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MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES A NEW GRANT PROGRAM TO ADVANCE LAST-MILE BROADBAND SOLUTIONS

Westborough, MA (April 6, 2011) – The MBI today announced a competitive grant program to advance last-mile solutions and expand broadband connectivity in western and north central Massachusetts. The MBI’s Last-Mile Broadband Solutions Program will offer grants for broadband service providers to plan and deploy last-mile services to connect homes and businesses in unserved and underserved areas. The service providers will deploy broadband technologies using new and existing infrastructure, as well as *MassBroadband 123*, the MBI’s 1,338 mile Internet backbone network that will extend broadband access to over 120 communities in the western and north central parts of the state.

“The MBI is excited to support broadband service providers in developing last-mile solutions to expand broadband connectivity in the unserved and underserved communities in the region,” said MBI Director Judith Dumont. “This is a critical step toward reaching Governor Patrick’s goal of extending broadband access and bridging the digital divide.”

The MBI is currently accepting [grant applications](#) from broadband service providers, which include existing or new providers from public or private companies, public entities and non-profit organizations. Providers can submit a proposal to fund projects for broadband planning, broadband deployment, or both. The planning category includes the development of market studies, business plans, network engineering and designs, and other actions needed to develop and implement last-mile broadband solutions. The deployment category will fund providers who will acquire and install broadband equipment to expand last-mile services using the *MassBroadband 123* network, as well as new and existing infrastructure before the network is complete. Both planning and deployment grants are critical to spur investment by broadband service providers and expand broadband connectivity and economic development in the region.

The MBI plans to fund multiple proposals of up to a maximum of \$50,000 per provider and project, supported by a twenty-five percent cash or in-kind match from providers. Collaboration among broadband service providers and municipalities is allowed and encouraged. All proposals for the Last-Mile Broadband Solutions Grant Program are due on May 9, 2011. The MBI plans to announce the grant awards in June.

The ***MassBroadband 123*** network will be open access to allow any broadband service provider to connect and offer its services, which will increase competition and affordability of options. The MBI signed an agreement with Axia NGNetworks USA (Axia) to serve as the network operator for the ***MassBroadband 123*** network. Axia will provide wholesale services to broadband service providers on the ***MassBroadband 123*** network and maintain and refresh the fiber-optic network to ensure its operability and efficiency.

The MBI is continuing to work closely with municipal leaders and broadband service providers to advance the ***MassBroadband 123*** project. The MBI and its outreach partner, WesternMA Connect, recently hosted a summit in Northampton to highlight last-mile broadband technologies that could be deployed in unserved and underserved areas using the ***MassBroadband 123*** open access network. The summit included Axia, as well as broadband service providers and municipal leaders from communities in the project's service area.

MassBroadband 123 is a critical component of the Patrick-Murray Administration's initiative to expand broadband connectivity across the state. The MBI was awarded \$45.4 million in federal stimulus funding to develop the ***MassBroadband 123*** network. The Commonwealth is providing \$26.2 million in matching funds, bringing the total public investment in the project to \$71.6 million.

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About the MBI

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) is working to extend affordable high-speed Internet access to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices and other public places across the Commonwealth. Governor Patrick created the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, when he signed the Broadband Act into law in August 2008. The Act gives the MBI the authority to invest up to \$40 million of state bond funds in necessary and long-lived infrastructure assets, such as conduits, fiber-optic cable and wireless towers. For more information on the MBI, please visit www.massbroadband.org.