Applicant Name: IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Project Title: Video Visitation Project

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

a) A statement of the problem or need your project addresses with regard to improving broadband service adoption rates. The Urban League research indicates that a critical component to successful offender rehabilitation is family reunification programming, beginning with increased contact between family members and offenders while the latter are still incarcerated. However, Iowa is a rural state in which the nine state prisons are scattered from one end to the other, making frequent family visits to the prisons for personal visits very difficult if not impossible for many families. Many of the families possess just as few financial resources as their incarcerated member and/or lack the time or reliable transportation needed to make the trek. Offenders and their families can and do exchange letters or phone calls which are of some benefit. However, these methods are limited by the lack of face-to-face encounters, which psychologically increases the connection between parties that a letter of phone call could not achieve.

b) Your overall approach to addressing the need, and how your approach is innovative. The Iowa Department of Corrections (DOC) envisions setting up video visitation units at each of the nine prisons scattered throughout the state. This would allow for a person living in one area of the state to visually visit with an offender incarcerated in a prison in another area of the state who may otherwise not have that opportunity. Since Iowa’s prisons are spread out across the state, all the person need do is travel to the nearest prison in order to access a video visitation unit and connect with any prison in the state. This project would also allow offenders held in disciplinary detention and prevented from participating in personal visits from family members to engage visually with their family. These video visitation units would be connected by an already existing broadband network - the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) - owned and administered by the state of Iowa. This network already possesses the capacity to handle the heavy demand that a video visitation system would impose upon it. In addition, the ICN will provide for a 'secured line' that will ensure that the video conversations cannot be accessed by any unauthorized parties. The video visitation units themselves will provide a real-time and uninterrupted video and audio connection thereby enhancing the quality of the transmission and video visitation experience.

c) Areas to be served; the estimated number of potential users of your public computer center(s). This project will serve the entire state, as no community or country home is immune from the prospect of someone being incarcerated for the commission of a crime. The Iowa prison population hovers at 8,300 inmates, all of whom would be served. Every year, about 6,000 are released back into the community, to be replaced by incoming offenders. So over the course of a year, up to 14,000+ offenders could be served. In addition, their families would be direct beneficiaries of this project. As of February 24, 2010, there were 74,441 approved visitors, of which 52,295 were family members. Finally, Iowa communities in general would benefit through increased public safety resulting
in improved offender rehabilitation. d) Qualifications of the applicant that demonstrate the ability to implement the project and achieve its intended results. DOC has existed as an independent state agency for over 26 years. By Iowa law, DOC is charged with the responsibility of supervising convicted criminal offenders not sentenced to local jails. In addition, DOC is recognized as a national leader in offender rehabilitation programming. This project will enhance ongoing rehabilitation efforts. Each prison, along with the central administrative office in Des Moines, has on staff qualified engineering and information technology personnel to ensure proper installation and administration of the video visitation system. ICN, which administers the broadband network, has several decades of experience in administering real-time video communications systems. e) Jobs to be saved or created. This project will create two full-time jobs at each of the nine prisons, or 18 full-time positions. The new staff’s principal duties will entail monitoring the visits, and routine maintenance of the equipment. These positions will be funded by modest fees collected for using the video visitation system. f) Overall cost of the proposed project The overall cost of the proposed project will be a one-time expense of $698,975. This will cover the cost of purchasing, installing and servicing 135 video visitation stations spread throughout the nine-prison system. After which time, the project will be self-sustaining.