

## Wyoming and Idaho Supplemental/Amended SBDD Grant Applications

EdLab Group Responses to Questions from NTIA

July 26, 2010

### 1. Describe in more detail how the projects are Wyoming/Idaho-centered and Wyoming/Idaho-customized.

Broadband planning projects facilitated by LinkAMERICA in Idaho and Wyoming share similar methods and inputs yet yield significantly different results. Conducted in close collaboration with participating stakeholders from each state, the planning process currently underway reflects an intentional, efficient and effective method for developing regional broadband investment plans. The steps taken to date in each state include:

- Intensive fact-finding, fact-verification research including one-on-one interviews.
- Sector-based situational assessments of broadband related activities in target areas (such as education, healthcare, public safety, economic development, etc.).
- A series of facilitated focus group discussions with key broadband stakeholders from all major geographic regions and relevant sectors.

These steps in both states were concluded in early June and results of these steps were used in developing the requests for supplemental funding in both states. It must be recognized that the Idaho and Wyoming requests for supplemental funding are severely challenged by the fact that the funding period is two years out, and much will change between now and then. Both states will have new leadership, different economic conditions, and a series of newly-minted regional broadband investment plans, i.e., the output of the current SBDD planning process, as well as the many other initiatives being planned or underway.

In preparing Idaho's request for supplemental funding, the following discovered conditions were considered as Idaho-specific conditions to be addressed:

- There is a moderate-yet-growing level of interest in broadband development, especially in the areas of education, economic development and government performance.
- There are several broadband-focused initiatives, mostly isolated regionally, and those with a statewide approach are focused on intermediary institutions (e.g., IRON's partnerships with IEN and INL), which do not serve residents.
- There is little to no discernable statewide vision or coordination for broadband development that spans the various relevant sectors.

Idaho's current SBDD planning effort is actively harnessing, fueling and shaping the growing broadband interests and emerging broadband initiatives into a statewide framework of regional investment plans. However, what is needed is the capacity and approach to leverage these plans into meaningful action. Idaho's request for supplemental funding is specifically designed to address these needs.

In preparing Wyoming's supplemental request, similar challenges were recognized; however, the initial research effort discovered several distinct issues in Wyoming.

- Approximately 70% of the state's roughly 544,000 residents live within 70 miles of the state's border; hence there is an inherent need to conduct trans-border transactions for education, health, wholesale and retail trade.

- There is strong value placed on limiting the role of government in addressing issues such as broadband development.

In both states, the LinkAMERICA Broadband Planning Team (LinkAMERICA Team) is transitioning from a research phase to a regional planning phase. The outputs from the research phase in each state have outlined important variables that will determine the success of broadband planning.

The LinkAMERICA Team regularly consults with stakeholders in each state on a variety of issues. In Idaho these stakeholders include nonprofits organizations, tribes, libraries, broadband providers, county leadership, health care interests and economic development councils. In Wyoming, these stakeholders include state transportation, tourism and administration departments, health care interests, public television, professional associations and business advocates.

The results from LinkAMERICA's research have exposed the fault lines, basins of influence, regional needs and key players on the broadband landscape for each state. Perhaps more importantly, the research process has built many key relationships between the LinkAMERICA Team and key organizations/coalitions in each state. There is a lot of change going on in Idaho and Wyoming as the broadband environments are constantly shifting due to new funding (e.g., BTOP and BIP), new mergers (e.g., Frontier's acquisition of some Verizon exchanges), new initiatives (there are many) and soon-to-come new political winds (both states will elect new Governors this year).

**a. What unique things happened in Idaho in planning and resulted in the solution described in the applications?**

In Idaho, results from the research phase clearly outlined a comprehensive assessment of high need areas – a full report of the interview process is available online. Below is a selection of these findings:

- Lack of statewide vision for broadband development, which hinders coordinated private and public investment in infrastructure and adoption.
- There are significant gaps in awareness of the value of broadband among city and county governments, small businesses and many low-income, rural communities.
- There is strong interest for high-capacity route diversity for public safety networks, including 911.
- Many educators and employers describe a need to expand post-secondary education's reach to k-12 students, employed workers and unemployed workers.
- There is a need to expand the effective use of HIT (especially EHRs and health data exchange) among all hospitals and eventually clinics – this is a particularly acute need in rural locations.
- The State's DOC and economic development leaders stress the need to strengthen the investment readiness in many communities for growing and/or relocating businesses.

