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Beatrice Proposal, Among Winners of "Beyond the Walls" Awards
Libraries in seven states to lead community TV WhiteSpace projects

MAY 9, 2017 (LINCOLN, NEB.) — The Gigabit Libraries Network (GLN), in partnership with San Jose State University's School of Information (iSchool), announced today that a total nine projects will receive funding and support to expand the Libraries WhiteSpace Project.

Sponsorship for the campaign originated through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS): **"Libraries Leading in Digital Inclusion and Disaster Response via TV WhiteSpace Wireless Connections."** Five libraries in ME, GA, NE, SD and WA will receive awards under the IMLS grant.

These funds will underwrite the costs of equipment and installation for libraries who've initiated partnership projects with other community institutions to explore and develop innovative uses for TV WhiteSpace (TVWS) network technologies to support remote fixed and portable library access points at new locations in their communities starting this summer.

One winning proposal from Beatrice, Nebraska gained support from the state CIO, "The State Office of the CIO has already convened a multi-sector TV White Space exploratory meeting. I believe that the findings of the Beatrice Public Library project will inform and potentially accelerate the deployment of TV White Space across other sectors, including K-20 education, agricultural research, telehealth/public safety, and biological research."

Like WiFi, TVWS units use free open spectrum, requiring no third party carriers, ongoing fees, licenses or other permissions for use as wide area intra-facility networks. But unlike WiFi, TVWS has long range and penetrative capabilities that can support broadband connections over miles and around or through obstructions like trees and buildings.

"This may be the first time the economics of any infrastructure has favored rural areas because they typically have an abundance of valuable open public spectrum. The time has arrived for the country to finally take advantage of this powerful new communications resource, too long in the making," notes project Co-director, Don Means of the Gigabit Libraries Network.

Details and objectives for each of the individual project plans are available on the Beyond the Walls page. Winning proposals have shown creativity in thinking of new ways and locations to install remote library WiFi access points. They also demonstrate an ability to collaborate with other community institutions like schools, health clinics, community centers, post offices, shelters, etc. An important secondary use for these TVWS enabled hotspots will be as redundant disaster communications resources, where the units can be installed for rapid redeployment to areas of need in times of crisis.

The Beyond the Walls initiative builds on the work of a grant in 2015 from the Knight Foundation to GLN in partnership with the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) to build preliminary analysis and orientation tools, including a 2 minute overview video, for libraries interested in exploring the capabilities of license-free TVWS equipment to inexpensively expand access to a range of institutional services.

"This initiative will further explore the role of libraries as leading community anchors promoting access and inclusion through strategic technology integration. There's a nice intersection between what we're implementing and the concept of community anchors, which has been used by IMLS to describe the role of libraries in providing civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality to communities," says project Co-director Kristen Rebmann of SJSU.

Project outreach and proposals review are being supported by the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB), the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) and the The Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC).

Participating libraries: IMLS award winners: Millinocket Memorial Library, Millinocket, ME; Twin Lakes Library System, Milledgeville, GA; Beatrice Public Library, Beatrice, NE; Huron Public Library, Huron, SD; Yakama Nation Library, Toppenish, WA. Additional participating libraries: Capital Area District Libraries, Lansing, MI; Otsego County Library, Otsego, MI; Superiorland Library Cooperative, Marquette, MI; Schlow Centre Region Library, State College, PA.

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