

**Broadband Florida Q1 2013 PPR Report Details  
Project Attachment – Technical Assistance (Grants)**

**Question 2. Describe your progress meeting each major activity/milestone approved in the Project Plan for this project; any challenges or obstacles encountered and mitigation strategies you have employed; planned major activities for the next quarter; and any additional project milestones or information.**

Planned Major Activities and Mitigation Strategies for the Next Quarter

In 2013, the Broadband Florida Grants and Resource Development Team changed our focus to be more effective. The 2013 strategies follow:

Strategies:

1. Focus on broadband-related resource development for healthcare and education Community Anchor Institutions
  - a. Healthcare: Maximize Universal Service Fund (USF) supported healthcare programs
    - i. Assist applicants in determining which program (the traditional Rural Health Care Program or the new HealthCare Connect Program) provides the most resources
    - ii. Provide application assistance
  - b. Education: Utilize funding resources to enhance infrastructure or broadband services for educational institutions
2. Focus on project development and resource development assistance

First Quarter Major Accomplishments

During the first quarter of 2013, the National Science Foundation Advanced Technology Education grant proposal authored by the Florida State University Information Institute and entitled "Assessing Information Technology Educational Pathways that Promote Deployment and Use of Rural Broadband" was recommended for funding in the amount of **\$800,000**. The problem addressed is the lack of knowledge and understanding about Information Technology management at institutions in rural areas. This grant will strengthen the employee pool for IT staffing (including general IT, as well as broadband and network technicians) by improving educational support related to broadband, telecommunications, and networks for future and current IT employees in rural areas. Broadband Florida will be included on the Advisory Board and will lend access to our contacts and rural connectivity data.

Lauren Harris gave a presentation at the Florida Education Technology Conference in Orlando, FL on January 30, 2013. The presentation was entitled "Get Funded with the Grants Assistance Team." She described our effort to increase funding to Florida institutions and communities that increase access to and use of broadband. She also discussed ways to reduce the digital divide and increase the digital economy in Florida by strategically approaching planning and development for funding educational technology needs. Although Florida performs poorly on federal and other competitive grant applications, we are working to expand broadband access through creative use of Universal Service and other program supports. The session closed by offering technical assistance for application development to Community Anchor Institutions in Florida.

### Deliverables

The remainder of the First Quarter report for the Team describes performance based on the scope of work. New measures are developed for this year. These performance measures will be tracked and then refined to address unforeseen challenges. The quarterly deliverables are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Grant Deliverables for the Grants Assistance Team from the NTIA Grant Scope

1. Research, Review and documentation of Homeland Security DHS, NG911, National Science Foundation NSF, Health Care Information Exchange and Information Network HIE/HIN, Grants.gov, FCC, Universal Service Fund, Smart Grid, Libraries, Education and Economic Development based funding programs
2. Determine Community Anchor Institutional grant applicants and needs
3. Communicate grant opportunities to stakeholders
4. Provide technical assistance and program management support to grant applicants
5. Incorporate grant program research results into grant database and web portal
6. Provide quarterly report and newsletter to stakeholders of quarter activities and results
7. Continue Grant Program outreach and awareness building with public and private institutions
8. Grant program Training to Community Anchor Institutions
9. Document funding program requirements for applicants

### Research, Review and Document Federal Funding Programs

The Team updated methods of tracking funding announcements differently this quarter, placing a heavy focus on the Universal Service Healthcare Connect fund. Also, significant time was invested into the Portal Development, employing APIs offered by major funding sources. The Portal will serve as our major outreach tool in the coming quarters. Regular outreach continues with phone calls, emails, stakeholder meetings, webinars, and application assistance. The team reported outreach in February and March and estimated outreach in January. The outreach estimated total follows:

Table 2: Grants and Resource Development Team Outreach, Quarter 1

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Stakeholder Meeting Attendance	65
Personal Calls	278
Emails	733
Executed Outreach Campaigns	13
Webinars	6
Application & Resource Development Assistance	10
Total	1,111

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#### Determine Community Anchor Institutional Needs

For health care, the Team worked with the Florida Hospital Association to survey members about their interest in the HealthCare Connect Fund. The Association delayed the distribution of the survey until after the legislative session to address their most pressing legislative priorities. Meanwhile, the Florida Regional Planning Councils, the statewide organization of the eleven Florida Regional Planning Councils, understands the need for enhanced broadband access and infrastructure especially in the rural areas. The Councils are effective service organizations to the State of Florida, its local governments, and citizens. They are consensus builders and problem solvers, and serve as regional liaisons which help to articulate those multijurisdictional issues that need resolution. The Councils are evaluating the opportunity to lead a statewide consortium for the Health Care Connect Fund. If the Councils lead the consortium, they will conduct a thorough needs assessment.

