Driving Broadband Adoption in the Latino Community

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Categories: **BTOP** [1]   **National Telecommunications and Information Administration** [2]

Cross-posted from NTIA blog by **Anna M. Gomez** *[4],*
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Communications and
Information

I recently had the opportunity to speak to the National
Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
(NALEO) and the League of United Latin American Citizens
(LULAC) about NTIA's Broadband Technology Opportunities
Program (BTOP) and the work it is doing to promote
broadband adoption in the Latino community.

A high-speed Internet connection can provide access to
everything from online job postings to educational
opportunities to valuable healthcare information. But too
many Latino households remain cut off from these important
benefits.

NTIA, in collaboration with the Census Bureau, conducts
some of the most extensive survey work on broadband

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adoption trends in the U.S. Our most recent survey, in October of 2010, found that 72 percent of White households nationwide subscribed to
broadband, compared with only 57 percent of Hispanic households. The survey also found that socioeconomic factors such as income and
education do not fully explain the gap. Even after accounting for these factors through regression analysis, Hispanic households still lag White
households in broadband adoption by 11 percentage points on a nationwide basis.

So NTIA's BTOP program is supporting a number of projects specifically intended to benefit Latinos – by funding computer centers in
neighborhoods with large immigrant communities, by offering computer training and digital literacy classes in Spanish, and by helping Latino
entrepreneurs and Latino-owned small businesses get established online. I'd like to tell you about a few of those projects:

- The **Texas State Library & Archives Commission** is using BTOP funding to add and upgrade computer centers in libraries,
  community colleges, schools, recreation centers and other public buildings around the state. The Technology Expertise, Access and
  Learning for all Texans (TEAL) project is working through 38 local library systems across Texas to install 2,100 new workstations and
  upgrade 580 existing machines in more than 150 existing and new computer centers. The program is also funding statewide training for
  librarians so that they can provide job search, career development and technology assistance to patrons – including many Latinos. The State
  Library & Archives Commission used BTOP funds to create a Webinar series entitled "Building Texas Latino Communities through
  Technology" for Texas library staff. And it is currently using BTOP funds to translate a computer training manual into Spanish. In addition,
  many of the libraries participating in the program are offering English-as-a-Second Language classes using BTOP-funded computers.

- A non-profit called the **California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF)** is using a BTOP investment to provide affordable computers,
  low-cost home broadband connections and digital workforce training for low-income residents and other vulnerable groups in California.
  CETF works through 19 partners statewide, including non-profits that offer job training and career development services for the
  unemployed and community organizations that serve California's diverse ethnic populations. One partner, the Latino Community
  Foundation, is working through a network of eight community groups in the San Francisco Bay Area to provide digital literacy classes in
  Spanish to involve parents in their children's education and help them find work. Another partner, Radio Bilingue, is educating migrant
  farm workers in California's Central Valley about the utility of broadband and supplying pragmatic information on how to get connected.
  Yet another partner, the Chicana/Latina Foundation, gives college scholarships to young Hispanic women who serve as "broadband
  ambassadors" in their communities - spreading the word about the benefits of broadband in places with low adoption rates.

- A San Francisco non-profit called the **Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)** is using a BTOP investment to open 12 new computer centers and expand five existing ones in more than a dozen low-to-moderate-income Latino neighborhoods across the U.S. Altogether, with outside matching funds, the program supports 20 computer centers around the country. The project - called Latino Tech-Net – is a collaboration among MEDA, the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders and a network of local economic development organizations serving Latino communities. The 20 computer centers, which are equipped with 359 new machines paid for by BTOP, provide bilingual digital literacy training and adult education classes, as well as assistance with resume writing and job searches. The centers also offer customized technology workshops and one-on-one consultations covering topics such as budgeting and marketing to help Latino entrepreneurs establish and grow their businesses. Phoenix, Minneapolis, Kansas City and Philadelphia are just a few of the places that are home to the new computer centers.

There are many other BTOP-funded projects around the country also working to increase broadband adoption among Latinos. Momentum is building as more Hispanic households get online and encourage others to do so too. We hope the BTOP investments will play an important role in helping to close the digital divide in Latino communities across the U.S.

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