



Connect Your Community Project Overview

OneCommunity and seven local community partners have been awarded \$18.7 million by the U.S. Commerce Department's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program. The funded project, **Connect Your Community**, is an intensive two-year effort to:

- Fund partnering agencies' capacity and ability to hire and train local residents to serve as a coordinated Connected Community Corps;
- Engage, train, equip and support thousands of disconnected community residents to become sustainable broadband adopters;
- Collectively develop and share effective broadband adoption and use strategies to serve as a national model.

Connect Your Community in Ohio: Three of OneCommunity's local partners (Lead Community Agencies) serve communities in northeast and north central Ohio. Together, OneCommunity and its partners have attracted \$11.7 million to support broadband adoption by more than 14,000 disconnected Ohio residents, and creating 58 direct new jobs.

- In Cleveland, the Cleveland Housing Network will work with Cuyahoga Community College, the Famicos Foundation, Ashbury Senior Computer Community Center, Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation and Esperanza Inc. These agencies will plan and implement the deployment of eighteen (18) Connected Community Corps members as well as manage a significant investment in new training center capacity and capabilities to directly assist more than 5,000 neighborhood residents. OneCommunity will provide free wireless Internet access for a large share of these new broadband adopters.
- The Akron Urban League is the designated lead agency for the project in Akron;
- The Appalachian Ohio Connect Your Community effort is led by Zanesville-based ACCEL, covers a broad area with outreach, training and connection assistance efforts including Muskingum County, Coshocton County and at least eight other counties.

Excerpts from BTOP Updated Executive Summary:

OneCommunity seeks funding for Connect Your Community (CYC), a collaborative effort with organizations in seven U. S. cities ranging in size from Detroit and Cleveland to Bradenton, FL and Zanesville, OH. CYC's broad purposes are to:

- a) Directly assist more than 26,000 disadvantaged households to cross the digital divide from disconnected to broadband-connected;

- b) Demonstrate the efficacy of a community-based approach to drive broadband adoption in low-income, low-education, and disadvantaged populations in varied community settings; and
- c) Develop a national collaborative to share curriculum and tools that can contribute materially to best practices in this field.

OneCommunity and its partners incorporate the experience and guidance of Community Technology practitioners in an approach that is high-touch and intensive on a local scale, but broad-reaching and replicable nationally. The seven (7) Lead Community Agencies (LCAs) named in this project are strong organizations, committed to serving vulnerable and disadvantaged clients in their communities. LCAs include Urban Leagues, educational institutions, economic development agencies, human service and housing organizations. Thanks to the strength of these local partners, CYC has deep community roots, experience built on existing relationships, and the ability to sustain growth well beyond the project's funding period.

National collaborators supporting key aspects of CYC include the Benton Foundation (best practices), the Alliance for Community Media (online content/collaboration), PBS (marketing awareness and content hosting), Angela Siefer (training content and policies), Jim Baller (municipal access), Karen Peltz Strauss (accessibility tools and practices), PC Rebuilders and Recyclers (affordable hardware) and TechSoup (technology guidance and software). Dr. Kate Williams, Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois, a leading authority on program evaluation which includes broadband initiatives, will design evaluation methods for the project.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project continues to report a digital divide in America, especially among people over 65, those with little education, with household incomes of \$25,000 or less, people with disabilities, African Americans, and those in rural areas. These are precisely the people who will be directly served by the CYC project through neighbor-to-neighbor programs in seven diverse communities. CYC will support communities with a combined population of 2.6 million people: larger cities like Detroit and Cleveland, smaller cities like Akron, Biloxi/Gulfport and Bradenton, and rural regions like the ten counties in Appalachian Ohio. In the aggregate, about a third of the residents of these communities are African American; about a third have household incomes of less than \$25,000; and about half have a high school degree or less. A partnership with the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technologies will ensure that all projects include provisions for serving people with disabilities.

Together, OneCommunity, the LCAs and their community partners will operate fifteen local CYC Work Groups, each with a team of five CYC Corps members, a supervisor, a training facility and a distinct geography or constituency to serve. Using a case management approach, each Work Group will ENGAGE, TRAIN, EQUIP and SUPPORT between 1,500 and 1,750 disadvantaged households during the project with near equal weight placed on each element of the adoption process.

In several of the CYC communities, collaborations have already produced plans for public interest broadband projects that will provide affordable access, a critical element of this adoption plan. Network builds with free service tiers are already funded and being developed in

portions of Akron, Cleveland and Lexington, plus Detroit has a similar pilot project directly aligned with this project.

CYC will recruit and train at least 26,000 new broadband users, employ 106, generate approximately 40 indirect jobs, and prepare participants to be competitive in today's information-centric workforce. Overall cost of the project is \$23,456,250 with an average BTOP adopter cost of \$719, including a \$125 set-aside for LCAs to use to directly support home adoption, and an overall BTOP cost per person served of \$327. CYC partners will work to reduce that cost and raise the program's value through collaborations with suppliers and local funding resources.

CYC maximizes sustained home broadband adoption to the most vulnerable citizens in America through a network of urban, suburban, and rural partnerships. It leverages, to the best possible degree, Recovery Act projects that are expanding technology accessibility to the CYC regions.

[OneCommunity](#) is an Ohio-based nonprofit dedicated to accelerating the adoption of information technologies to drive economic development in Northern Ohio. OneCommunity connects more than 1,000 public and nonprofit institutions via its regional fiber-optic broadband network, one of the fastest in the world. The organization collaborates with public and private sector partners to lead innovative 21st-century programs in health care, education, government and economic development.