The Team is also providing assistance to a start-up foundation which will support technology access in Florida schools and libraries. The Team conducted a thorough data collection and analysis of educational broadband technology usage and aggregated education technology needs assessments for the foundation (Name TBA). Other data collected and analyzed include E-Rate filing status, trends, and broad technology funding trends over multi-year periods. Qualitative data collection focuses on plans for assessment of use and capacity at school, district, and state levels involves the Florida Department of Management Services Division of Telecommunications and the Florida Department of Education. The Team has also reviewed case studies and data studies on technology and funding trends in schools and libraries around the country.

Next quarter, the Team is conducting a market survey of best practices for the potential statewide consortium for the HealthCare Connect fund. Data will be collected from the Universal Service Fund Pilot Projects.

#### Communicate Grant Opportunities to Stakeholders

In the First Quarter, the Team provided extensive information to the Florida Hospital Association and the Florida Regional Planning Councils about the Health Care Connect Fund. Based on this outreach, these two organizations may be involved in a statewide consortium application.

Additionally, the Team has been working closely with a start-up foundation which is developing an education funding model funded through private, corporate donors to support the technology needs of Florida schools and libraries. Funding development will tap a broad sampling of donors from relevant industries. Funds will be granted to schools and libraries in Florida to pay the non-discounted portion of E-Rate funding. In order to ensure that the funding is utilized well and leveraged to capacity, the model also includes the provision of technology strategic planning by the foundation.

Provide Technical Assistance and Program Management Support to Grant Applicants

In the fourth quarter, the Team assisted on four funding programs that included:

[Universal Service Fund Rural Health Care Program and HealthCare Connect Fund](#)

The Team compared the potential discount of the two existing Universal Service Fund health care funds, including the Rural Health Care and the HealthCare Connect, for the Florida Department of Health. The Rural Health Care Fund pays the difference between high-cost rural broadband compared to typically lower-cost urban broadband. A request for information from telecommunications companies across the state determined there is practically no rural-urban difference in cost to the Florida Department of Health. This is because the Department's telecommunications provider is SUNCOM, which is owned and operated by the state of Florida. SUNCOM has flat-rate pricing that minimizes the cost difference between rural and urban locations.

We recommended that the Department of Health apply for the Healthcare Connect Fund. This fund provides for a 65 percent discount on broadband for a majority rural consortium and their urban partners.

USDA RUS Telecommunications Loan Program

The Team provided funding development assistance to the North Florida Broadband Authority. The NFBA was awarded a federal grant under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program to support efforts to provide service as a middle mile provider. The Team is assisting NFBA apply for the Department of Agriculture Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program, which makes long-term direct and guaranteed loans to qualified organizations for the purpose of financing the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, and operation of telephone lines, facilities, or systems to furnish and improve Telecommunications service in rural areas. The Authority will use loan funds to expand their area of service and continue to develop broadband connectivity options in rural areas of North Florida. The Team provided data collection, resource analysis, and project management support and expects to continue offering assistance into the following quarter.

FirstNet

The Team provided the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles assistance for the FirstNet program. The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 created the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) as an independent authority within National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The Act directs FirstNet to establish a single nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network. The Team assisted the Department by providing broadband coverage data, as well as narrative regarding tools and other assistance Broadband Florida can provide during FirstNet implementation.

Next Quarter:

Since the HealthCare Connect Fund will officially begin July 1, 2013, we will continue working with potential consortia including the Florida Regional Planning Councils and the Florida Hospital Association. After that date, the Team will begin submitting Forms 460 on behalf of consortium leaders. Competitive bidding is not expected to take place until August or September 2013.

The portal website and web-based tools will continue to be a priority for the Team. We are conducting training and hiring interns to help update and manage the portal.

We will continue providing assistance to the start-up foundation focused on providing non-discounted E-Rate support to Schools and Libraries. As needed, we will further assist with the FirstNet and Telecommunications Loan program application.

Incorporate Grant Program Research Results into Grant Database and Web Portal

The Team is fully engaged in building a portal to host the grants database, facilitate outreach, store recorded webinars, and enable newsletter subscription and dissemination. The portal is expected to go "live" in the second quarter.

Continue Grant Program Outreach and Awareness Building with Public and Private Institutions

The Team is developing marketing material for the Healthcare Connect Fund. These include brochures, form templates, and other necessary documents. The Team will also work to facilitate communication between the start-up foundation and partners, resources, and served organizations.

Grant Program Training to Community Anchor Institutions

As the HealthCare Connect Fund develops, so will our training and outreach. We do not expect the HealthCare Connect forms or filing instructions to be posted on the Universal Service Fund's website until July.