

**The Digital Freedom Initiative
Annual Report**

March 2003 – February 2004

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Digital Freedom Initiative

Annual Report 2003

Executive Summary

The goal of the Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI) is to promote economic growth by transferring the benefits of information and communication technology (ICT) to entrepreneurs and small businesses. The DFI approach leverages the leadership of the US government with the creativity and resources of American business, and the vision and energy of local entrepreneurs in host countries. The DFI was launched on March 4, 2003 at the White House, where the Governments of Senegal and the United States agreed to pilot the DFI - the first of up to twenty countries to join the initiative over the next five years. On October 16, 2003, President Bush announced that Peru and Indonesia had agreed to join the DFI partnership.

The Technology Administration of the Department of Commerce, the US Agency for International Development, the Department of State, the Peace Corps, the Small Business Administration, and the DFI Roundtable provide the DFI global governance structure. The DFI Roundtable is an open membership body composed today of over 90 US companies and non-profit organizations. US private sector participants provide vision, strategy, and business expertise to all phases of the DFI. They provide volunteers and other resources that leverage activities supported by the US government; and they partner with private sector entities in the DFI host countries to identify and implement activities that promote economic growth and opportunities.

A DFI implementation plan for Senegal was developed by August 2003 and implementation began in September. Implementation plans for Peru and Indonesia are in progress.

DFI/Senegal continues to serve as the DFI pilot country, learning how best to apply the DFI model and leverage the strengths of the US and Senegalese private sectors. DFI/Senegal project features three focus areas: 1) improving productivity of small and medium sized businesses by using ICT to facilitate use of better business practices and increase access to markets, 2) making sources of credit more accessible to rural entrepreneurs by using ICT, and 3) strengthening the telecommunications policy and regulatory climate, increasing competition, lowering internet access fees and introducing new wireless technologies. Since September, the DFI/Senegal team has conducted the following activities with the help of eight US volunteers and seven Senegalese volunteers:

- Assessed the capabilities of local ICT firms.
- Assessed e-money activities and their potential in Senegal, and issued a tender for businesses interested in e-wallet activities.
- Via a public tender process, selected four activities that will improve access to markets for small and medium enterprises. Each project will be assigned DFI volunteers to assist it.
- Assessed helpful existing or potential tools and services available to small and medium enterprises related to ICT in preparation for providing volunteer assistance in this area.

- Hewlett-Packard, a DFI Roundtable charter member, identified a Senegalese firm with skills and experience in e-money applications and is collaborating with them.
- Cisco Systems, another DFI Roundtable charter member, is developing twelve Cisco Networking Academy locations to train Senegalese to install, manage and maintain modern computer networks.
- Through DFI, an international telecommunications lawyer worked with ART, the Senegalese Telecom regulator, as it prepares the legal framework for effectively and transparently regulating a competitive telecommunications sector.
- Assisted by the DFI, the ART has established a Web Site, through which it is increasing transparency and public participation in its activities and decisions.
- The Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) helped organize an IT industry trade group that provides, for the first time, a unified voice to government and regional decision makers regarding progressive telecommunications policy reforms.

In year two of DFI, DFI/Senegal will continue with its activities as a pilot country, transferring lessons learned about the effective use of the DFI approach to other DFI countries. DFI/Peru and DFI/Indonesia will begin activities and up to five additional DFI countries may be announced.

I. Introduction

The Bush Administration launched the Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI) in March 2003 at a White House ceremony led by Commerce Secretary Evans, US Agency for International Development Administrator Natsios, USA Freedom Corps Director Bridgeland and Peace Corps Director Vasquez. Members of the DFI Interagency Working Group include representatives from the Department of Commerce (DOC), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) the Department of State, the Peace Corps, the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The goal of the DFI is to promote economic growth by transferring the benefits of information and communication technology (ICT) to entrepreneurs and small businesses in the developing world. The DFI approach leverages the leadership of the US government with the creativity and resources of America's leading companies and the vision and energy of entrepreneurs throughout the developing world.

