Executive Summary

One Economy Corporation (One Economy) and the Broadband Opportunity Coalition (BBOC) will leverage our experience in promoting sustainable broadband adoption by providing affordable Internet access, technology training and relevant content to low income Americans, particularly three of the least served populations in the country: senior citizens, rural Americans, and Native Americans. We will bring a sustainable technology infrastructure, targeted information, and digital literacy training to all three populations, creating digital ecosystems that will help them improve the quality of their lives and their communities. A. Problem/Need. It is generally recognized that high speed Internet access is an essential tool in today's world. As maintained in an October 2009 report to the Federal Communications Commission by the Advanced Communications Law & Policy Institute, New York Law School, Barriers to Broadband Adoption, 'Ubiquitous availability and usage of broadband is vital to continued innovation, social advancement, and economic development in the United States. In order to realize these goals, however, broadband adoption rates must be maximized across all demographic groups and sectors of the economy.' A February 2010 research preview by the U.S. Department of Commerce's NTIA confirmed that many Americans still rely on slow, narrowband Internet service or fail to use the Internet at all. While the study also stipulated that nearly all demographic groups have increased their use of broadband in the last 10 years, several groups'including senior citizens and people in rural areas'remain behind. Another report, Broadband Adoption and Use in America, based on an October/November 2009 FCC survey, showed that only 35% of senior citizens over 65 had broadband access at home. That report stipulated, however, that seniors are increasing their Internet use faster than any other age group in the country. The NTIA report showed that while 65.9% of urban households had broadband, only 54.1% of rural households had broadband. This difference carried over into certain rural ethnic groups as well, with 28.8% of Blacks and 33.8% of Hispanics in rural areas having broadband at home compared to 47.8% and 40.1% in urban areas respectively. A recent study on Internet use by Native Americans (New Media, Technology and Internet Use in Indian Country: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses) showed that, where the Internet is available, Natives are eager to use it to improve their lives and are among the fastest growing ethnic consumers of the Internet. The report goes on to discuss the 'disparity between Internet availability in tribal communities and a very real divide between Native America and the nation as a whole in terms of access, coverage, and affordability of service.' B) Our Approach. Throughout our ten-year history One Economy has recognized the need to provide high speed access to the Internet, relevant online content that can help individuals improve their own lives, and training in technology and Internet use. One Economy supports all individuals'regardless of income, location, education, or ethnic background'and accommodates them in terms of time, place, literacy and language.
Our goal is to produce value for individuals by way of improved socioeconomic outcomes, such as educational advancement, improved health, community engagement and employment. Our adoption approach is multi-faceted, providing individuals with affordable access, content and training. Moreover, we have a proven track record of success: at least 50% of our audience has sustained their broadband adoption after 5 years. With BTOP support, One Economy's integrated approach to broadband adoption will target critically underserved low income Americans in the following ways: 1) Access. For most Americans, the home is the essential place to deliver 24/7 access to broadband. Household access is critical for rural, senior, and Native populations who are often unable to reach public anchor institutions. Working with rural, elderly, and Native American affordable housing organizations, we will provide home-based access to 18,000+ households that otherwise would be unable to access the Internet. This includes a significant rural and elderly program developed in partnership with Oregon Housing and Community Services, a testament to the need for, and value of, One Economy's work. 2) Relevant Content. We will produce innovative online content that is easily accessible, written at low-literacy levels, culturally relevant, and multilingual. During the past ten years, we have created a network of public-purpose media focused on vital issues like health, jobs, finance, education, and civic engagement. Our Public Internet Channel (www.PIC.tv) and the Beehive (www.theBeehive.org) have been visited by more than 18 million individuals, including many first time Internet users. With BTOP funding we will localize content based on zip code through a national resource locator and produce public-purpose applications for mobile devices and computers. Our partnership with Monster.com allows highly localized employment guidance and sector specific job outlooks for low-income Americans, including Natives (with unemployment rates at nearly 2.5 times the national average), and for mature workers (55 and older) seeking part- or full-time jobs to supplement their retirement income. Our online content is developed and produced with the advice and input of local populations. 3) Training. For the past eight years, One Economy has educated youth aged 14-21 to serve as technology trainers and ambassadors in underserved communities through our Digital Connectors program. To date 3,000 youth have provided 60,000 hours of training. With this grant, we will bring our proven framework to targeted communities, providing technology and leadership education to 1,800 low-income teenagers and using those youth as teachers to spread digital literacy and encourage broadband adoption within their communities. In fact, recent data shows that broadband usage in Digital Connector program communities is five times higher than in communities without Connectors programs. 4) Public Education/Awareness. Though a major barrier to broadband, cost is often not the main reason cited for non-adoption among seniors. Other reasons include lack of comfort with computers and software, fear of the Internet, and skepticism or lack of awareness about the value of online content. Through a sustained public education initiative, using match funds from the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT), and Charter Communications we will dispel fears and misperceptions and promote broadband use as a means to improved education, employment, and health. We will also provide additional resources to the BBOC so that their local affiliates can assist with this outreach campaign. All efforts will align core messaging, focus on connecting people to adoption support programs, and increase and sustain broadband use. C. Areas to Be Served. Our efforts focus on over 115 communities where we have defined public housing, Digital Connector, and BBOC partners to help us target for new broadband subscribership. We will work with over 40 housing partners in 200+ housing projects and will connect over 36,000 senior citizens, rural Americans and Native Americans in 18,000+
households. Geographic focus areas include AL, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IO, KS, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, ND, NJ, NV, NM, NC, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, and WY. We project that 3,135 youth will be trained through 209 Digital Connectors programs and that they, in turn, will teach digital literacy and technology skills to approximately 156,750 community members to foster their sustained use of the Internet. D) Qualifications. One Economy is the largest digital adoption organization in the United States. Our ten years of work serve as a proof of concept for effective and sustainable digital adoption. We have established partnerships and raised approximately $63 million in private funding. Our digital literacy, public-purpose media, and housing-based broadband deployment initiatives are now being utilized in nearly all fifty states. The BBOC member organizations are uniquely qualified to lead our expansion and on-the-ground implementation into rural, senior and Native American populations. E) Jobs/Cost We estimate that through this program we will save or create 1,820 jobs. The total cost of the project is $52.1 million of which $35.9 million is being requested through this proposal.