

## Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** Executive Office of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Office of Administration)

**Project Title:** Pennsylvania Education Network - Public Computer Centers

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### Executive Summary

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a) A statement of the problem or need your project addresses with regard to improving broadband service adoption rates.

Pennsylvania is a leader among states in promoting broadband in K-12 schools. Our E-Fund program has increased the telecom capacity of schools by 470% over three years, and our related BTOP Infrastructure application aims to expand this success to additional schools, libraries, pre-K centers and institutes of higher education.

Unfortunately, our efforts to extend the reach of broadband beyond the classroom walls have not kept pace. Providing better broadband to “anchor” tenants is highly effective in driving new broadband services to underserved and unserved areas, but that approach alone does not meet the needs of Pennsylvania’s vulnerable populations.

b) Your overall approach to addressing the need, and [for Sustainable Adoption projects] how your approach is innovative.

This BTOP Public Computing Center grant application aims to expand access to high-speed broadband for a larger segment of its vulnerable populations. It focuses on libraries and community colleges with a strong support role by schools and colleges.

This effort maintains our coordinated approach to educational technology that cuts across Pre-K through 20 populations while expanding our efforts into the non-traditional student population. It is designed to go hand-in-hand with our other two BTOP applications for Infrastructure and Sustainability.

To recap, these other two applications will create regional groups from 514 schools, libraries and colleges across rural Pennsylvania to prepare coordinated responses to broadband-related challenges and opportunities. With PDE oversight, these groups will be tasked with improving their Last Mile and Middle and completing professional development programs to 1,542 educational professionals. Then, interdisciplinary teams will use their new training to launch projects that make the best use of their improved infrastructure.

This application names 100 of those 514 locations as Public Computer Centers to extend the reach of these efforts out into the community. Mostly, the named locations are libraries and community

colleges, but other sites are included as well. Each of these 100 sites will be placed into the same regional groups and tasked with devising local approaches to better access.

BTOP Public Computer Center funds would pay for two things:

A. Stipends to the 100 Centers for \$45,000 each for equipment, software, other technology, training and technical support for their efforts (\$4.5 million total); and

B. Professional assistance in support of these efforts (\$500,000). This money will go to PDE for distribution to project management and oversight.

c) Area(s) to be served; population of the target area(s), including demographic information; and [for Public Computer Centers] the estimated number of potential users of your public computer center(s) or [for Sustainable Adoption projects] the estimated number of potential broadband subscribers your project will reach.

This application will cover 66 counties within the state and the total population for these counties totals over 5.4 million residents. Currently, the public libraries within this application serve approximately 22 million patrons annually and we are projecting that we will be able to increase the daily patronage to the libraries by 25%

d) Qualifications of the applicant that demonstrate the ability to implement the project and achieve its intended results.

Pennsylvania's libraries and community colleges are the premier organizations for offering public access to broadband services. Libraries are the community centers for most areas. They are open in the evening, weekends (many also on Sundays). An American Library Association study reported that public libraries are the only source of no-fee Internet access for 71 percent of America's communities. Libraries not only offer the Internet and materials, but much programming for all ages--from pre-school to seniors; they offer after school homework help, provide classes on how to use computers and certain databases to locate jobs or do employment applications, provide speakers on many subjects, act as job sites for employment programs, they partner with many government agencies and other non-profits to assist the community.

Libraries are the community centers of life long learning.

e) Jobs to be saved or created. It is estimated that 100 new jobs will be created by this project.

f) Overall cost of the proposed project. \$5 million BTOP.