The Essential Role of the Business Community

The private sector is a pillar of the DFI. Its inclusion in the design and implementation process brings strategic thinking and business savvy that will lead to replicable and scalable solutions as the DFI expands its programmatic activities to 20 countries by 2008. Part of the value of the DFI is to ensure that solutions generated in one country can be shared with and deployed in other DFI countries. Over 90 US companies and non-profit organizations are members of the DFI Business Roundtable, a body with open membership. A list of organizations that have participated on the DFI Business Roundtable is provided in Attachment 1. Roundtable members seek to expand markets for technology, develop products and services that are more relevant and appropriate to local needs and strengthen relationships with host country companies. US private sector companies participate in the DFI in a number of ways including: providing vision, strategy and business expertise to all phases of the DFI; providing volunteers and other resources that build upon activities supported by the US government; and partnering with private sector entities in the DFI countries to identify and implement activities that promote economic growth and opportunities.

In each DFI country, DFI is implemented through an alliance with US private sector companies in coordination with the host country's government and its private sector. The DFI is implemented in each country over a three-year period and consist of two broad classes of activities: Core Activities and Leveraged Activities. Core Activities are undertaken with funds from the US Government using business and technical volunteers and other resources from private sector partners. Core Activities will also include partnerships between US Government agencies (e.g., the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)) and appropriate host country entities such as the Agence de Developpement et d'Ecadrement des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (ADEPME) and the Agence de Regulation des Telecommunications (ART) in Senegal. Leveraged Activities are led by the US private sector and relate to the Core Activities. They are undertaken as opportunities arise and private sector partners are identified. All Leveraged Activities are undertaken with private resources and/or US Government resources outside of the core DFI budget.

II. Key Objectives of the Digital Freedom Initiative

DFI has three key objectives:

Enable Innovation through Volunteer-led Business and Entrepreneur Assistance

The DFI leverages its activity by placing volunteers from the private sector and non-profit organizations with small businesses and entrepreneurs to assist in growing their businesses through the application of technology and the transfer of business expertise.

Drive Pro-Growth Legal and Regulatory Reform

The State Department, Commerce Department, USAID, FCC, SBA and other public and private sector organizations work to assist DFI countries in developing pro-growth regulatory and legal structures to enhance business competitiveness.

Leverage Existing ICT Infrastructure to Promote Economic Growth

The DFI identifies opportunities to leverage existing information and communications technology infrastructure, for example, in-country cyber-cafes and telecenters. The DFI will generate use of information and services that take advantage of existing ICT infrastructure and support, for example, financial services and product price information to help entrepreneurs and small businesses better compete in both the regional and global market place.

III. Summary of Activities in DFI Countries

Senegal

The DFI is being piloted in Senegal. Its focus is on improving accessibility of credit to small businesses by applying information and communications technology (ICT), improving SME performance and market access through ICT, and promoting a more pro-competitive policy and regulatory environment. A DFI/Senegal Design Plan was completed in August 2003, and a DFI team was established in Dakar. As the DFI pilot country, DFI/Senegal is honing the DFI approach to see how it can be applied most effectively. More detailed information on DFI activities in Senegal is provided below in Section IV

Peru

At the APEC Leaders meeting in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2003, President Bush announced the expansion of the DFI to Indonesia and Peru. In November 2003 a design team consulted the US and Peruvian governments as well as members of the private sectors in both countries.

Over three years, DFI in Peru will clarify and enhance the policy and regulatory environment to promote access to and applications of information and communications technologies (ICTs), and will seek to expand the market for ICT products and services by assisting medium, small, and micro enterprises to use these products and services to exploit opportunities to improve productivity, expand sales, and further integrate into the formal economy. Commercial business development services providers and organizations will be complemented by volunteers from both the Peruvian and United States private sector and national service organizations. More details are provided below in Section V.

