

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Albany Public Library

Project Title: ALLbany Online: Connect, Educate, Empower (Public Computer Centers)

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Albany Public Library is committed to assisting our city's underserved residents by providing expanded free public Internet computers, digital literacy assistance and training, and stimulating demand for broadband throughout Albany.

Public Libraries—a cornerstone of the promise of our democracy—offer everyone equally, access to the information and tools to transform our lives. The Albany Public Library (APL) is our city's neutral destination for residents with vital questions, community center for civic discourse, and “third place” where we peacefully share valued objects and make lasting relationships that strengthen our community.

Albany's citizens and many neighborhoods are underserved by affordable broadband service and so rely on public computers at APL.

More than 813,000 people walked through the doors of our six current service locations (one Main Library, four Branch Libraries, and one (1) Bookmobile) in 2008. In a city of 93,000 people, 60,000 of them (almost 65 %) carry our library card. Last year, our card-holders checked out over one million items, and 138,500 customers used 57 public Internet computers.

By the summer of 2010, the opening of five (5) new energy efficient and LEED certifiable “green” Branch Libraries will add two new service locations with expanded public computing areas and complete the APL's first major capital improvement project in its 200-year history.

Yet, the demand for public computers and the professional assistance required to manage them safely and ensure digital literacy at the library's public computing areas is expected to outpace APL's ambitious current plan to more than double the amount of public computers to 132.

Founded in 1609, the city of Albany is the capital of New York State and the Albany County seat where the economy is heavily dependent on government, healthcare, education, and now the promise of high-tech jobs in nanotechnology. However, the city of Albany has been affected by the northeast trends of shrinking city centers, increased poverty, expanding suburbs, and movement out of state by younger professional adults and the newly retired.

Albany is 16% below the national average in per capita income, 13.4% above the national average for individuals below the poverty level, and 26.1% above the national average for renter-occupied housing. Of our residents, 60.9% are white and 39.1% are people of color.

ALLbany Online: Connect, Educate, Empower is a powerful partnership in our city-wide ecosystem of building and nurturing broadband adoption.

APL's Public Computing Centers request: \$871,536 with 36% match to:

- leverage APL's current taxpayer approved and bonded \$29.1 million Branch Improvement Project to renovate and construct five (5) state-of-art Branch Libraries with expanded public computing capacity, and
- create 13 additional library jobs to safely manage and assist the public at the five (5) new anchor Branch Libraries, and
- provide three (3) new laptop labs to the library system for flexible training centers at anchor and satellite sites and increased public access to the Internet.

Tech Valley Communications' Broadband Infrastructure request is for the citywide build-out of a free and low-cost fiber and wireless infrastructure for use by residents, city safety and services departments, and for workforce training content delivery.

The City of Albany's Department of Youth and Workforce Service's Sustainable Adoption request is for the coordination of digital literacy training and delivery of virtual workforce development content with community computer satellite sites and APL.

APL's Public Computing Center application is a sustainable investment that addresses both the BTOP's statutory purposes and the NYS Broadband Strategy goals by directly helping Albany's underserved residents and neighborhoods with expanded free public Internet computers, digital literacy assistance and training at anchor and satellite community sites, and stimulating demand for broadband throughout the city.