

FREE WI-FI PROJECT GOES NATIONWIDE

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The free Wi-Fi in public places project will install wireless Internet access points in public places such as, town plazas, parks, government offices, health units, and transport terminals including train stations, seaports, and airports. World bank studies have shown that every 10% increase in broadband Internet penetrations translates to 1.38 percent increase in a country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.



The Department of Science and Technology (DOST)- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Office's free Wi-Fi internet access in public places project will be including class one and two municipalities in its roll out, in order to better reach the class three to six municipalities which were the original target beneficiaries of the project.

The decision to include class one and two municipalities initially stemmed from the low participation in the procurement of providers for the original 967 beneficiary municipalities. A reason cited by the providers was the low price of allocated budget for contract (ABC) for the various municipalities. According to Undersecretary Louis Casambre of the ICT Office, "We intend to increase the budget allocation for Municipal Connectivity for the project, by around 50%, likewise, we will also be including class one and two municipalities in order to better reach classes three to six, the ones who need Internet connectivity the most." The total number of beneficiary municipalities now stands at 1,435.

Use. Casambre further stated that providers would need to upgrade and expand their communications infrastructure in order to serve far flung areas, and with class one and a municipalities included it would be easier for them to reach the poorer communities. "Tenders are currently being prepared for the new municipalities with the new budget, and they should be available within the month." Use. Casambre added. According to the Project Management Team, 1.6 billion pesos was added to the 2015 unobligated funds for the 2016 budget.

DOST Secretary Mario G. Montejo is hopeful that with the increased budget, industry will better participate in the program, "We are looking forward to providing connectivity through our private sector partners especially in the rural areas. With Internet connectivity readily available, their lives can be enhanced with better access to weather information, education, agricultural resources, commerce, e-government services, as well as employment, through online jobs" Sec. Montejo said.

Domestic Internet connectivity to the 14 major cities of the project which will act as hubs for the project was already been awarded to a joint venture between Innove & Yondu Inc. While connectivity to the international Internet was awarded to PLDT, connectivity to various municipalities was awarded to WIT, Converge ICT Solutions and a joint venture between AZ Communications and Omniprime. While the System and Management and Access component of the project which will oversee the nationwide network of access points and provide the hardware necessary was awarded to Abratique and Associates Inc. which will be utilizing CISCO equipment to deliver connectivity to the end users .

– From the [Department of Science and Technology](#)

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