

**Telecom and Broadband Issues Subcommittee Recommendation to the  
Federal Communications Commission's  
Advisory Committee on Diversity for Communications in the Digital Age:**

**September 15, 2009**

**Recommendation on Crafting a National Broadband Plan**

The Telecom and Broadband Issues Subcommittee of the FCC Advisory Committee on Diversity for Communications in the Digital Age recommends that the full Advisory Committee commend to the Commission the importance of focusing on broadband adoption, education and training when crafting the National Broadband Plan. The importance of adoption, barriers to adoption, and means of achieving adoption, especially among minority, multilingual and vulnerable populations, should be at the top of the agenda for the Broadband National Plan hearings the Commission will hold this fall.

An important priority for the National Broadband Plan should be to enable underserved populations – in particular, rural and low-income households – to acquire and make effective use of broadband service where it is already available. One of the factors is that many such households do not subscribe to the broadband services that are available because the financial strain of purchasing the necessary equipment is beyond their means and in some cases they lack the ready access to training and other educational opportunities to take advantage of the benefits of Internet use. The following actions by the Government would aid in promoting broadband adoption, education and training:

1. The Government should consider modifying the Universal Service Fund's Lifeline and Linkup programs, which help eligible low-income consumers establish and maintain telephone service, so that these programs include a subsidy for broadband hardware, connection and service. In addition, as part of its consideration with respect to modifying the Universal Service Fund's Lifeline and Linkup programs, the Government should recognize the success of the Enhanced Tribal Lands programs and create similar programs for broadband services on Tribal Lands.
2. The Government should review whether the E-Rate program, which provides affordable access to telecommunications services for schools and libraries, particularly those in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, should allow for broader community use of services funded through the E-rate and should be expanded to include funding for Internet literacy and computer training as well as access to portable computers for persons in low income communities.
3. The Government should consider incentives for adoption of next-generation, high-speed services at affordable prices.

4. The Government should partner with national intermediary nonprofit organizations as well as community institutions to build awareness and foster demand for broadband. For example, these institutions can develop programs to assist people in leveraging their current technology devices, such as cell phones or PDAs into broadband adoption and relevant applications. The process of establishing such partnerships could be initiated after such an intermediary organization is selected as a BTOP adoption grantee. Attached as Exhibit A are some examples of potential broadband adoption partners. The list is non-exhaustive and provided only to give some idea of the potential.

## **EXHIBIT A**

### **POTENTIAL BROADBAND ADOPTION/DIGITAL LITERACY PARTNERS**

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#### **American Library Association (“ALA”)**

ALA’s Fiber to the Library initiative envisions partnerships between libraries and communications providers to fund and build enhanced broadband connectivity for local libraries and library systems.

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#### **American Telemedicine Association (“ATA”)**

As part of its mission, ATA educates the government and the public about telemedicine as an essential component in the delivery of modern medical care. Although grant partnerships with MSOs will be formed at the local or regional level, ATA serves as a clearinghouse for those interested in telemedicine opportunities.

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#### **Computers for Youth (“CFY”)**

CFY’s Take IT Home program works directly with schools in low-income communities to improve the home learning environment of their students. Families are offered:

- A free computer – designed as a home learning center. Participating families keep the home learning center.
- Engaging educational software titles – in English, math, social studies and science.
- Internet access – at a reduced rate, where available.

- Family Learning Workshops – teach parents and children how to use their CFY home learning center to strengthen core academic skills.

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### **Common Sense Media**

Common Sense Media will create community-based programs in digital media education, including training, content, and the development and distribution of additional tools to help make American families more “digital media literate.”

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### **LULAC**

LULAC operates 57 community technology centers in low-income Hispanic communities throughout the country (largely funded by AT&T). LULAC is interested in expanding the number of centers it operates.

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### **National Urban Technology Center (“Urban Tech”)**

Urban Tech prepares residents in low-income communities across the country to participate in the information age by building technology centers to access computer training and web-based products for job training, health care and financial literacy, and life skills for at-risk youth. Since 1995, Urban Tech has established over 700 technology centers.

Urban Tech’s flagship program, SeedTech, works with community-based organizations to establish state-of-the-art Computer Training Centers. Partner organizations are provided with turn-key facilities, backed by Urban Tech's training, source materials and support. Each center

provides jobs for local community residents that Urban Tech trains and certifies as instructors. These participants in turn provide computer job training for other residents.

Urban Tech's Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) is a comprehensive web-based program for building life skills. The NY State Department of Education integrated the YLA program into its core curriculum. The Interactive Training Network (iTN), developed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, offers online access to curriculum and courseware, shared resources, webinars and other material.

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## **One Economy**

One Economy works to increase broadband demand and adoption by making broadband more accessible, offering digital literacy training and creating and distributing relevant content. Programmatic efforts include:

### Access Services:

One Economy consults with low-income property owners to develop options to deploy affordable broadband into the property; markets adoption programs to targeted demographics in the program location; designs, facilitates, and in some cases manages hardware purchase programs for low-income people to acquire computers for home usage; works with financing partners to extend microloans to facilitate these purchases.

### Digital Literacy/Digital Connectors:

The Digital Connectors program hires youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who are trained on a full development curriculum with a community service mandate to support the digital literacy/adoption needs of a designated community. In addition to the skills they gain they receive financial stipends and earn a computer for their work. One Economy operates some programs directly and has also established chapters and affiliates in many communities.

### Content and Online Applications:

One Economy offers an array of online programming through its media sites designed to increase the relevance of broadband to low-income communities.

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## **SeniorNet**

SeniorNet operates over 90 Learning Centers across the country including in “underserved urban” communities and Native American communities. The centers are targeted at those 50+ in age.

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