Indonesia

A DFI design team visited Indonesia in mid-January 2004. The team sought programmatic guidance from the USAID Mission to Indonesia. The design team conferred with representatives of the Indonesian private sector, the government of Indonesia and NGO's. The US and the Indonesian business community will play a critical role in adapting the DFI/Indonesia Design Plan to the market and business conditions of Indonesia, the priorities of the government of Indonesia, the Indonesian private sector and NGO communities. The design team reviewed existing USAID ICT programs, updated earlier assessments and ICT designs conducted by USAID and coordinated the goals of the DFI with that of the new USAID Mission strategy. USAID Mission approach concentrates on telecommunications policy reform and liberalization, fosters private sector entrepreneurship, and uses IT as a tool for economic and social development. The assessment team was comprised of specialists in each of these three categories who also have experience working in Indonesia and in developing earlier DFI designs. The USAID Mission in Jakarta is now reviewing a draft DFI design plan.

IV. DFI in Senegal

DFI Office Activities

By November 2003, the DFI/Senegal Team, supported by the Geekcorps, a DFI business partner, set up its office in Dakar. The staff then developed work plans for each volunteer supporting DFI activities, including ICT supported financial services; ways to increase business capacity of telecenter and cyber-café; the use of ICT to improve SME access to markets and business capacity. DFI/Senegal activities are now well underway with a website (www.dfi.sn) and volunteers working on several activities. The team maintains close communications with Peace Corps Senegal, USAID and numerous agencies in the Government of Senegal related to promoting small business development, telecommunications and trade (e.g. DFI/Senegal is a member of the Steering Committee for the preparation of the "Small Business Caravan" to be organized by the Government of Senegal). The team supports and helps coordinate contributions and visits by DFI business partners including Hewlett-Packard and Cisco. Some examples of specific DFI/Dakar activities follow.

Core Activities

Four US volunteers have conducted detailed technical assessments of current activities and technical approaches in four areas: 1) e-wallet/smart card/money transfer, 2) market access, 3) improving performance of cyber-cafes and telecenters, 4) SME Operations and Management, and 5) a cyber market (an internet access center for merchants and artisans in a dense market area. The volunteers prepared detailed tender documents to implement technology-enhanced interventions in each of the areas noted above. Three of these tenders have been published and applications have been received and evaluated. For the activities chosen through this process, DFI is competitively selecting local contractors who, in partnership with Geekcorps and Senegalese volunteers, will implement the activities starting in late February or early March 2004.

Sample activities selected so far through this process are:

- A business center in a secondary city

- Assistance for a local SME support agency to create a database supported network of women's businesses
- In-depth management, marketing, and technical training for cyber-cafes and telecenters
- Set up of a Client Relation Management (CRM) package for a medical office
- Assistance to develop on-line courses and a digital library for a major local university

All beneficiaries will share the costs of their DFI activities. Some of the activities will most likely be replicated on a larger scale, such as training and technical assistance for a larger number of medical offices. Also, some of the approaches and results will be shared across DFI countries.

The first Senegalese volunteer was recruited in January 2004 to work on the volunteer data base and on DFI/Senegal Marketing. So far there have been a total of seven Senegalese volunteers working with both DFI staff and Geekcorps volunteers.

DFI/Senegal is still in the early phase and expects a higher regular volume of activity in the near future. Some of this activity is expected to be in partnership with USAID/Senegal initiatives relating perhaps to investment in Senegal by Senegalese diaspora, marketing of natural and non-traditional foods, and export promotion. DFI/Senegal coordinates its activities with the Peace Corps in Senegal and will integrate the work of Peace Corps volunteers in Senegal who focus on assisting small businesses.

Telecommunication Policy and Regulatory Development

The Government of the Republic of Senegal has taken a major step forward in the establishment of pro-competitive telecommunication policy environment, (publicly stated, via newspaper articles and public speeches), that it intends to set aside the current SONATEL monopoly and introduce competition in all aspects of the telecommunications sector.

The Agence de Reglementation de Telecommunication (ART), the Senegalese telecommunications regulatory agency and a key DFI partner, has taken meaningful steps to increase transparency and public participation in the regulatory process. For example, the ART website, designed with DFI assistance, is now operational. Draft Decrees to establish the new competition framework in Telecom have been put out for public comment, via the Senegal Information Technology and Services Association (a DFI leveraged activity).

