

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Kansas Farm Bureau Foundation

Project Title: Connect Kansas - Sustainable Broadband Adoption Initiative

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) and Connected Nation (CN) are seeking funding to launch a comprehensive sustainable broadband initiative that addresses the concerns outlined in the BTOP. Research suggests that there remains a breach between rural communities and the quickly developing global economy that many refer to as the “digital divide.” This widening chasm is recognizable by the lack of relevant access to, awareness and use of, broadband Internet and related technology. Kansas Farm Bureau is spearheading this Broadband adoption initiative because of its concern for farming and ranching communities who are lagging behind in the digital age. The partnership between KFB and CN will address this disconnect in Kansas using their mutually progressive ideology and CN’s proven, effective model for closing the digital divide.

The partnership will leverage the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) to advance the BTOP statutory purposes of 1) providing broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions, job-creating strategic facilities, and vulnerable populations and 2) stimulating demand for broadband. In order to address the broadband adoption predicament in Kansas, CN will perform the following functions:

1. Conduct comprehensive research on broadband use and barriers to broadband adoption in Kansas which will help in implementing customized awareness and educational programs. This research also helps identify pent-up demand for services in communities that private broadband service providers may not yet recognize.
2. Launch a statewide grassroots technology planning process and awareness campaigns in Kansas’ 105 counties. This process will be spearheaded by a team called an eCommunity Leadership Team that consists of leaders in business, local and state government, education, healthcare, tourism and community.
3. Facilitate a relationship between the state and the broadband provider community, including estimating the true cost of service build-out into unserved areas.
4. Increase the use and ownership of computers by providing computers through the No Child Left Offline Program and the Every Citizen Online Program. The ECLO will be funded by a complimentary BTOP application.

5. Assist grassroots organizations in implementing broadband applications that will help to drive adoption.

6. Provide technology training and coordination of existing training/literacy resources.

KFB consists of men, women and families with talent, skill, intelligence, wisdom and faith, who understand the power of collaboration to achieve mutual goals. But like many agricultural regions, Kansas has been steadily losing population for the last century. Some Kansas counties have seen a 70 percent loss in that time, leading to economic decline. It is in this regard that KFB is partnering with CN help revitalize these communities by beginning a statewide effort to generate sustainable technology adoption, not only for farmers, but for all Kansans. Broadband internet access and adoption will give farmers, ranchers, Main Street entrepreneurs and the entire community access to global markets, an increased customer base, expanded educational and employment opportunities and a connection to the outside world that those who already have broadband take for granted.

Connected Nation, Inc. is a national non-profit organization that is dedicated to one goal: to make technology work for previously underserved communities and markets across the United States in a way that improves community life and economic development while enhancing markets for technology providers so that no community suffers the repercussions of digital exclusion. Connected Nation provides the leadership that delivers technology for strong communities and open markets. With its experience in numerous states across the country, Connected Nation employs experts on high-speed internet technology, infrastructure and deployment – with divisions dedicated to mapping, research, public relations and communications, community planning/demand creation, and technology inclusion programs for underserved segments. Moreover, Connected Nation’s work has proven to be effective in state-based engagements like ConnectKentucky, Connect Ohio and Connected Tennessee.

The CN model is innovative because it recognizes that a “one size fits all” approach is not effective for creating local broadband plans. It is important to first diagnose the broadband challenges of each community. Under the eCommunity Strategies programs developed by CN, local leaders in each community will be empowered by this information and best practice experiences to pull from to design and implement an effective, targeted technology stimulation program for their community. This process offers an insightful method of assessing county-level readiness for broadband adoptions. It is designed to provide resources to local communities and educate how technology can impact the local economy and empower citizens and the community at large and in turn, stimulate demand for such services. As a result, 1.3 million additional Kentuckians have broadband access, and 100% of the counties having developed a technology plan through the eCommunity Leadership process. Once the needs pertaining to broadband adoption are isolated then grassroots organization will be implemented.

Successful deployment of a sustainable adoption initiative is expected to cost \$7,621,176 and will create or retain more than 85,000 jobs.

In addition, KFB has applied for a BTOP Public Computer Center grant for the depressed region of Sedan, KS. The application title is Connect Kansas-Sedan Broadband Communication Center. The ID number is 196.