

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Putnam County Public Library

Project Title: Putnam County Computer Centers and Road Show Project

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

PURPOSE: To expand public access to Internet and word processing; to provide dedicated computers for purposes of job searches, application, and resume writing. To provide training in basic computer skills, accessing e-government services, job searching techniques. To expand free public access to areas of the county currently underserved. To provide access to computers and training to vulnerable and underserved populations, including low income, unemployed, the disabled, incarcerated, and homeless.

PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED:

The high unemployment rate in the county, lack of broadband Internet access by many individuals in the county, lack of basic computer skills among the recently unemployed, homeless, senior citizens, incarcerated men preparing for release, lack of public library locations other than in Greencastle and Roachdale.

- The unemployment rate in Putnam County was 11.4% in June 2009; compared to the state rate of 10.6% and U.S. rate of 9.7%; ranks 39 of 92 counties and increased 58.1% from previous year.
- While persons must access the unemployment system on-line, the economy has affected individuals' ability to have Internet access in their homes, including lack of service and failed equipment.
- Portions of the county do not have high speed Internet service available to individuals.
- Many of the newly unemployed, directed to the library to file for benefits on-line, have little or no experience with using a computer and require personalized assistance.
- Since many employers now accept applications for employment only on-line, knowledge of these skills is critical for the job-seeker.
- The public library is increasingly the one place in the county providing access to all people at no charge. Usage of computers for Internet access has increased 25 % over 2008 and use of the word processing/study room computers has increased 6 %. Currently a minimum of 25% of computer users are doing job-related activity. Classes are offered at the library on basic computer skills such as e-mail.

- Additional access points in the county are needed to improve access.
- The local Work One office (Indiana Department of Workforce Development) provides 2 computers for job-related use, along with staff assistance, during daytime business hours. The library is open three evenings and Saturday when the office is closed. The two agencies have collaborated in the past on classes and expect to continue.
- The library currently has no workstations with features specifically designed for the disabled.
- At the state prison in Putnamville, the Re-release Re-entry Department has no budget for equipment, most of which is outdated with too little memory to support current operating systems.

This project specifically targets vulnerable populations, those incarcerated, and the homeless, as well as low-income, elderly, and the un/under-employed.

This project addresses the needs in the following ways:

- Increases the number of Internet-accessible computers at the Putnam County Public Library and the Roachdale-Franklin Township Public Library, with a portion dedicated to the Job Center
- Provides for additional staffing to oversee the computer center and provide training at the library, senior center, and other community locations
- Provides up-to-date computer equipment for purposes of learning basic skills and resume preparation for vulnerable populations at the homeless shelter in Greencastle and the state prison at Putnamville. Staff at these locations will provide supervision and training.
- Provides for a work station with assistive technology for the disabled
- Provides for an additional T-1 line at the Putnam County Public Library to accommodate the increased demand
- Supplies a mobile computer lab that can be transported to towns in the county and provide training in basic computer skills and web searching where an Internet connection is available

DESCRIPTION OF AREA SERVED:

Putnam County encompasses 480 square miles in rural west central Indiana. Population in 2000 census was 39,765. Population in 2000 census was 35,211. 86% are Caucasian. The median age was 35.1 in 2000. 4270 people did not have a high school diploma and 12,060 had only a high school diploma. Spanish and a variety of languages other than English are represented. Adults between the ages of 18-

64 number 23,083. This is the target audience and potential users. Census figures include the prison population at Putnamville. Reaching those needing services is always the challenge.

The county seat, Greencastle, houses the largest employers, including DePauw University and Wal-Mart Distribution Center. Several factories making parts for a variety of automobile manufacturers have had significant layoffs. The smaller towns in the county have a variety of small businesses and agriculture is a significant portion of land use.

Putnam County Public Library has provided Internet access to the public since 1996, starting with one computer. Currently 12 are available in the Adult Reference department, with one in Local History and Genealogy and two in Children's, with restricted use. Library staff has experience teaching basic computer skills, both in small groups and one-to-one. The planned addition of a computer reservation/management system will free librarians to better assist patrons.

Two jobs will be created in this project, one at the public library and one at the Senior Center.

Overall cost of the project is \$ 272,790.