Smart Community Networks Challenge

How can we leverage existing infrastructure to provide robust wireless Internet connectivity in communities that need greater access?

Ten percent of all people in the U.S.—34 million people—lack access to internet connectivity, a number that jumps to a staggering 39% in rural communities and 41% on Tribal lands. The Smart Community Networks Challenge aims to close this access gap by enhancing wireless connectivity in areas where Internet access is a challenge, whether due to geographic, financial or other factors. With a total of $1M in prize money, the Smart Community Networks Challenge seeks wireless solutions that leverage existing physical infrastructure to increase Internet connectivity in underserved areas.

What might the world look like if we're successful in sourcing this solution?

Under-connected communities, including rural and low-income areas, could be brought online using efficient, low-cost solutions that respond directly to community needs.

Possible example solutions

- A community wireless network whose nodes are mounted on existing infrastructure like street lamps, utility poles or phone booths

How to get involved/call to action

In under-connected communities, many people still lack a home internet connection and the access to jobs, education and resources which that connection provides. Do you have a big idea that can efficiently connect the unconnected and help increase digital inclusion in your community?

Entrants will be required to design and build both the network (hardware) as well as any necessary software that will allow nodes and users to connect to the network. Entrants are also expected to provide documentation that would allow others to build and deploy a network based on the submitted design. Entrants are not required to test their prototypes using real municipal infrastructure; the use of municipal infrastructure is subject to federal, state and local laws, and at the discretion of individual entrants.

Judging Criteria

Designs and prototypes will be judged by a panel of experts from academic, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations working in the fields of research, technology, and community engagement based on the judging criteria outlined below.

Technical Feasibility: How feasible are the ideas presented? What are the technical capabilities of the idea or prototype?

Differentiation: How does the proposed solution differ from or improve upon existing solutions? What is innovative or novel about the proposed concept or technology?

Affordability: How affordably could the idea/prototype be implemented in a real community?

Social Impact: How well tailored is the idea or prototype to the needs of the community and users for which it is designed? How will the design of the idea/prototype help engage community members in order to maximize utilization?

Scalability: How will the idea or prototype be adaptable to broader communities or areas? How scalable is the project? How will the idea or prototype provide tools and documentation to anyone who might wish to build upon it or launch a similar effort?

Challenge Timeline

Submissions will open in June 2017. Entrants will have until November to submit a Design Concept for consideration. In January 2018, we'll announce which entrants will move on to the next stage, as well as which entrants have been awarded prizes for outstanding Design Concepts. Entrants that have been approved to move on to the Working Prototype stage will have until June to work on and submit documentation of their prototype. Winners of the final Challenge awards will be awarded in August of 2018.

Where To Submit

Submissions will open on June, 15th 2017 at wirelesschallenge.mozilla.org. Sign up for our email list at https://mzl.la/WINS_EMAIL and we'll send you an alert when submissions are open.