DFI specialists continue to provide comments and updates to the ART as this process unfolds.

Leveraged Activities

- SITSA, the organization being facilitated by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) is now formed and seeking legal status in Senegal. SITSA will provide a unified voice for the ICT industry in Senegal.
- Ronald Langston, Director of the US Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), and staff visited Senegal. The MBDA, the only federal government agency tasked with the promotion of US minority-owned businesses, is supporting DFI/Senegal by linking US minority businesses with Senegalese businesses. A central purpose of the October MBDA mission to Dakar by Director Ron Langston was to explore the opportunity to build a

strategic partnership with the Senegalese Ministry of Commerce. The partnership would provide management and technical assistance to Senegalese entrepreneurs and provide for the general support of business linkages between US minority-owned firms and Senegalese businesses.

The Director met with Senegalese government authorities in October to discuss possible cooperation. Since his return to the US, he has been informing members of the US minority business community, particularly the Senegalese- American community, about the DFI/Senegal project. He is encouraging them to partner with Senegalese businesses and US citizens operating businesses in Senegal. Follow-up activities by the MBDA will likely include website links, training sessions focusing on formalizing the informal sector and access to capital and a partnership with leading Senegalese business associations.

- Cisco Systems has launched the Senegal component of its Africa 100, a USAID Global Development Alliance with the USAID Leland Initiative. The Cisco Networking Academies program is expanding from one academy to eleven additional locations. Seven of these academies are already up and enrolling students. Cisco will be investing about \$1.5 million in these academies while USAID Leland is providing \$150,000. The Cisco Academies program is designed to overcome a chronic shortage of skilled computer networking specialists, a major constraint to ICT use by SMEs.
- The Senegalese Embassy E-government Pilot is also a DFI/Senegal leveraged activity. The US National Telecommunications Cooperative Association has donated expertise and a Senegalese professional volunteer resident in the United States hopes to help design web interfaces and databases to track visa requests, issue necessary forms, aid the Senegalese diaspora and publicize opportunities for trade and business linkages with Senegalese firms. Once the web activities are operational and Embassy staff trained, the Embassy may be helped to identify Senegalese IT firms that can provide on-going maintenance.
- Hewlett-Packard (HP) is engaging in two DFI projects in Senegal related to DFI/Senegal's e-money objectives and the development of the business capacity of small businesses.

HP invested several thousand dollars of staff time and travel expenses to identify promising technology offered by Senegalese firms. As a result of its engagement, HP was introduced to ByteTech, a local start-up that is developing a technology solution for the micro-finance industry. ByteTech's vision and solution paralleled an effort that HP had undertaken in Uganda. HP's interest in partnering with ByteTech rekindled a funding conversation that had been dormant for some time. As a result of HP's intervention, ByteTech has now received the funding it needs to pilot its micro-finance solution in 2004.

HP and ByteTech will also work through the DFI to integrate HP's more robust industry-standard platform for micro-finance transactions with ByteTech's local application suite. The DFI will provide technology experts that can team with ByteTech's engineers to integrate the two solutions. In the process, ByteTech's staff will be building their capacity around enterprise standards and advanced technologies; skills that are relatively new in Senegal.

In Fatick, a town approximately 140 km from Dakar, HP has partnered with Avesta Consulting and the Fatick community to build a business and technology center for entrepreneurs. HP provided a lab of new computers to the Fatick community. They are working with a local entrepreneur who will own and manage the business center. He will lease the computers from the community. A business plan has been generated that

demonstrates profitability of the center in 12 - 18 months. DFI volunteers will be spending some time in Fatick over the next few months to gain insight into the business needs of a rural population. Together the DFI, the Fatick community, Avesta Consulting, and HP will develop a strategy for continued engagement and partnership.

V. DFI in Peru

Peru was designated a DFI partner country by the White House on October 21, 2003. On November 12th, a team was fielded from Washington, DC to draft the critical design elements of the program. The team met in Lima with staff of US agencies that will be charged with overseeing the implementation of critical DFI elements on the ground and with key representatives of the private sector and the Government of Peru.

