



Wireless Minneapolis Digital Inclusion Task Force

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The work that we are completing here in Minneapolis, which will result in a multi-million dollar community benefits agreement, invites many comparisons to the cable franchise agreements that made community and public access television successful in previous decades. Here is brief history of our efforts to secure this historic agreement in Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis Broadband/IP Initiative (later called Wireless Minneapolis) was launched by City officials in fall of 2004. The project evolved in response to public safety concerns the City felt might best be addressed by a new city-wide network designed to provide mobility for first responders, police, fire and City staff.

The City's Business Information Systems (BIS) department facilitated a series of internal stakeholder meetings beginning in August 2004. Public safety, city services, public housing, schools, libraries, community development and other city agencies were represented at stakeholder meetings. Participants were asked to submit their recommendations related to the initiative, including how they might make use of the network, cost savings that might be realized, transition issues that required attention, and to how the project might impact their services, departments and agencies.

I was invited to participate in these meetings, representing the non-profit sector and community technology centers. One of the issues I was able to bring to the table during these meetings was the need to include community development and "Digital Inclusion" language within the Broadband/IP RFP. As a result, when the RFP was released in March of 2005, it did include, as a "desired service", a request for vendors to propose how they would support community development and community technology efforts. "Desired services" meant that vendors should include a discussion of these issues in their proposals, but they were not required to do so.

Once the City released the initial RFP, the BIS department hosted a public vendor Q&A, attended by over 100 telecom company representatives from around the world. From this list of respondents, the City received 22 formal proposals, and selected 9 for further review. Several committees were organized to review the proposals, and eventually the field of vendors was narrowed to two finalists.

During the 6-month period that the City was reviewing proposals and developing vendor selection criteria, our grass-roots organization, along with another local agency, began a community education and outreach effort called "the Digital Access +Equity Campaign". Our objective was to educate the community about the Broadband initiative, discuss how it might impact residents, and create a strategy to ensure digital inclusion would be part of any municipal network project.

Our coalition received seed money from the Minneapolis Foundation to support this campaign, and we hosted a series of 20 community meetings from Sept. 2005 through May 2006. Also during this time, community technology advocates attended city-sponsored information meetings, and presented "Digital Inclusion" information at City Council hearings --whenever the Broadband/IP issue appeared on the

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agenda. We also sent out information packets to area non-profits, wrote letters to the editor at local and community newspapers, and contacted local elected officials to solicit their support.

In February of 2006, in response to a public hearing at which several community technology center staff testified as to the technology needs of their constituents, the Minneapolis City Council amended the RFP to *require* vendors to address community development and specifically, Digital Inclusion efforts.

The result of this action was that the City of Minneapolis went on record requiring a community benefits agreement (CBA) in conjunction with the vendor contract. Once a CBA was formally required, the City directed the BIS department to convene a Digital Inclusion Task Force to collect community input and publish a set of recommendations regarding CBA issues and strategies.

The Task Force reviewed community generated recommendations, including a community benefits report developed by the grass-roots community coalition that had been meeting for 8 months. The Task Force received a small allocation from the BIS department to complete its work and publish a report, including a review of all correspondence between City departments, staff, elected officials and residents (public comment). We also reviewed over 450 surveys that community organizers and volunteers had collected as part of the Digital Access + Equity Campaign.

In September of 2006, the Digital Inclusion Task Force community benefits recommendations were agreed to by the City and the winning vendor, with few changes made during contract negotiations. As the Task Force coordinator, I participated in the vendor selection process, and eventual contract negotiations.

The term sheet below outlines what is in the final contract, which was signed on 11/2/2006. Here also is the timeline that shows how community coalition activities and City-sponsored events coincided, which was by design. In order to make sure elected officials understood the importance of this issue in the community, we developed a strategy of working with the Office of Community Engagement and BIS as they held informational meetings around the City.

I was invited to present a power-point presentation about Digital Inclusion and community benefits at these and other events (which helped City staff address community concerns about the project) and this gave us an opportunity to collect surveys and input from community stakeholders that were otherwise difficult to reach.

Without the grass-roots community organizing efforts, there would be no Community Benefits Agreement in Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis Broadband initiative was not a "digital divide" project-- it was a public safety project. Yet the City offered publicly owned assets to the vendor in exchange for building out this network, and the vendor was invited to sell commercial and residential accounts on the network as well. Until the community organizing efforts got underway, little discussion around "public benefit" had occurred.

Once the community became informed and actively involved in this conversation, City Hall found it impossible to ignore, and instead came to embrace and support our efforts. We feel the City acted in good faith to ensure Digital Inclusion was embedded in the contract, and that community concerns and recommendations were taken seriously throughout the process.

There are two documents worth reviewing to fully appreciate the work of community volunteers involved in these efforts. The Digital Inclusion Coalition's Report on Community Benefits, and the Wireless Minneapolis Digital Inclusion Task Force Report are included with this memo.

