

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Athens Regional Library System

Project Title: Economic Enhancement through Expanded Access to Education, Training and Technology

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Economic and societal problems facing the Athens Regional Library System, a 5 county library system in NE Georgia, include high poverty, high school drop-out rates, and illiteracy. This proposal will use web 2.0 applications and live instruction to provide training for community residents in 6 locations.

Our purpose is to develop classroom training focusing on job readiness skills, computer and adult literacy, money management, and ESOL. The Library will partner with the Governor's Office of Workforce Development to provide access to the Georgia Work Ready Program, which enables adults to improve skills and earn a Work Ready Certificate. The online program identifies gaps in one's skills base, and we will provide an instructor to work with adults in this program so they can log in for assessment tests, access gap training, and receive first-hand assistance. Other community groups will assist with training aspects and speakers including Athens Technical College and the Department of Labor.

The Library concluded that establishing community learning centers to target out-of-school adults in each location should be our top priority after meeting with representatives of each group. We propose placing computer labs in designated locations, or, when space is an issue, providing mobile laptop labs for flexibility. When labs and laptops are not being used for instruction, equipment and staff will be available to the general public, particularly youth who come to the centers to do homework.

The training component is key to our proposal. Karen Douglas, our very competent staff trainer who has offered weekly public programs at the library for 5 years, will "train the trainer." Each of the 6 locations will have a trainer focusing on specific site needs; Ms. Douglas will be responsible for working with each trainer to develop curriculum, provide technology assistance, and teach some classes. The Pinewoods Biblioteca and Casa de Amistad program, located in two separate Hispanic enclaves within the city, will need a bi-lingual trainer who can help students pursue ESOL and GED skills to enhance employability. This may mean that, in addition to job skills, we will work with them to complete the requirements for a certificate from Plaza Comunitaria, the Mexican equivalent of a high school diploma. In addition to offering live training, the library will video all formal training sessions offered by Ms. Douglas and archive them, making them available through our webpage. This expands the impact of our program, opening it up to all.

The areas to be served in NE Georgia include Athens-Clarke County, Oglethorpe County, and Carnesville located in Franklin County. Athens-Clarke County population is 114, 737, but as regional headquarters, we actually serve 212,000; estimated potential new users: 4,200. In East Athens, Census

Tract 302 is the target group - an underserved, low-income area with housing projects and a population of 4,317; potential users: 800. Located in a

low-income Hispanic mobile home park, the Pinewoods Biblioteca serves Census Tract 1404 with a population of 4,317; potential users: 1,000. Casa de Amistad is located in Census Tract 1403 with a population of 4,236; potential users: 850. Oglethorpe County is eligible for USDA Rural Development Loans and Grants and has a population of 14,106; potential users: 1,800. The proposed new computer lab/community learning center in Carnesville (in Franklin County, part of Georgia's Appalachian Regional Commission) will serve Census Tract 9902 with a population of 5,293; potential users: 1,000.

The Library has demonstrated its organizational capacity to manage a major grant. In recent years, library staff has received several nationally competitive grants including a 3 yr grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, a 2 yr grant from the FINRA Foundation, grants from the American Library Association, and many other state level grants to enhance library services. The Library is audited annually and meets all standard accounting requirements. The support staff has experience in establishing computer centers and troubleshooting, training, and adult education. This project would be a perfect opportunity to harness their creativity.

The program creates 4 new positions as trainers to be assigned to project locations. A conservative estimate of 600 people will participate in formal instruction. Hundreds more will attend one or more sessions on specific topics or utilize one-on-one training. If participants were to obtain jobs because of skills gained through the program, the impact would be impressive on the economy in the region and on individual self esteem.

This project will serve as a pilot project for Georgia Public Library Service [GPLS]. Use of the web 2.0 applications and web conferencing will demonstrate the possibilities for meetings and training events sponsored by GPLS. By demonstrating live conferencing capabilities and archival materials from our training programs, other libraries may replicate it across the state. Travel costs can be minimized with the use of live conferencing, making it possible to attend meetings digitally. Accessibility to archived training extends the value and outcomes of the grant.

Total cost of the proposed project includes the following federal request:

Staff [4 trainers]	\$249,600 plus \$94,848 benefits costs
Equipment [6 computer labs]	\$113,760
Software	\$ 20,644

Funds contributed by the Library System includes

Staff	\$216,000 plus 78,428 in benefits
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Equipment	\$ 27,850 [this is where we will spend cash]
Travel	\$ 1,000
Supplies	\$ 2,000
Space and Utilities	\$ 20,000
T-1 and cable fees	\$ 50,160

The Library system will contribute \$27,850 in cash to the program and \$184,120 each year through in kind contributions as detailed in this proposal.