Focus on Small Rural Business

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are a large and critical part of every national economy, but are especially important in Peru. They represent 98 percent of the enterprises in Peru and hold enormous potential for Peru's economy. These enterprises are currently faced with historic opportunities and also risks.

Peru has embarked upon an ambitious and far reaching decentralization program and is at the same time actively pursuing further integration in the world economy through a Free Trade Agreement with its biggest trading partner, the United States. Economic growth due to enhanced governance and trade liberalization will create new opportunities but the extent to which MSMEs can participate in the growth will depend on their ability to improve productivity and access markets and assets. If these businesses can grow, they can play a critical role in helping Peru increase employment and decrease poverty.

The goal of the Digital Freedom Initiative worldwide is to help entrepreneurs and small businesses make better use of information and communications technology (ICT) so that they can create jobs and improve the standards of living of the families of workers. The United States, in both public and private sectors, is uniquely positioned as a world leader in the development of innovative ICTs.

The strategy for Peru, as elsewhere under DFI, is therefore one that includes close partnership with the local business community as well as with Peruvian Government policy makers. This partnership will adapt ICTs to address the special problems of MSMEs in Peru, and will seek to transform and enhance national policies and infrastructure to make these ICTs more readily accessible.

Two Key Results Expected

Over three years, DFI in Peru will:

- Clarify and enhance the policy and regulatory environment to promote ICT access and application. This critical assistance will help both to ensure that public investment in ICT is effective and sustainable, and to stimulate essential private investment and innovation. The private sector must have the freedom and the market based incentives to develop new ICT business models and practices. Assistance will be provided through direct provision of services to Peruvian Government policy makers, through the facilitation of public and

private partnerships, and the support of consultative mechanisms and business associations.

- Expand the market for ICT products and services by assisting MSMEs to use these products and services to exploit opportunities to improve productivity, expand sales, and further integrate into the formal economy. MSMEs will be provided with the tools and training which they require to create and exploit opportunities in improved governance and liberalized trade. Commercial BDS providers and BDS organizations will be complemented by volunteers from both the Peruvian and United States private sector and national service organizations.

Assistance from the American Chamber of Commerce in Peru

The American Chamber of Commerce in Peru (AmCham/Peru) has formed a special committee called Technology and Telecommunications that specifically relates to the work of DFI. AmCham/Peru proposes that this committee become a "Think Tank" for DFI.

The purpose of the Think Tank will be to serve as the principal forum for interaction between AmCham/Peru and the other components of DFI/Peru. The intent of this interaction will be to generate innovative ideas for applying information and communications technologies in rural areas of Peru to help small businesses grow.

It is envisioned that most of these ideas will be particular technologies developed or adapted for commercial purposes by the major companies that are the members of AmCham/Peru. The expected partnerships under DFI will vary according to the nature of the technology proposed, but in most cases will unfold as follows:

The AmCham/Peru firm will propose a technology for pilot deployment under DFI. Prototype equipment and/or intellectual property will be donated, and technical support will be volunteered. The AmCham/Peru Think Tank will review the technology and assist the particular firm in appropriate adaptation for deployment. The Think Tank may also identify additional volunteers and/or complementary technologies from among its membership. The DFI/Peru Country Committee will receive the recommendation from the Think Tank, and identify an appropriate DFI program site for pilot deployment.

DFI/Peru, which includes the Think Tank and the proposing firm, will marshal complimentary inputs to the pilot deployment, including client organizations to employ and field test the new technology, and technical assistance to develop appropriate business models for scaling up the full commercial deployment of the technology by the proposing firm. DFI/Peru, which includes the Think Tank, will provide high-level visibility for the pilot deployment, and will disseminate results.