These two documents are complementary, with the Task Force incorporating many of the community coalitions' recommendations.

Timeline: Minneapolis Digital Inclusion Outreach Efforts

November 2004- July 2005

A representative from (the non-profit) Community Computer Access Network (C-CAN) participates in City-sponsored stakeholder meetings about the Minneapolis IP/Broadband initiative, along with representatives from school, library, public housing and park boards.

August 2005

The *Digital Access + Equity Campaign* is created. Campaign partners include: The Community Computer Access Network, the Community Technology Empowerment Project (CTEP AmeriCorps) and the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability.

September 2005

The Digital Access + Equity Campaign, a grassroots community organizing effort, receives seed funding from the MSNet Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation and begins community outreach efforts.

October 2005- May 2006

Campaign partners, with support from CTEP AmeriCorps members, facilitate community outreach efforts, and host 20+ roundtable meetings. Over this 8-month period, meeting attendance averages 15-20 participants. DigitalAccess.org is re-launched as a "Wireless Minneapolis" resource website, and over 100 new subscribers sign-up to receive the C-CAN listserv. In order to reach "offline" and new immigrant residents, AmeriCorps members translate a "community technology needs" survey into four languages and distribute copies through local social service agencies and at community meetings.

January - May 2006

The City of Minneapolis sponsors a series of 6 community meetings to discuss the Wireless Initiative. Representatives from the Campaign present Digital Inclusion information at each meeting and collect survey data from attendees. Organizers share this information with elected officials and City staff.

February 2006

Campaign leaders and community technology advocates, including community technology centers' staff and volunteers, testify at a City Council hearing on the wireless initiative. As a result of this testimony, Council amends the RFP language to require that vendors address Digital Inclusion through a formal and binding community benefits agreement. To ensure community engagement, Council directs city staff to assemble a Digital Inclusion Task Force to review public comment and community input on this issue.

March-April 2006

The *Wireless Minneapolis Digital Inclusion Task Force* is convened to ensure broad stakeholder representation. Twenty-nine Task Force members review community coalition recommendations, collect and review correspondence and emails received by the City on this issue, and make recommendations to City staff regarding community benefits requirements. Over 600 residents participate in community meetings, fill out surveys and/or email the City with questions and comments related to the Wireless Minneapolis project.

C-CAN, working with the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Project, identifies two underserved neighborhoods in which to launch wireless networks in conjunction with vendor trials. City staff supports the selection of these neighborhoods, and meets with neighborhood agencies to plan pilot projects.

May 2006

The Digital Access + Equity Campaign changes its name to "*The Digital Inclusion Coalition*". With support from the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, the coalition releases their community benefits report. This report provides an articulate, detailed list of requirements that the contract must address to adequately support Digital Inclusion efforts.

June 2006

Wireless pilot projects go "live" in both North and South Minneapolis neighborhoods: launch events are coordinated by CTEP AmeriCorps members, the City, and community agencies. Over 150 residents attend launch events. By late summer, 458 "community technology needs" surveys have been collected at community events and posted to the website.

July 2006

The Digital Inclusion Task Force releases their final report, incorporating much of the Coalitions' recommendations. These recommendations form the basis of the community benefits agreement that vendors are required to respond to in their "best and final offers" in August 2006.

August 2006

The City enters into final negotiations with the two finalist vendors. The Task Force coordinator works closely with City's negotiation team to ensure CBA issues are addressed in vendor selection. US Internet is selected to provide wireless service to the City of Minneapolis.

September 2006

City Council reviews and approves the Wireless Minneapolis contract terms including a **community benefits agreement**, agreed to by the vendor and the City during negotiations. City Council directs staff (BIS) to finalize the contract with US Internet.

November 2006

The Digital Inclusion Task Force selects the Minneapolis Foundation, a community foundation, to manage the newly created "Digital Inclusion Fund". USIW makes initial 200K contribution to new Digital Inclusion Fund. First RFP for grants issued July, 2007.

December 2007- Initial grants announced in Dec 2007, 12 community based organizations awarded grants totaling 200K/

**Terms of the USIW/ City of Minneapolis Wireless Services Contract
(Community Benefits Agreement Items)**

- \$500,000.00 in cash, up front, to launch a new Digital inclusion Fund
- 5% annually of ongoing pre-tax net income directed to the same fund
- 2% of additional profits from adjacent community contracts directed to the fund
- Subsidized training and wireless accounts for up to 100 Non Profits and CTCs, and 15K annually in trial account vouchers that CTCs can distribute to community volunteers
- Free wireless access zones, covering up to 5% of the geographical area of the City (parks, plazas, etc.)
- A free "civic garden" of content, available to everyone who can access the signal, that includes up to 90 neighborhood portal pages, city websites, community news feeds, and public safety information
- 100% of portal page advertising revenue will be directed to the Digital Inclusion Fund
- Vendor will make available and support a content management system, and community server, available for use by neighborhoods and community groups
- A guarantee of network neutrality from the Vendor