

Re: National Broadband Plan Notice of Inquiry Docket #09-51

Marlene H. Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW. Suite TW-A325
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Ms. Dortch:

We, members of the non-profit organization known as Bridging The Digital Divide, Inc., humbly submit the following comments as an effort to impact the FCC's directive to fully define the issues which may forever determine what will be the technology capabilities of the American public well into the 21st century. Our response will be specific regarding these five terms:

1. The definition of "unserved" area;
2. The definition of "underserved" area;
3. The definition of "broadband";
4. The non-discrimination obligations that will be the contractual conditions of BTOP grants and
5. The network interconnection obligations that will be the contractual conditions of BTOP grants.

Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grants are intended (by our limited understanding) to increase access to technology for populations considered "unserved or underserved". We suggest that a thorough investigation of the projects supported by Bridging The Digital Divide, Inc. (BDD) will confirm a necessary approach to actually achieving technology outreach to those populations currently stranded across the Digital Divide.

Attached to this message you will find extensive studies published by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), the Pew Internet & Life Project's "Home Broadband Adoption 2008" survey, the City of Houston's Digital Inclusion guidelines for its fledgling Wireless Empower Community Access Network (WeCAN Network), BDD's "Read By

Six" Initiative for children aged 0 to 5 and Prairie View A&M
Professor John Williams commentary on the Educational Opportunities
offered by increased Broadband Access.

This documentation is more than enough to define what may be
considered "unserved" or "underserved" communities, but the other
two terms regarding "non-discrimination" and "network
interconnectivity" remain vaguely defined for the purposes of
continuing rigid obstacles to true competition for the existing
Internet monopolies of the local "Baby Bells" (reconstituted into
the ancient "Ma Bell" of AT&T) or the primary local cable television
systems (i.e. TimeWarner, Comcast or Cox Cable for example).

True competition, and thereby a more accurate definition of these
terms, may come from the attached PDF describing the recipe of a
"Local Network Cookbook" created by Wally Bowen (wallyb@main.nc.us).
This recipe has been installed for local residents in rural areas
of North Carolina and maintained by Mountain Area Information
Network (MAIN) in Asheville, N.C. They service over 500 wireless
subscribers in a four-county area (including three rural counties),
1,200 local and national dial-up subscribers, 400 webhosting clients
and a low-power FM radio station. This is a truly amazing local
network operation that may not be duplicated very easily, but local
volunteers in Kansas City have done quite well through creating the
Dubois Learning Center Telehub Network.

These residents over a decade have erected a 180-foot tower with 10
to 20-foot repeater towers on churches, rec centers and member
non-profit organizations which serve to implement a functioning
wireless network that trains children in network cabling skills,
computer training and math/science tutorials; local technologists
volunteering to maintain the network and fruitful efforts which have
recently started a for-profit computer repair company. All these
examples including BDD's efforts at an annual Computer Olympics
challenging over 500 children from ages 2 and above should provide
evidence on how Stimulus funding through this American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act of 2009 can be effectively dispersed.

Once again, we of BDD humbly submit such evidence to the FCC during

this time of crucial decision-making whereby the real definition of "service" to these communities can be increased with funding to existing projects such as these. We await your response to our offer and patiently support whatever final determination will be made by the FCC.

John Gay/Marketer
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