

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Portsmouth Public Library

Project Title: Ohio Community Technology Centers Program: Portsmouth Public Library

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Scioto County is a rural, mainly forested, area of south central Ohio. 94.7% of the population is white, 2.6% African-American; the remainder includes two or more races, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander. 39.9% of the population over the age of 25 are high school graduates, and only 16.2% have college degrees. 15.2% of families in our community are below the poverty level, and the median household income is \$28,008. There are 33 public schools, 2 non-public schools, and 1 university in the county. The unemployment rate is 12.9%.

The six locations of the Portsmouth Public Library provide the only source of free public computing available to the 75,950 residents of Scioto County. We currently offer 56 public internet computers with access speeds up to 4.2Mbps. The library's computer centers are open to the public six days a week, and our facilities are handicap accessible. Adaptive technology equipment including peripheral devices is available to patrons at all locations. The library's public computing facilities currently serve about 1,925 people per week.

Three staff members are available to assist patrons and to provide training. We provide small group computer training at our main library on a regular basis, and those programs are in high demand. Many of our program attendees are new to computer ownership, planning to purchase a computer and broadband access, or are developing skills that will make them more employable. About 30 patrons per week attend computer training programs. We do not have adequate equipment to accommodate additional training, or to provide training at branch libraries. Current equipment and software used for training is outdated.

The aim of this project is to increase service capacity and to improve the quality of service provided to our community. These equipment and facility upgrades, combined with the services provided by the "Connect Ohio Community Technology Centers Program", to be submitted by Connect Ohio in the second round of funding, will enable us to increase awareness and broadband access, augment our training program, and thus facilitate the adoption of broadband by our community members. Our goal is to increase access to services by 25%.

The Portsmouth Public Library is requesting \$76,500.59 which will be used to improve our central training facility, increase access in our Youth Services area, create mobile training opportunities, and provide color printing and scanning at all library locations.

The library intends to utilize existing Information Technology staff to implement the enhanced training and services. The improvements provided by this project will increase public awareness and quality of programming, and improve our ability to serve as an accessible place for the unserved and underserved in our area, as well as a bridge to participation in the digital economy.