

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Birchard Public Library of Sandusky County

Project Title: Ohio Community Technology Centers Program: Birchard Public Library of Sandusky County

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Birchard Public Library is seeking funds to expand and update the computer center to meet the increasing demand for services. There are not enough workstations available, the existing computers are not fast enough to support the demands of users, and the number of citizens that need to learn basic computer skills is increasing, due in part to the current unemployment rate of 12.4% in Sandusky County. This project will address those needs by adding ten additional workstations, replacing the ten oldest current workstations, and adding a wireless mobile computer lab which will enable the library to offer classes in basic computer skills not only at the main library, but at the three rural branch locations as well.

Birchard's service area, which includes 80% of Sandusky County and a small portion of Seneca County, consists of 49,377 citizens, approximately 90% white, 6.8% Hispanic, 2.8% African-American, and .4% other. We also serve the largest seasonal population of Hispanic migrant workers in Ohio. In households with less than \$35,000 in income, 70% are without access at home to broadband internet. Currently, 7,325 patrons are registered to use the computers at the main library location. This project is expected to increase the number of users by 20% or more by increasing and publicizing the number of new available portals, replacing the oldest computers, and making more classes available at both the main library and the remote branch locations throughout the county, thereby reaching the more rural, underserved population.

The project management team consists of the Library Director, the Network Administrator, the Adult Services Coordinator, and the Fiscal Officer. The Library Director has administered numerous small equipment grants, and has been the site manager on two building projects. The Network Administrator has been managing the technical aspects of the computer center since 2002, and has years of experience both as a teacher of computer classes and as an administrator at the local community college. The Adult Services Coordinator has managed the public services aspects of the computer center since its inception over twelve years ago, and the Fiscal Officer has been managing an annual budget of over a million dollars since 1994.

The implementation of this project will allow Birchard to provide more computers for job hunters and more classes to increase the basic computer skills of the unemployed as well as the general population. An educated worker with sound, basic computer skills will stand a better chance of landing and keeping a job in the digital age.

The overall cost of the project is \$45,550: \$36,440 Federal, \$9,110 Local match.