In preparing the supplemental request for Idaho, the LinkAMERICA Team and the designated contact from the Idaho's CIO Office considered these and many other facts. The conclusion was

reached that the regional broadband investment plans (development of which is currently underway in the original SBDD project), will need

- a) Dedicated in-state leadership and coordination;
- b) Targeted education outreach; and
- c) Supporting technologies to facilitate planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation across Idaho's vast distances.

And, it was clear that Idaho currently does not have the capacity in place to initiate and sustain this effort. The supplemental request was designed to build the needed capacity and transfer ownership/stewardship to an appropriate in-state steward.

**i. Describe how the processes differed.**

In Wyoming, results from the research phase highlighted similar but noticeably distinct needs -- a final report is under review for approval by the Wyoming Broadband Advisory Committee:

- There is strong resistance to ask for and use federal assistance in broadband development, yet there is a growing awareness that a market-based approach is not, and will not address Wyoming's challenging broadband investment environment.
- There is need for an effort to raise the awareness of the value of broadband services among Wyoming's legislature and some state government administrators.
- Mobile broadband is a common priority for WYDOT, tourism advocates, public safety and business advocates. → Related to this is the struggle the Public Safety Communications Commission has in working with the state's recent decision to invest in reverse compatible interoperable communication systems.
- WYPBS is seen as one of the most trusted conduits between state government and residents, yet they face multiple challenges as they transition to more IP-based transmission.
- Many communities throughout the state struggle to find viable investment strategies. However, the arrival of NCAR to the Sheridan area has opened many eyes to new options. There is a need to shape/innovate regional opportunities.

Perhaps the most notable discovery in Wyoming is a resounding call for leadership on statewide broadband issues, which is complicated by a strong resistance to appoint that leadership to the state government. This points to the need for a public-private partnership; the LinkAMERICA Team has discovered a pattern in Wyoming where key state leadership initiatives are packaged as public-private partnerships.

While the specific findings for Wyoming vary significantly, there are strong similarities in what's needed. There is a clear need for awareness building, success tracking and in-state coordination capacity.

Despite the similarity in methods described in the Idaho and Wyoming requests, this is far from a cookie-cutter approach. The training modules, the in-state leadership capacity-building process, and the monitoring-evaluation systems are highly tailored to the assets, barriers, priorities and opportunities for each individual region of each state. The reports and other datasets assembled by the LinkAMERICA Team demonstrate significant difference in each state's assets, barriers, priorities, and opportunities.

One of the many findings from LinkAMERICA's initial research phase indicated that the residents of both states retain a strong sense of localized individuality. So, not only will a "Wyoming solution" NOT work in Idaho, but a "North Central Idaho solution" will not work in South East Idaho – one size does not fit all in these states. The LinkAMERICA approach, which is based on data and built on a growing web of individual relationships, is carefully designed to distill, refine and position-for-success broadband investment solutions for regional broadband priorities that are defined and implemented at the regional level.

**b. NTIA needs to understand the constituencies, working relationships we have developed in each state.**

In Idaho, the LinkAMERICA Team, in collaboration with the Office of the CIO, have formed an informal advisory team that is guiding many important planning decisions such as the regional organization of the state, the logistical considerations for regional meetings, identification of grassroots champions, and the development of key content pieces. Essentially, the team helps ensure the process looks, feels and is 'Idahoan'.

In Wyoming, the Governor has appointed and chartered the Broadband Advisory Committee that is chaired by the Office of the CIO. Many members of this committee have expressed strong interest in, and have been heavily involved with, the broadband planning work to date.

