agencies and housing authorities. For instance, the DC Department of Health can repurpose their existing information on childhood obesity and make it available to parents through WES. This has the dual benefit of creating new broadband-accessible content for use by DCHA residents and allowing Health Department audiences to use the information in a newly accessible way. Since the project uses cloud computing technology and an unlimited user software license, the solution can scale for an ever increasing number of users. Qualifications and Project Viability: Beyond having implemented multiple technology centers within the Housing Authority's jurisdiction that are of comparable size and scope, the Housing Authority has an annual budget over $300 million and manages over 50 multi-unit properties, making this project a highly manageable undertaking. Further, the software being used is a scalable, hosted solution maintained by our vendor, minimizing the burden of DCHA's IT Department. The project is operationally feasible because DCHA residents have places to access broadband. DCHA has existing educational courses, instructors, and curriculum into which we can easily integrate broadband, and WES is a proven, user-friendly technology with a 14 year history of being used in schools, housing authorities, and community organizations. The developer of WES will customize the software to our specifications, provide training on its use, and advise on its implementation. To facilitate greater broadband access, the project will include 4 Mobile Computer Labs that can be transported across DCHA properties to bring broadband technology directly to residents. The project creates 19 total jobs'2 direct job years, 10 indirect jobs, and induces another 7 jobs using the Council of Economic Advisor's methodology for job creation estimates. Costs: The budget total of $2,265,207 with Matching Support of $484,744 (21.4%) and Federal Support of $1,780,463 represents a cost effective solution that develops sustainable
broadband use by DCHA residents. The budget is reasonable because it employs existing resources supported by outside funds, such as computing centers, educational programs, community partner expertise, Web-based instructional resources, and a proven educational software system. DCHA is also leveraging in-kind contributions in the form of curriculum and staff totaling $308,000 from community partners. The cost of developing this specialized curriculum from scratch would greatly increase the cost of the project. The cost per new user can be evaluated in two ways, both of which are encouraging for project sustainability after the grant ends. Since WES will be marketed and available to all 47,687 DCHA residents, each resident could be considered a new user at a cost of $37.34 each. Alternatively, the focus of our efforts will be to create 7,050 sustainable broadband users, which also has an attractive cost per new user of $252.55. Given the financial constraints of public housing authorities, our project design keeps costs sufficiently low ($82,754/year for staff; $195,000/year for WES license and service) in order to be sustainable after grant completion while continuing to improve broadband adoption rates over the long term. The WES is the key to project sustainability because it minimizes DCHA staff overhead while making the broadband resources completely scalable. WES is entirely hosted, maintained, backed-up, made secure, and constantly updated by Bascom.