Reinvent Payphones Challenge/LinkNYC Recognized as 2015 Harvard Ash Center Bright Idea in Government

Reinvent Payphones Challenge led to the de Blasio administration's winning LinkNYC proposal approved in December

LinkNYC will transform aging payphone infrastructure into free, high-speed Wi-Fi hotspots citywide, expanding broadband access to more New Yorkers across the five boroughs

NEW YORK—The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, recognized today Reinvent Payphones Challenge/LinkNYC as part of the 2015 Bright Ideas program. The Challenge engaged hundreds of urban designers, planners, technologists and policy experts to create physical and virtual prototypes that reimagine the future of the City's aging public pay telephones.

This design challenge culminated in the de Blasio administration's selection of the CityBridge consortium to develop and operate a first-of-its-kind communications network, LinkNYC, which will bring the world's fastest free municipal Wi-Fi to millions of New Yorkers, small businesses, and visitors. LinkNYC will offer gigabit-fast Wi-Fi in all five boroughs--built at no-cost to taxpayers—and generate more than $500 million in revenue for the City over the next 12 years.

"The Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge is an inspiring example of the power of collaboration between government and private citizens. The City of New York asked, and our vibrant technology community responded with a wealth of creative and forward-thinking ideas to transform our outdated payphones into cutting-edge Wi-Fi hotspots," said the **Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications Commissioner Anne Roest**. "The winning proposal – LinkNYC – represents a dynamic and adaptable solution to one of the pressing needs of our time: the expansion of fast, affordable broadband access to more New Yorkers in neighborhoods in each of the five boroughs."

This year's Bright Ideas cohort includes 124 programs from all levels of government—school districts; county, city, state, and federal agencies; as well as public-private partnerships—that are at the forefront in innovative government action.

 "The Bright Ideas program demonstrates that often seemingly intractable problems can be creatively and capably tackled by small groups of dedicated, civic-minded individuals," said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in Government Program at the Ash Center. "As exemplified by this year's Bright Ideas, making government work better doesn't always require massive reforms and huge budgets. Indeed, we are seeing that, in many ways, an emphasis on efficiency and adaptability can have further-reaching effects than large-scale reforms."

This is the fourth cohort recognized through the Bright Ideas program, an initiative of the broader Innovations in American Government Awards program. For consideration as a Bright Idea, programs

must currently be in operation or in the process of launching and have sufficient operational resources and must be administered by one or more governmental entities; nonprofit, private sector, and union initiatives are eligible if operating in partnership with a governmental organization. Bright Ideas are showcased on the Ash Center's Government Innovators Network, an online platform for practitioners and policymakers to share innovative public policy solutions.

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About the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation
The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Center fosters creative and effective government problem solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. For more information, visit www.ash.harvard.edu.

To learn more about LinkNYC, visit http://www.Link.nyc