Attachment 1: DFI Private Sector Roundtable

Name	Title	Agency	Email
Balian, Arpie	International Program Manager	SETA	abalian@seta.com
Bates, Shawn	Principal	Copernican	shawn@copernicaninternational.com
Binswanger, Ben	Vice President, AOLTW Foundation	AOLTW	Ben.Binswanger@aoltw.com
Caracuel, Joseph	Senior Vice President, International	B of A	joseph.s.caracuel@bankofamerica.com
Carlson, Sam	Executive Director	World Links	sam@world-links.org
Cramer, Lew	Managing Director	Summit Ven.	lcramer@summit-ventures.com
Davis, Kerri		BearingPoint	kedavis@bearingpoint.net
Davis, Martin		Vidyah	martin@noveracomunications.com
DeBono, Joe		MBA Corps	joe@mbacorps.org
DeGarmo, Thomas	Managing Director	BearingPoint	tdegarmo@bearingpoint.net
De Soto, Hernando		ILD	hds@ild.org.pe
Derryck, David	President/CEO	NexGen	david@nexgencommunications.com
Diagne, Ndeye Fama	Teacher		diagnendeye@hotmail.com
Dove, Randolph	Executive Director, Gov't Relations	EDS	randy.dove@eds.com
Fares, David	Director, Electronic Commerce	USCIB	dfares@uscib.org
Farmer, Wayne	Director of Development	World Links	wayne@world-links.org
Firpo, Janine	Director, Global Multisector Initiatives	HP	JANINE.FIRPO@HP.COM
Foote, Dennis	Vice President	AED	dfoote@aed.org
Frazier, Mark	Chairman	DevInform	markF@devinform.com
Gibson, Thomas	President	SME Institute	tgibson@smeinstitute.org
Eisner Gillett, Sharon	Exec. Director, MIT Ctr. For Technology Policy	MIT	sharoneg@mit.edu
Gillis, Bill	Director, Center to Bridge the Digital Divide	WSU	bgillis@wsu.edu
Gross, Alan	Executive Director	JBDC	apgross@jbdc.org
Hachem, Michel	Marketing Director	GSI	mhachem@globecommsystems.com
Hachten, Stephen	Vice President, Global Relations	GCN/GIIC	HachtenConsult@aol.com
Hale, Wanda	Director of International and Gov't Programs	ITG	wanda.hale@itgonline.com
Halvorsen, Anders	Senior Program Manager	ITAA	ahalvorsen@itaa.org
Hansen, Terry	Manager of Public	IBM	thansen@us.ibm.com

Name	Title	Agency	Email
	Partnerships		
Haque, Syed	President, Wiseman Systems, Inc.	WSI	sh@wisemansystems.com
Harkins, Ana Maria		GeekCorps	amh@geekcorps.org
Hawkins, Robert		WorldBank	rhawkins@worldbank.org
Helmstadter, Sarah	Vice President	Carana	shelmstadter@carana.com
Hemrick, Christine	VP for Strategic Technology Policy and Consulting Engineers	CISCO	hemrick@cisco.com
Hughes, Kristin	Global Public Policy	HP	KRISTIN.HUGHES@HP.COM
Jones, Chris	Executive Vice President	LVCM	cljones@lvcm.com
Keating, Barbara	President	CFI	bkeating@computer-frontiers.com
Kendro, Maria	International Projects Manager	NTCA	mkendro@ntca.org
Kirkman, Geoffrey	Managing Director	Harvard	geoffrey_kirkman@harvard.edu
Knutson, Robert	Senior VP, Oppenheimer		Robert.Knutson@opco.com
Kraselsky, Bruce	President & CEO	AfriHub	sales@afrihub.com
LaVee, Niccole	School of International and Public Affairs	Columbia U	nl2016@columbia.edu
Lichon, Jamie	Business Development/Knightsbridge	Knightsbridge	jlichon@knightsbridge.com
Lineberger, Robin	Senior Vice President	BearingPoint	rlineberger@bearingpoint.net
Linkous, Jonathan	Executive Director	ATA	jlinkous@americantelemed.org
Maddens, Sophie	Telecom Policy Consultant	JTSM	jtsm@comcast.net
Markland, Michael	CEO	Copernican	michael@copernicaninternational.com
Marshall, Dana	Piper Rudnick	PR	dana.marshall@piperrudnick.com
Mayer, Rebecca	Program Associate, Clean Energy Group	Winrock	rmayer@winrock.org
Meyer, Paul	President/CEO	Voxiva	pmeyer@voxiva.net
Miller, Allen	Senior Vice President, Global Affairs	ITAA	amiller@itaa.org
Miller, Harris	President	ITAA	hmiller@itaa.org
Moffat, David	DEKA R&D Corporation	DEKA	dmoffat@dekaresearch.com
Morrison, David	President	NetAid	dmorrison@netaid.org
Moseley, Stephen	President/CEO	AED	smoseley@aed.org
Nasbey, Bruce	Senior Vice President-Global	SIFE	bnasby@sife.org
Nelson, Lisa	Vice President-External Relations	AOLTW	Lisa.Nelson@aoltw.com
Olatidoye, Olu	CEO - Tido Tech International	TTI	tido@ttics.com