**i. List specific groups from each state.**

In Idaho, the LinkAMERICA Team is working with:

- Idaho Regional Optic Network
- Syringa Networks
- Idaho State University
- University of Idaho
- College of Western Idaho
- Clearwater Economic Development Association
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Idaho Health Data Exchange
- Idaho Hospital Association
- Idaho State Library
- Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security
- Idaho TechConnect
- Partners for Prosperity
- Latino Economic and Development Center
- Idaho Public Service Commission
- Idaho Panhandle Area Council
- Boundary County Economic Development

- Idaho Economic Development Association

In Wyoming, the LinkAMERICA Team is working with:

- Cheyenne Regional Medical Center
- Wyoming Health Information Organization
- Wyoming Business Council
- Wyoming PBS
- Wyoming Association of Municipalities
- Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation
- Wyoming Telecommunications Association
- U of WY Center for Rural Health Research and Education
- U of WY Outreach School
- Dubois Telephone Exchange
- WY Public Safety Communications Committee
- WyDOT: WyLink
- TCT
- Teton County School District
- Wyoming State Library
- Wyoming Travel & Tourism

- c. Revise the conclusions so it is clearer how the outcomes are state-specific and solve state needs.**

In Idaho, the outcomes of the proposed supplement activities will include:

- The testing of and the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for six regional broadband investment plans developed during the current SBDD project.
- Development and implementation of a series of educational outreach modules designed for city and county governments, local businesses, K-12 and post-secondary organizations, hospitals and clinics and economic development councils.
- Engaged and advanced capacity of a state appointed director whose primary roles are focused on coordinating and maintaining progress on regional broadband investment efforts and integration with government policy processes.

In Wyoming, the outcomes of the proposed supplement activities will include:

- Customized regional monitoring and evaluation frameworks based on extensive testing of broadband investment plans designed to maximize the beneficial impact and sustainability of broadband development in all regions of the state -- the LinkAMERICA Team is still working with the Wyoming Advisory Team to define regions in that state.
- A portfolio of educational content modules focused on building the awareness and promoting action towards broadband development among key target audiences,

including state legislators and administrative leaders, small and medium businesses, libraries, and community leaders.

- Established leadership capacity, possibly in the form of a public-private partnership that oversees the implementation, funding, monitoring and continuity of regional broadband investment efforts around the state.

A word about the monitoring and evaluation framework: Each regional broadband investment plan will be subjected to a stress-test and then modeled using a socioeconomic impact tool. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for each regional plan will use the indicators developed by the stress-test and modeling steps. The M&E framework will then be custom fitted to the available capacities and resources in that region, such as existing data collection processes depending on the scope and content of the individual investment plan.

**2. Describe further the increasing management/compliance/fiscal management role EdLab Group is taking in years 3 – 5 and how CQA’s roles are decreasing.**

The EdLab Group, as designated by the states of Idaho and Wyoming, and led by Executive Director/CEO Karen Peterson, will provide fiscal and administrative oversight to the project, including coordinating with the Department of Commerce/NTIA on programmatic and fiscal reporting, overseeing the subcontractors and collaborating with the state staff to implement the project. The EdLab Group will hire a Program Director to lead the project because in year 3, CostQuest Associates will transition out of the Program and Project Management roles it has now. CostQuest will only be performing the mapping and data development functions of the program. This shift will eliminate their general and administrative management of the program. EdLab Group’s Program Director and other resources will ultimately provide training and guidance in the transition of the program to the state’s personnel at the conclusion of the project.

**a. Additionally, describe how CostQuest Associates (CQA) mapping management role is different than EdLab Group’s project management role.**

CostQuest’s role in years 1 and 2 included managing the full portfolio of all SBDD projects for Idaho and Wyoming. CostQuest currently ensures the delivery of outputs and expected outcomes for these projects. In the Supplemental Period, years 3 – 5, EdLab Group will be assuming these roles, while CostQuest’s role will only be related to meeting the expectations of the EdLab Group. CostQuest will focus on delivering the expected data, maps, surveys and other outputs – according to the project deliverables, milestones and timelines developed and managed by EdLab Group. CostQuest will only have project management functions related to internal resource management functions such as developing internal timelines, time reporting and resource planning and staffing.

