

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: WildBlue Communications, Inc.

Project Title: Education, Training & Discounted Satellite Broadband Program for Rural Low-Income Persons in CO & WY

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

WildBlue Communications, a leading satellite broadband provider, through its partnership with One Economy, the largest non-profit digital adoption organization in the U.S., has designed an innovative and comprehensive program (the "Program") to increase broadband adoption by educating, training and affordably providing satellite broadband to rural, low-income Colorado and Wyoming citizens. The Program will provide Internet education and training to 25,000 persons. The Program will also provide 10,000 new subscribers in rural and unserved areas with WildBlue's satellite broadband service at no upfront cost, and at a heavily discounted monthly rate of \$19.95 per month for service at 768 kbps download x 200 kbps upload. This rate is heavily discounted from WildBlue's existing commercial rates, and is as low, or even lower than, urban DSL rates. In addition, a netbook computer will be available for a \$99.00 co-payment for up to 8,500 new subscribers who lack a broadband-capable computer in their home.

WildBlue's Program addresses each of the causes of low broadband adoption: lack of broadband access, lack of affordability, lack of access to a personal computer, failure to understand the value of Internet access, and lack of training. WildBlue's Program – the first of its kind in rural America – will enable and spur adoption rates among vulnerable populations.

Consistent with the Obama Administration's directive, availability of broadband to these populations will be rapid – WildBlue's satellite broadband technology is already proven and the infrastructure is already built. Indeed, WildBlue is prepared to commence its Program within 90 days of the grant and to complete its Program within two years.

One Economy, WildBlue's partner, will provide community-based hands-on training to persons in rural areas across Colorado and Wyoming. A custom-fitted mobile Internet lab with storage for 20 portable computers and WildBlue's broadband satellite service will be driven to community centers around the states, where the driver – who will be specially trained -- will provide hands-on training in or near community institutions. Further, a cadre of 75 specially trained 16 – 21 year olds (Digital Connectors)

will provide training in their communities. Such training will include: (1) how to use the Internet; (2) critical information about the numerous valuable tools available on the Internet, such as educational materials, distance learning, medical information, job search, and telecommuting; (3) Internet resources useful to farm families, such as weather data, crop prices, and on-line auctions; and (4) guidance as to the dangers of the Internet, and how to avoid or minimize them.

WildBlue's Program advances several of the BTOP statutory purposes, as follows: (1) Provide broadband access to unserved areas: the provision of satellite broadband, at highly favorable rates, will not only provide access to unserved areas, but will dramatically increase uptake of broadband access in such areas; (2) Provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions, job creating strategic facilities, and vulnerable populations: WildBlue's Program is targeted to vulnerable populations and small community anchor institutions, and specifically provides education, awareness, training, access, equipment and support to these customers; and (3) Stimulate demand for broadband: The provision of free customer premises broadband access equipment, a computer for \$99, and very low cost monthly broadband access will significantly stimulate demand for broadband among the rural, unserved, and low-income population targeted by the Program.

By providing broadband access to unserved rural areas, WildBlue's Program also directly furthers the objectives of broadband infrastructure deployment set forth in RUS's BIP program and in the Broadband Infrastructure portion of NTIA's BTOP program.

The Program is also highly complementary to proposals specifically targeting the provision of high capacity broadband to large community anchor institutions. These institutions will be able to provide information and communicate on-line with their rural customers and constituents, who will now have broadband access at home. Further, access to a portable computer will enable program participants to access the Internet not only at home, but also at community anchor institutions.

WildBlue's Program will be highly sustainable beyond the funding period. New subscribers added pursuant to the Program will incur no additional costs for the computer or for the satellite broadband equipment. New subscribers will have received comprehensive training and educational materials so that they can use their new computer and broadband access effectively. No additional federal funding will be needed after the initial grant period. The only out-of-pocket expense for new customers, both during and after the funding period, will be the heavily discounted monthly fee for satellite broadband access.

WildBlue's program is easily replicable by WildBlue or other organizations. The satellite broadband service is already in place, and WildBlue sells that service using its own employees and through a network of value-added resellers. The ground-based customer premises equipment and the netbooks are readily available. The awareness campaign and training programs will be well established. WildBlue is confident that the expansion of broadband access and usage resulting from its Program will have the spillover benefit of encouraging even more consumers to seek, and ultimately obtain, broadband access.