Name	Title	Agency	Email
Olympio, Alberto	Co-founder - Africa Technology Forum	ATF	AlbertoO@galaxieintl.org
Otto, Bob	Executive Vice President	Carana	botto@carana.com
Owen, Darrell	Consultant	O&O	darrell_owen@msn.com
Pearl, David	Manager	BearingPoint	dpearl@bearingpoint.net
Perine, Lori	President/CEO - Interprettech	Interpretech	lperine@interpretech.com
Peters, Teresa	Executive Director	Bridges	tmpeters@bridges.org
Pinckert, Robin	COO	Endeavor	rpinckert@endeavor.org
Reagan, Tim	VP, Market Development	NSSGA	treagan@nssga.org
Realini, Carol	Board Member, GlobalGiving	GG	crealini@tumminaro.com
Resnick, Sasha	Corporate Council on Africa	WAIBL	sresnick@africacncl.org
Roberge, Brad		Skystream Networks	brad.roberge@skystream.com
Robinson, John	Pres./CEO National Minority Business Council	NMBC	nmbc@msn.com
Rogers, Robert	Executive Director	GIIC	rrogers@giic.org
Rosborough, Brian	President (Digital Nations Trust)	DNT	Barconcord@aol.com
Rush, Sean	General Manager, Global Education Industry	IBM	scrush@us.ibm.com
Salcedo, Daniel	Executive Director	PEOPLink	dsalcedo@peoplinc.org
Sene, M. Bamba			bsene@comcast.net
Schaefer, Peter	Senior Fellow and Counselor	ILD	ILDWashington@aol.com
Schram, Susan	Vice President	ACDI/VOCA	sschram@accdivoca.org
Sirbu, Marvin	Prof. Eng.& Policy, Carnegie Mellon Univ.	CMU	sirbu@cmu.edu
Skelton, Shaun	Director, Visions in Action	VIA	visionsdir@yahoo.com
Southwood, Russell		Balancing-Act-Africa	info@balancingact-africa.com
Stanzick, Karl		MTDS	karl@mtds.com
Szamosfalvi, Jozsef	Associate	Summit Ven.	jozsef@summit-ventures.com
Tews, Shane	Director of Public Policy	Verisign	stews@verisign.com
Thiam, Mass	Director of Investment Generation	APIX	mthiam@apix.sn
Tisch, Sarah	Chief of Party	Internews	stisch@internews.org
Tryon, Bill	CEO	Infotronix	Bill@infotronix.com
Tully, N. Linsey	Corporate Relationships, Global Giving	GG	linstully@aol.com
Walsh, Erin	Manager, Intl. Strategies and	Cisco	erwalsh@cisco.com

Name	Title	Agency	Email
	Partnerships		
Wells, Ian		Vista Solutions	ian@vistasolutions.net
Whittle, Dennis	CEO	ManyFutures	dwhittle@globalgiving.com
Wolfe, Casey	Executive Director	ECI-Com	cwolfe@eci-communications.com
Zuckerman, Ethan	Founder	GeekCorps	ethan@geekcorps.org