

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** South Georgia Regional Library

**Project Title:** MyPace - Computer Learning for All

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### **Executive Summary**

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The South Georgia Regional Library has designed an innovative community center project which will strengthen the regions workforce, boost high school graduation rates, bridge language barriers, support small business development, and ultimately promote area-wide broadband adoption.

The South Georgia Regional Library is in an emerging area with a population of 113,000 persons from the Lowndes, Echols and Lanier counties. These areas pose an unusual blend of rural, underserved and undeveloped communities surrounding Valdosta's small urban core.

A large portion of the system's patrons are from low-income, minority, aged, and vulnerable backgrounds. The South Georgia Regional Library system serves a very diverse patron base: Echols County has a 28 % Hispanic population while Lowndes County serves a 34.2% African American community.

Diverse as the system's community is, everyone is suffering during this recession. The SGRL service area has only an average median household income of \$38,666, which is \$10,414 less than the state average. Approximately 20.5% of the region's residents are below the poverty line. Much of this has to do with the regions abysmal 40% drop out rate and staggering illiteracy rate.

After assessing the community's needs we developed a plan to address the root issues of the region's problems. These primary issues are:

- Communication barrier between the English and Spanish speaking communities.
- Illiteracy and a lack of high school education and/or higher education.
- Lack of career readiness and job hunting skill education.

- Limited computer/Internet access and training.

Called “MyPace: Computer Learning for All” the program our team has developed combines classes with self-guided study to transform our current computer centers into learning labs. Our approach is an innovative solution to our systems reduced state and local funding. MyPace will meet the emerging needs of our community with as little impact on operational costs as possible.

The “MyPace: Computer Learning for All” program has nine main components:

- Archived computer lessons available 24/7 on YouTube.
- Computer confidence classes for seniors.
- Enhance our current GED prep course capabilities and effectiveness.
- Education on accessing GALILEO and WebMD resources at the library.
- Tumblebooks early literacy software for pre-K through elementary school.
- Rosetta Stone language learning software available at all six computer centers.
- Comprehensive Tutor.com service for high school and college students.
- One-on-one online career counseling for job-seekers via Tutor.com sessions.
- Access to WinWay resume writing software for area job-seekers.

Each of component ties back to one of the core issues the library is addressing in our community. This program, if implemented, will give our region the tools necessary to pull through the recession. The library’s self-directed learning will allow any person from novice to expert to use our computer centers and provided point-of-contact assistance to those needing individualized attention.

All 6 of our library branches will be able to offer the patron self-directed learning in regards to job hunting, learning English and Spanish, supporting the GED program of Valdosta Technical College, Internet safety, and access to many other online databases like GALILEO and WebMD. The library’s approach is an innovative solution to the systems reduced state and local funding. MyPace will meet the emerging needs of the community with as little impact on operational costs as possible.

Patron demand for computer services has exceeded the capabilities of the system's current equipment.

In 2007, the system recorded 104,172 logins; only a year later 130,100 logins were recorded. According to collected data, the computer terminals are inundated with logins from the time the library opens until it closes. The system's computer usage has grown to a saturation point and the old equipment can no longer handle patron demands. By enhancing the computer centers services and improving the technology provided, logins will likely jump to 175,000 to 200,000 logins a year.

Overseeing and implementing the project will be Systems Administrator Sean Strickland. Mr. Strickland has been systems administrator of a 180 computer, 6 branch library network for the past 4 years and has during that time maintained and repaired all system computers. Prior to working for the South Georgia Regional Library, Mr. Strickland was an instructor at Valdosta Technical College where he taught Installation and Maintenance (A+), Networking (Net+), CISCO, and the Microsoft Office 2003 Suite of products. He also holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting, Finance, Management and Information Technology.

Mr. Strickland will be overseeing a new position, Network Support Operator and Webmaster. This employee will deploy the new computers, perform routine maintenance, and serve as the system's webmaster. The position is proposed at 45,000 for 3 years and it is the intent of SGRL at the time of writing this continue this position after the grant funds have expired. This position has been an approved position on the South Georgia Regional Library organizational chart for nearly 2 years, but the system has lacked the funds to fill the position. This position would create one full time position for a minimum of 3 years.

The total estimated cost of our project is \$487,606.