

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: ENGAGE COMMUNICATIONS INCORPORATED

Project Title: ENGAGE COMMUNICATIONS PUBLIC COMPUTING CENTER APPLICATION

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

a) Engage Communications has partnered with the Monroe County Public Library (MCPL) to address three core objectives:

- 1) Solve current operational problems that stem from the MCPL's computer center infrastructure
- 2) Stimulate demand for broadband adoption rates and
- 3) Create jobs

Our proposal is to improve the MCPL's 5 computer centers and create 2 new computer centers in Key West, FL. For reasons provided in this executive summary and our Project Purpose, our proposal effectively addresses all three of the above core objectives.

At present, Monroe County Public Library system operates 5 library branches throughout the Florida Keys, with a span of 20-100 miles between them. These branches service the 79,589 residents of Monroe County in addition to the estimated 3,000,000 tourists whom visit annually. There are 36,500 registered users of this system, 40 library staff members, and 81 computers in the public computing centers within the libraries themselves.

The current ratio of staff members to computer users at any given time is 1:40, and the current number of persons served collectively throughout these branches weekly is 1,650. Due to public library funding cuts, library branches are only able to staff their facilities for 5 days a week, creating bottlenecks on network and computer access for library computer center users, allowing only 20 minutes of access per user, per workstation. This means that every minute and a half, a staff member must check a computer user in or log one out, while at the same time deal with user questions and usage issues. Furthermore, of the total 40 library staff members, only one person countywide is trained to deal with technical issues, exacerbating the burden on both library employees and computer center users alike. While we

recognize the operational problems of the library, we also recognize the need to stimulate the use of broadband services in our community, as it will further education, job eligibility and creation, healthcare, public safety, and services for children. All of these issues are addressed in both this Public Computing Center Application, in addition to our Sustainable Broadband Adoption Application.

b)A preliminary survey conducted by both Engage Communications and the Monroe County Public Library system yielded results which strongly correlate new broadband subscribership at homes, businesses, and institutions with enhanced versions of their existing computer centers. Thus far, the most important features in a public computing center in descending order are: "Expanded hours of operation," "Faster internet connections," "A location which is convenient and accessible," "More time allowed on each computer," and "Upgraded software applications." Engage Communications will provide these enhancements to every existing and proposed computer center in this application.

Of 100 survey participants, 34% claimed they would subscribe to broadband at home for the first time this year if a computer center with the above features were opened today. Additionally, 28% claimed they would adopt broadband services for the first time at either a business or institution they were a part of. As the survey is ongoing, we will collect more data, run regressions, and use this data to continue to improve upon and service the existing and proposed new centers.

Our proposal is to upgrade the Monroe County Library system's current capacity by adding 20 new stations to its main branch in Key West and add an additional 10 stations to its remaining branches in Monroe County. Furthermore, we have partnered with the State of Florida to access an unused portion of the Old City Hall, at no cost to set up 40 new computer stations. This center is located near the Key West Library, in the most populous center of the Florida Keys. We also propose to set up another center in "New Town," Key West, in a former state agency facility, located strategically near foster care facilities, a Public High School, and non-profits including AIDS Help, Pace Center, Catholic Charities, and Workforce. Both centers are located in Key West, as it is home to 32% of Monroe County's population, yet it comprises only about 5% of the Florida Keys in Monroe County's land mass.

This proposal seeks to reach a broader population by expanding geographic access to computer centers. It will also offer alternative locations to the Monroe County Library in Key West, increase time allotted on each computer station, and ease the burden on library staff members by decreasing the turnover rate of computer center users. If the results of our preliminary survey are any indication, an increase of subscriberships at homes, businesses or institutions will further move broadband use away from the library and into other locations.

c) The Florida Keys are an elongated, arching chain of nearly 822 low-lying islands, over 120 miles in length, connected by a single overseas highway. Given Monroe County's shape; every service, every county function, must recur repeatedly to effectively serve its 79,589 residents. There is no single, patron profile in the Keys. Patrons can be self-employed artists and writers, long-distance learners, shrimp boat captains, non-profit agency directors, "RV-ing" retirees, and home-schooled students. Our community is eclectic and diverse, and our needs for computer resources reflect that diversity. Interestingly, it is estimated that the resident population of Monroe County turns over every three years. This transient nature of the Keys provides a new and constant audience for broadband subscriberships.

d) Engage Communications is a State of Florida Certified Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) headquartered in Key West, Florida, primarily servicing the Florida Keys in Monroe County. For details on our qualifications, please refer to our uploaded Management Team Resumes from Question 37 of this Application.

e) Jobs created: 6

f) Total cost: \$274,000