**b. Describe roles with more specificity to ensure there are not duplicative areas.**

VISIONTECH 360 is reviewing their budgets for the Capacity Building program and may reduce the requested amount to reflect additional efficiencies that may be leveraged assuming funding of four states for this program. A response to this question will be submitted on Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**3. Specific outcomes are needed for each subcontract and project in the Capacity Building program.**

Outcomes for the in-state director subcontract:

- Better use of state and federal resources resulting from well coordinated regional broadband development initiatives and improved collaboration among the state's higher education, non-profit and state government entities engaged with broadband development.
- Increased capacity to monitor and track progress in broadband development in terms of access, adoption and utilization.

Outcomes for the VisionTech360 subcontract:

- Improved ability of communities to attract private broadband investment as a result of effective planning and documentation of the business cases supporting investment in each of Idaho's six planning regions and Wyoming's (seven) regions.
- Demonstrated success in attracting and effectively utilizing relevant governmental and philanthropic grants to achieve the state's broadband development goals.
- Documented achievement of measurable benchmarks to be established within priority areas of broadband impact that may include but not be limited to such things as: reduced commuting to obtain health care services, expanded integration of information technology within small business processes, better integration of on-line learning within schools, expanded delivery of degree programs to isolated rural households, etc.

**4. Provide a few sentences to describe how costs were determined and divided across the four states – in particular regard to VisionTech360 and CQA subcontracts.**

- a. **Describe VisionTech360's role, how it is not duplicative and how there are synergies within the work plan. We are particularly concerned that the project is top-heavy on management, so it will be need to be very clear what partners are doing, why they are the ones doing it, and what the outcomes are to the project.**

VisionTech360 will serve each state in three important capacities:

1. Collaborate with state university partners in developing the needed training modules, the content of which will depend on the emergent needs of the regional planning teams. It is expected that synergies among the underlying technology systems for module delivery will arise between the two states; however the content, theme and context of each module series will be specific for the given state. On this aspect of the work plan, VT360's will feed content and design parameters to the state partners, maintain the operational relationships with the partners, and provide quality control of the final outputs. VT360 personnel have extensive experience researching, designing and building technology-mediated training tools.
2. Design and implement transferable monitoring and evaluation systems to track and ensure success for each regional broadband investment plan in both states. Each state will have its own system. Synergies are expected in the development of the stress-testing method, the investment impact modeling process, and system-interface-design. In building the monitoring and evaluation framework for each regional broadband investment plan, VT360 researchers will work with subject-matter experts to stress-test

the investment logic for each plan - evaluating the cost, the viability, and the expected impact of each regional investment plan. Results may impact the investment plan. VT360 researchers will then model the social and economic impact of the planned regional broadband investment. The stress-test and socioeconomic modeling performed on each regional broadband investment plan will yield 1) weaknesses in the plan, which can be addressed before the investment is made, 2) key measurable benchmarks to track the progress of the investment, and 3) valuable insights to inform future regional investments. The entire process will be supported by an easy-to-use technology interface designed for repeated and sustained use by an in-state partner, such as a state university. VT360's personnel include credentialed experts in economic analysis of broadband policy and investments, social impact of broadband services and technologies, project evaluation, and technology interface design and software development.

3. Build and transfer leadership to in-state entity to coordinate the entire broadband development process (planning, testing, implementing and monitoring regional broadband investments) as an ongoing function. As part of this work element, VT360 will "hire" an in-state associate, apart from the state director and university partner, to facilitate daily logistics and operations related to module development and the monitoring-evaluation framework. This position's primary focus will be on supporting the maturation of the state's leadership capacity to take over the broadband development process. VT360's personnel have successful experience building and spinning-off leadership initiatives in several different environments: higher education, non-profit associations and subject-focused coalitions.

**5. Revise budgets so EdLab Group's project management costs are spread across all of the proposed projects.**

Budget revisions will be submitted on Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**6. Review indirect cost calculations for errors.**

An answer to this question will be submitted on Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**7. Explain indirect costs and the 20% take/14% match process.**

An explanation of the indirect costs will be submitted on Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**8. Review costs –NTIA roughly estimates we are 17% over what they expected.**

Budget revisions will be submitted on Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**9. Revise the Wyoming GIS project and budget significantly if the state wants to move forward. NTIA cannot fund more than 25% of the project.**

The State of Wyoming is currently reviewing the program and will work with NTIA to find an acceptable approach.