Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: RALEIGH AREA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Project Title: Ark of Knowledge

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_____**Executive Summary**_____

The Digital Divide won't close by itself. But it can be closed. The people served by the Ark of Knowledge currently experience this divide daily. With a poverty rate of 14.3%, North Carolina has the 14th highest poverty rate in the United States. Our state is one of the only states with critical poverty rates found in different types of counties and major cities. These localities include: rural counties, urban counties and counties with major Native American reservations within them.

This project will address several needs of the residents of NC by: A) Preserving and creating jobs and promoting economic recovery; B) Assisting those most impacted by the recession; C) Providing investments needed to increase economic efficiency by spurring technological advances in science and health; D) Investing in renewable energy collaborations, and E) Stabilizing state and local government budgets.

The Ark of Knowledge is an innovative approach to solving the problem of limited broadband access for North Carolina citizens. The request for funding will enable the purchase of six (6) coach vehicles, their up-fit as fully mobile broadband telecommunications facilities, and initial program operating expenses. The vehicles will be utilized to enable low income populations, those with special needs, rural residents and professionals who serve these populations, to access the Internet for the delivery of information and services that will contribute to general improves in the quality of life for NC citizens.

This project will 'connect' unserved and underserved communities, urban and rural, to new opportunities, knowledge, and services via broadband technology. The Ark of Knowledge will serve the locations within counties in North Carolina with critical rates of poverty (at least 50% above the state average). Census data estimates for 2007 and 2008 indicate countywide poverty rates in the targeted counties are as follow:

Bertie (26%)

Columbus (21%)

Edgecombe (22%)

Halifax (26%)

Hertford (25%)

Northhampton (21%)

Robeson (29%)

Tyrrell (25%)

Vance (22%)

Wake (9%)

Warren (25%)

Additional demographic data from the 2007 and 2008 U.S. Census estimates show that the total population in these 11 counties is 1,286,824; the percent of White citizens ranged between 37.2% (Bertie) and 72.9% (Wake) in the 11 counties, the percent of citizens without a high school diploma ranged between 10.7% (Wake) and 37.5% (Northampton); the median household income ranged between $28,531 (Bertie) and $61,706 (Wake); and the number of citizens employed in private farm occupations ranged between 428 (Tyrell) and 369,539 (Wake) in the 11 counties.

The Ark of Knowledge will serve thousands of clients per year. With six buses serving the state at least 3 days per week and 52 weeks per year, the project will provide no less than 936 service opportunities for the buses. Estimating an average of 20 clients per service opportunity, we arrive at 18,780 clients per year and 56,160 clients over a three-year period. In addition to computer workstations, each bus will be equipped with a small conference room, seating capacity of 10. These mobile broadband technology vehicles will have the ability to reach citizens throughout North Carolina. We anticipate that very few proposals submitted will touch the diversity of areas and people as the Ark of Knowledge. This approach to service is truly innovative.

This project is a partnership between the following entities; Raleigh Area Development Authority (RADA); the CISCO Black Employee Network; Nashville Coach, Inc., and Provost bus company. RADA was founded in 2003 with support from the Southeast Raleigh Assembly (SERA) and initial funding provided by the Raleigh City Council in 2005. RADA has worked to fulfill its mission to facilitate new investment in the City's low and moderate-income areas. RADA is uniquely focused on helping property owners in low-

income areas consider development options and feasibilities, and facilitating and preserving homeownership. In short, RADA has served the segments of the community that BTOP and the ARRA were authorized to assist.

Wallace Green, RADA President, has 25 years experience in community and economic development. He has worked as a technology integration consultant, finance administrator for the Council on Foundations in DC, and served as Assistant Secretary for Territorial and International Affairs with President Carter.

It takes a village to raise a child. This is a global village consisting of families, churches, businesses, schools and industry. By example, the Cisco Black Employee Network (CBEN) has taken steps to enhance the "Human Network" by bringing together the entities to help to "Shrink the Digital Divide." CBEN is a group of Cisco IT professionals, engineers and managers who volunteer their time to introduce youth to cutting edge technology. Having CBEN as a partner increases the success rate of this proposal. CBEN has implemented several innovative technology projects in high schools, colleges and universities throughout North Carolina. CBEN is reaching out with the vision that the youth they serve gain new knowledge and skills, and possibly develop career interests in information technology.

This project will create 26 new employment opportunities: 6 full-time bus-driver positions, 12 part-time bus-driver positions, 6 part-time instructors, 1 project manager, and 1 full-time administrative assistant position. Most of the positions for bus drivers will be private contractors. Therefore, this project would further support economically disadvantaged small businesses.

The full cost of this proposal, including Federal funding, matching contributions and program income, totals $7,727,824 over a three-year period. Federal funding will be expended in the first year, matching contributions will be made over the three years, and program income will be generated in the second and third years.