



US Ignite and Project OVERCOME Select Seven Communities for National Science Foundation-Funded Broadband Awards

Underwritten by the National Science Foundation, Project OVERCOME has received additional support from Schmidt Futures, extending total grant dollars to \$2.7 million

WASHINGTON – March 30, 2021 – March 30, 2021 – US Ignite announces grant awards to seven communities for Project OVERCOME, a \$2.7 million effort designed to connect the unconnected through novel broadband technology solutions. The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) conceived of and is providing \$2.25 million in funding for the project, with Schmidt Futures joining as a financial and strategic partner to extend Project OVERCOME’s geographic reach with an additional \$450,000.

Through Project OVERCOME, US Ignite will launch and oversee multiple broadband efforts that combine innovative technical and community engagement approaches to reach underserved populations. In the selection phase of the project, US Ignite conducted a rigorous panel review process drawing from experts across the municipal, research, and broadband industry sectors. In addition to assessing merit, reviewers evaluated proposals to ensure a diversity of people would be served by Project OVERCOME. Winning proposals reflect a range of rural and urban environments, demographic characteristics, geographic regions, housing types, local and industry collaborations, and technical approaches. The project management teams selected and listed below also represent a diverse and interdisciplinary group.

“The pandemic has made clear just how critical broadband connectivity is to our livelihoods,” said NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan. “While there is no single solution for closing the digital divide, we must bring communities, technologists and social scientists together to pursue multiple novel approaches for expanding broadband access for all.”

Teams Chosen for Funding and Project Deployment:

Lead Organization: DigitalC – Cleveland, Ohio

Project: Internet service to an underserved and historically Black neighborhood delivered through a combination of fiber and millimeter wave technologies, with local technical support and device purchase assistance

Lead Organization: Missouri University of Science and Technology – Clinton County, Missouri

Project: An RF over Fiber (RfOF) deployment using intelligent routing and multiple last-mile wireless technologies to serve a rural community

Lead Organization: The Westchester County Association – Yonkers, New York

Project: A CBRS network in a digital opportunity zone supported by exceptional partnerships to ensure youth involvement and digital equity

Lead Organization: Onward Eugene – Blue River, Oregon

Project: A resilient wireless link to rural McKenzie Valley combined with new fiber, a pilot CBRS education network, and new incentives to attract further private broadband investment



Lead Organization: Allied Media Projects – Detroit, Michigan

Project: A combination of fiber and fixed wireless infrastructure deployed and supported by a network of Digital Stewards employed at a neighborhood anchor institution

Lead Organization: Libraries Without Borders – Loiza, Puerto Rico

Project: A wireless mesh network deployed to three community centers providing digital skills training and health literacy information to low-income residents in underserved neighborhoods

Lead Organization: University at Buffalo – Buffalo, New York

Project: Internet service delivered via CBRS to the historic and under-resourced Fruit Belt neighborhood near the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

"Connecting the country with broadband is the central infrastructure challenge of our day. Now more than ever, we need connections that reach all and help us work, learn, be informed, enlightened, and entertained," said Jessica Rosenworcel, Acting Chairwoman for the Federal Communications Commission. "That means in Washington and in communities across the country we need to get creative with more projects just like these. Congratulations to the winners and thank you for rising to this challenge."

"We were immensely gratified by the quality of proposals we received," said Joe Kochan, CEO for US Ignite. "It's a challenge to combine creative technology solutions with strong partnership and community engagement strategies. Yet we found proposers exceeded our expectations in both criteria, and we are delighted to announce not only a stellar lineup of winning projects, but also one that reflects a strong mix of environments, demographics, housing types, and geographic regions. We couldn't be more pleased with the results and what comes next for these communities."

Project OVERCOME was originally designed to support five community deployments. However, the success of the proposal process expanded both the desired scope and funding capability for the project. Schmidt Futures, a philanthropic initiative founded by Eric and Wendy Schmidt, joined as a financial and strategic partner in March 2021 to support next-generation networks that provide connectivity to communities in need, helping to realize a core finding of the Reimagine New York Commission which Eric Schmidt chaired.

"To create a more prosperous and equitable economy, we need universal connectivity," said Eric Schmidt, co-founder of Schmidt Futures. "This will require new strategies to keep broadband markets competitive and internet service affordable for every American. At Schmidt Futures, we bet early on exceptional people making the world better—and I'm hopeful Project OVERCOME will identify the technologists working on novel solutions for the future, that we can scale around the country to make a significant impact."

The communities selected for Project OVERCOME will now begin an onboarding process to refine implementation plans, activate partnerships, and prepare for network rollouts.

For more information on Project OVERCOME, please visit: <https://www.us-ignite.org/program/overcome/>



About US Ignite

US Ignite is a high-tech nonprofit with a mission to accelerate the smart community movement. Our public-private partnership programs leverage advanced networking and data science to drive key outcomes for communities. Our work also enables new opportunities for wireless and IoT research designed to help narrow the gap between cutting-edge experimentation and scalable, real-world technology deployments. For more information, visit www.us-ignite.org.