Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** AARP

**Project Title:** NYC Work Connections For Older Adults

**Project Type:** Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary_______________________

Through the proposed BTOP award the AARP Foundation will build on its successful programs that serve one of the nation’s most vulnerable populations’, older, low-income, unemployed adults, to demonstrate the value of broadband in workplace training skills development and the work search process. The project supports low income older persons with assistance in computer purchase and helps bridge the barrier to digital literacy with hands-on training assistance specifically designed for older adults. Further, the project promotes sustainable broadband adoption by showcasing the value of broadband through a media outreach campaign.

According to the Federal Communications Commission Report, “Broadband Adoption and Use in America,” released February 23, 2010, only 35% of older households (age 65 plus) have broadband in their homes, compared to 67% of the general adult population. A recent Pew survey of U.S. households indicates that while 79% of the general population reports using the Internet, only 42% of those 65 and older indicate that they use the Internet (go online at libraries, community centers, senior centers, or other public computer centers).

For older, low-income individuals, however, broadband is the portal to opportunity and can lead to an improved quality of life, reduced social isolation, and foster independence, health, and well-being. It is also increasingly a key factor to finding employment and building job skills.

In New York City, the unemployment rate has been rapidly climbing. In January 2010, the rate of unemployment in New York City was 10.5%, compared with 10.4% in December and 7.8% in January 2009. This January 2010 unemployment figure translates into 417,500 individuals out of work in the city, a staggering number. The unemployment figures are particularly hard-felt by the older adult community. Without computer literacy skills, it is all the more difficult to find employment and compete in today’s market.

Searching for employment and preparing for a job is greatly assisted with access to broadband services. The AARP Foundation NYC Work Connections project will educate and incentivize thousands of seniors about the benefits of broadband by demonstrating the immediate and critical value it provides to unemployed older adults searching for employment. In New York City, AARP will partner with established, community-based organizations that have served the older adult community and have years of experience offering training programs to help seniors overcome digital literacy barriers. Together, NYC Work Connections will provide 3,000 seniors in need of employment with computer
literacy training, job skills, and employment services, as well as personal computers to empower them through opportunities to access broadband.

The NYC Work Connections will accomplish the following:

1) Increase the adoption and use of broadband technology by older, at-risk adults in New York City;

2) Prepare, train, and engage 3,000 low-income older workers in a program that equips low-income older adults with the hardware and training to utilize Internet technology for workforce/employment training and services; and

3) Educate and inform millions of New Yorkers—older adults – through media and community outreach – regarding the value and benefits of adopting broadband.

The AARP Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all as we age, with emphasis on the vulnerable and those at social and economic risk. The AARP Foundation has extensive experience designing and replicating successful training and placement projects in collaboration with other national organizations, community and government agencies, and trained volunteers. In 2008, AARP Foundation helped a record number of people improve their quality of life through direct, one-on-one assistance to 3.1 million people and by providing information to help another 2.2 million make sound decisions for themselves and their families.

After nearly four decades of administering the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), AARP Foundation will apply its successful portfolio of management and partnership strategies to launch and replicate the NYC Work Connections project. AARP Foundation has administered many large-scale training programs that continue to have regional and national impact. For example the WorkSearch and Training Assistance Program, which will be a critical venue for this project, currently collaborates with over 200 training vendors, including many community colleges. It served over 30,000 in 2009 alone; and provided training for over 1,000 non-SCSEP eligible older workers last year. Also, the AARP Foundation has a long track record of coordinating hiring programs with its 41 National Employer Team members.

Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) is a citywide nonprofit organization that has provided technology training and services to over 5000 older adults at more than 50 locations across New York City since 2004.

Incorporated in 1978, SAGE is the nation’s oldest and largest organization dedicated to serving and advocating for LGBT older adults. The SAGE computer lab has nine work stations and is the site for computer classes and SAGEWorks.

The project will create new jobs for staff directly involved in the management of NYC Work Connections. In addition, the project will help approximately 3,000 unemployed older workers find employment by assisting with their job search assistance, placement, and new job skills training. The project will also reach some one million individuals with our broadband media campaign, through AARP Foundation’s collaborations and access to a range of communication channels, partners, as well as paid and earned media placements.
The overall cost of the project is $2,906,882.00 for two years.