

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Las Vegas-Clark County Library District

Project Title: FAST TRACK RECOVERY

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District FAST TRACK RECOVERY project will yield multiple returns as new broadband assets support next-generation economic and workforce development. This project provides speed and strengthened public access connectivity, expands availability of public access computers, and stimulates adoption of broadband technologies and resources to put our people and businesses on the fast track for recovery.

The 8,000 square mile area of urban and rural Las Vegas and Clark County, Nevada, is an example of the problems with broadband coverage and adoption today. The proliferation of the infrastructure in our region is like a crazy quilt – unmapped and irregular in coverage, quality, and connection speed. Broadband adoption is challenged by many factors. A large percentage of the population has low levels of education and many economic challenges, including loss of jobs and homes. The already low basic adult literacy rates have fallen further with a doubling of the immigrant population. Reliance on construction, retail, and hospitality jobs that was sufficient for past residents to live the good life is in question. There is an urgent need to ramp up the digital aptitude of residents and businesses with broadband tools that are, elsewhere, driving economic growth and innovation.

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District (the Library District) has been proactive in terms of getting affordable and available public broadband access to all facilities. The District works with multiple service providers to lease limited bandwidth for 12 urban and 12 rural locations. The number of public access computers has grown from 50 in 2000 to more than 1,100 in 2009. However, the bandwidth the Library District has been able to afford is inadequate for the increasing demand, both in the number of public access computer users, and increasingly sophisticated applications. The recession is driving Americans online and they are going to their public libraries for connections and training. In the past 10 years, demand for online services soared from 645,000 computer sessions to 2,336,495 sessions a year. Recent research reports that 75% of people using public library computers have no other access. Waiting lines for computer use are driven by essential needs such as job search and employment applications, government assistance,, and tools for small business development. Computer classes on internet and computer basics are full and new kinds of broadband training are in high demand.

The Library District offers an innovative approach to meet the need for improved bandwidth speed and capacity in all 24 facilities. Moving away from traditional reliance on fixed computer workstations and computer labs, this project provides 1) significantly more bandwidth to support faster workstation service, public Wifi, and advanced broadband training; 2) 166 new public access laptop computers that can be used anywhere in our buildings or mobile labs; and 3) resources for a public awareness campaign to promote the Library District as the community broadband portal for technology, training, and vast collections of digital resources. This Library District proposal is being submitted in tandem with a second proposal submitted in partnership with the national broadband training experts, ZeroDivide. That project will develop new online and virtual training targeted to audiences such as students, job-seekers, entrepreneurs, immigrants, the homeless, and seniors.

The Library District serves a population of 1.3 million people in both urban and remote rural communities, a total that represents 2/3 of Nevada's population. This area desperately needs investment in broadband tools for economic and workforce development, as the traditional economy of unskilled workers able to make a middle-class wage is seeing the collapse of tourism, construction and retail, and rates of unemployment are close to 13%. This project increases the broadband use among 644,000 active library card holders, enrolls and promotes broadband among 136,000 new card holders, and doubles the number of people trained on broadband applications (from 7,000 to 14,000 per year). The project will serve a population with low levels of education (56% of local high school students graduate), marginal digital literacy, and limited use of online resources. The project will reach out to Spanish speakers, the area's largest immigrant group. The racial/ethnic breakdown is 43% White, 38% Hispanic, 11% African American, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander and 1% Native American. The initiative will benefit a wide variety of population groups, from families with young children (16% in poverty) and teen moms (generating 48% of new births), to seniors, including a sizable population of seasonal residents.

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District is a solid public institution, incorporated in 1982. Despite the 20% drop in local public tax revenues, the Library District has been able to sustain quality services, hours of operation, staffing and collections in a challenging economic environment. Two new facilities in new growth areas are being opened. We are completing a system-wide, leading-edge technology projects for automated materials handling and customer self-service. In 2003, we were recognized with Library Journal's "Library of the Year." The library is led by an experienced professional management team that manages an operating budget of \$58 million, a capital budget of \$43 million and over 650 employees.

One direct FT library job, 17 FTE direct employees on the fiber installation projects, and 45 indirect FTEs for project suppliers are created.

The total cost of this project is \$6,079,308. The Library District will provide a cash match of \$1,057,271 and in-kind match of 15% indirect costs totaling \$792,953. The total amount requested from the NTIA's BTOP program is \$4,229,084.