



Z E R O D I V I D E™

COMMUNITY / TECHNOLOGY / OPPORTUNITY

Application to the
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
Broadband Technology Opportunities Program

Executive Summary

Submitted 8/17/2009

ZeroDivide is a 501(c)(3) public foundation rooted in community advocacy and coalition building. ZeroDivide has invested nearly \$50 million over the past 10 years in innovative programming that has encouraged sustainable adoption of technology, including broadband, in vulnerable communities. ZeroDivide will capitalize on its strategic initiative to spark relevant community solutions, increasing demand for broadband and assisting broadband adoption through an intermediary strategy that will advance two BTOP statutory objectives: 1) Provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions, job-creating strategic facilities, and vulnerable populations; and 2) Stimulate demand for broadband. To accomplish this goal, ZeroDivide is requesting \$11,060,352 under NTIA's BTOP program.

Statement of Need

ZeroDivide has learned that information and communications technology is a powerful tool to increase economic opportunities, create jobs, improve educational achievement, enhance health & well-being, and increase civic engagement in communities. In today's global economy, broadband infrastructure is an essential and basic component to information sharing and transmission. Content rich websites for news, health, education and government services demanding high-speed networks have created countless social benefits, including delivery of government services.

But while broadband can be the great social equalizer, none of this is possible without adoption. With 300 million people spread out over 3.5 million square miles, reports vary from 26% broadband penetration to 61% of U.S. households connected to a high-speed network (*Moving the Needle on Broadband*, 2009 NCTA

White Paper). Significant segments of the population – namely low-income, minority, immigrant, non-English speaking, rural, senior and disabled communities – cannot fully participate in the digital revolution due to lack of service, lack of economic resources to pay for access and equipment, and/or lack of education about the relevance of technology in their lives (2008 California Public Policy Institute, *Californians & Information Technology*). Within this increasingly complex and technology driven world, the existing social and economic inequalities are exacerbated, and many equalizing benefits of broadband aren't recognized. The digital divide continues to exist, and for some populations it is actually increasing.

Overall/Innovative Approach

In recognizing the potential to stimulate broadband adoption utilizing community-based solutions, ZeroDivide proposes an intermediary strategy by partnering with 44 anchor institutions (Partners) throughout 13 west, mid-west and northeastern states. Our approach will build community among the Partners across geographies and populations to share lessons learned and best practices, and leverage ZeroDivide's network resources to provide a scalable range of resources to the Partners. ZeroDivide's programmatic focus on content development includes: Media Production and Distribution, Online Curriculum Development, Civic Engagement, and Technology Capacity Building. The program design uses a distinctive ecosystem of broadband technology, training and education support that will be delivered through a set of innovative services.

An analysis of our grantee portfolios emphasized that complex barriers to broadband adoption vary among different populations and cannot always be resolved with a one-size-fits-all approach. Many organizations with promising solutions are doing critical work to promote technology and broadband in vulnerable communities, but unable to apply for federal grants on their own. ZeroDivide's approach will build their capacity to understand, design and use broadband technology through systematic teaching, training, and technical assistance; provide resources to a peer-based network of community anchor institutions; and leverage technology to benefit vulnerable communities throughout the U.S. Our organizational capacity, technology strategy and awareness campaigns (via Partners) will promote thousands of new broadband users and new subscribers over a 2.5-year period.

Areas to be served: Low-income communities in major metropolitan areas with significant numbers of minority/immigrant, disabled residents; other disadvantaged/vulnerable populations in Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Minnesota, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania, and 92 Congressional Districts.

Target area population: 660,000 people of which 53% have household income less than \$35,000; 40% are 5 to 29 years; 20% are 60+ years; 40% non-English speaking at home; 17% disabled.

Estimated number of potential broadband subscribers and users the project will reach: 240,000 (incl. 222,000 new broadband users; 18,000 new subscribers).

Estimated jobs saved and created: 1,315 via Partners; 7 via ZeroDivide = **1322 Total**.

Overall cost of proposed project: \$15,490,352.

Qualifications

ZeroDivide is deeply rooted in community connections and committed to improving vulnerable populations by focusing on technology-driven and relevant, content rich solutions. Founded as a 10 year spend-down foundation, Board policy now requires a rebuild of capital to expand our scope and tenure. ZeroDivide has the experienced management, capacity and qualifications to replicate and scale models that can be propagated across vulnerable communities relatively quickly, including:

- a. A 10 year proven track record in stimulating demand for broadband, adoption and accessibility in vulnerable communities
- b. Technical, organizational and financial capacity to provide demand-side opportunities/programs
- c. Ability to leverage experience and philanthropic/corporate relationships to efficiently implement projects in targeted communities with strong support within/by members of specific geographic areas
- d. A comprehensive set of start-up and implementation plans with realistic multi-year/multi-phased milestones & activities that are based on experience