

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Leon County

Project Title: Public Access PC Expansion

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Building on Leon County's foundation of providing public access to the Internet, this project will allow the library system and the community centers to continue to serve as the avenue for public access. The Public Access PC Expansion project will address availability of public access (especially to those vulnerable populations on the south side of Tallahassee and the non-urban areas of the County), address an aging PC fleet, and address the need for computer literacy training. Solving these issues advances two of BTOP statutory purposes:

- Provide improved broadband access to consumers in underserved areas, and
- Provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions, job-creating strategic facilities, and vulnerable populations.

Currently, a total of 180 PCs are available in the County's library system consisting of a main library in the downtown area of Tallahassee, FL and five branches in each County Commission District. User time on a PC is limited to one hour. With a county population over 275,000, demand is high. The Florida Public Library Standards define the essential and minimum level of quality of average wait time to be no more than 30 minutes for public access PCs. Wait times for an available PC in Leon County can be as long as 2 hours. The branch in the southside of Tallahassee has wait times up to 2 hours. That area has a vulnerable patron base with median income being \$25,883 compared to \$46,852 elsewhere in the County.

Besides extended wait times PCs, patrons contend with outdated equipment. All of the 180 public access PCs are surplus equipment from the County government and are over 5 years old. Patrons often complain about the lack of device functionality (such as the lack of USB ports), system performance, and minimal RAM which causes programs to work poorly or not at all.

Finally, current training for computer literacy at the facilities is limited to very infrequent volunteer efforts. A formal, consistent training program is needed, especially in the vulnerable and rural population areas.

These issues of availability, an aging fleet, and need for computer literacy training will be addressed by:

- Upgrading and increasing PCs through virtualization technology
- Minimizing the wait time for a PC to 10 minutes or less
- Improving user experiences with ample CPU, RAM, and device ports
- Expanding PC availability to Community Centers in the rural areas of the County
- Providing a formal, consistent computer literacy training program in the library and community centers

The proposed technology strategy will provide up to 500 PCs using virtualization technology that will save on space, power, and technical support. Placement of PCs will be at each library facility and expanded to four rural community centers. The virtualized computing environment uses a “zero client” to connect a flat screen monitor with 2 USB ports, keyboard, and mouse to the network to receive access to the operating systems and software provided by a centralized server. The “zero client” device is a small 3.5 inch square box which contains no CPU, no memory, no operating system, no drivers, no software and no moving parts. The size of the device allows for more desktops to be deployed on tables and desk areas. The device consumes 5 watts of power, which is 3% of a typical PC, and supports the County’s commitment to energy conservation. Additionally, maintenance for each desktop is greatly minimized with the centralization of resources.

Use of personal flash drives, headsets, CD writers, and other input devices are enabled with the USB ports. Each library will have external CD writers and scanners for checkout. All desktop devices in each facility will be configured to access printers in the facility. Access to the full suite of Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, Microsoft media player, Adobe Reader, and other standard Microsoft interface software will be provided. Other software will include, but not be limited to, training for GED, SAT/ACT, ESOL, basic education for literacy, foreign languages, and personal development.

Virtualization is a proven, effective technology which can be replicated by other organizations. Leon County’s Management Information Services (MIS) Division has current experience with the technology

and has adopted the strategy for its entire fleet. With its existing partnership with HP and Microsoft providers and its own experienced team, MIS is able and ready to implement the project.

In concert with an enhanced public access environment, the provision of a robust computer literacy training program will ensure needed training for citizens. A Training Coordinator will be hired and will work with the existing Branch Library manager and the Parks and Recreations Community Center program manager to establish schedules for training. Content for training will come from a combination of contracted local vendors, online services, and local university programs, such as Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU – a historical black college). At a minimum, training will incorporate an introductory program of four 2 hour sessions held every week. Intermediate and Advanced programs will be available for desktop applications in the Microsoft Office Suite and will be offered in four hour sessions for each application as well as the provision of online training programs. Training for other types of needs such as GED, basic job skills, and self development will be organized based on interest.

Training rooms at the facilities will be installed to facilitate projections of training materials, webinars, and applications. Generally, installed equipment will be ceiling mounted projectors, control systems to connect to laptops, the Internet, and cable TV; and ceiling mounted display screens. Where reasonable and practical, the display screen may be digital.