

Project Purpose (6000 characters)

D. Project Purpose

Project Purpose: Recovery Act & BTOP Objectives

Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) proposes to use the funding available through this grant to construct the Lake Tahoe Public Intranet (LTPI), a community wireless broadband network for the provision of a) low cost access to wireless broadband to underserved areas of our community and b) free access to wireless broadband for the delivery of educational and training content. This is a project undertaken by the Lake Tahoe Green Energy District (LTGED), formed by and composed of multiple public agencies in South Lake Tahoe, including LTCC, the Lake Tahoe Unified School District (LTUSD), Barton Memorial Hospital, South Tahoe Public Utility District (STPUD), the City of South Lake Tahoe, the County of El Dorado, the State of California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC), and the USDA – Forest Service (hereinafter collectively referred to as the District). The LTPI project will allow the District to:

1. Increase the density and redundancy of the technology infrastructure of the District in order to provide for improved communication and disaster response and recovery for emergency services including fire, police, and hospital.
2. Provide improved access to broadband for underserved and disadvantaged members of the community and region through state-of-the-art technologies housed in the Lake Tahoe Green Data Center (LTGDC), which consolidates the information technology infrastructure of the District agencies (for improved disaster response, redundancy, recoverability, reduced operating costs and improved environmental quality).
3. Provide career and technical education and training to the targeted underserved and disadvantaged community by utilizing the LTGDC as a training site for existing and planned vocational education programs in many disciplines including telecommunications, information systems and green construction.
4. Expand underserved and disadvantaged community enrollment in these educational and training programs offered by LTCC and the LTUSD by improving access to and adoption of broadband services and computers for the delivery of educational content.
5. Provide a wireless broadband mesh network for public safety agencies by connecting the LTGDC (connected to the fiber trunk lines in South Lake Tahoe) to a citywide [REDACTED] wireless network, providing the connectivity to all the members of the District, including city police, county sheriffs, fire, and hospital.

South Lake Tahoe is a rural and isolated community of roughly 23,609 full-time year-round residents as of the most recent U.S. census. The fastest growing segment of the community is the Hispanic population, which was 26.7% at the census, and is estimated to be greater than a third (33%) as of 2008. Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) is the community anchor institution and job creating strategic facility in the South Lake Tahoe. The college currently serves approximately 3500 students each term, providing both face-to-face and online educational and training opportunities. Reflecting the makeup of the community, the student body is primarily white, with 15.6% identifying as Hispanic, a proportion that is growing and is among the target communities for service under this proposal..

Currently, El Dorado County has an overall unemployment rate of 11.3%, with that rate likely being significantly higher in South Lake Tahoe, as other economic indicators also trend higher.

For example, 9.1% of residents in South Lake Tahoe earn incomes below the poverty level, compared to 5% for El Dorado County as a whole. Additionally, the proportion of low-to-moderate households in South Lake Tahoe is 56.1% (U.S. Census; http://www.sltgpu.com/pdf/PRDBR/SLTGPU_PRDBR_3-Econ.pdf). The combination of these two factors highlights a substantial need for both:

1. Education and training opportunities in emerging industry sectors, such as telecommunications, information technology and green construction, to broaden the employment opportunities for unemployed and disadvantaged workers in our community.
2. Access in the underserved and disadvantaged communities to broadband service and computers in order to utilize these educational and training opportunities within existing constraints such as family commitments, work, or geographic location, .

The proposed project will address these needs by providing a wireless broadband network to the targeted communities at South Lake Tahoe for the delivery of educational and community content from LTCC and the LTUSD. Members of the target constituencies in the community will be able to register for classes and training, both at LTCC and the LTUSD, for a nominal community education fee and will be provided with access to the LTPI wireless network. Those needing PC equipment will be able to get recycled computers from the District, fully configured and ready to use on the wireless network, for a nominal cost. This will provide our target constituencies with:

1. Educational content, such as GED course work, basic computing skills, computer applications training, foundation English, and
2. Communication and computing resources, such as Microsoft's Office, Microsoft Live@edu email and other tools to promote their success in education and in the workplace.

The establishment of the LTGDC and the LTPI are part of a larger effort undertaken by the District to promote sustainable infrastructure development projects that can be utilized as education and training opportunities to retrain the workforce in South Lake Tahoe and the surrounding region and prepare them for emerging industry sectors in green technologies, including information technology (IT).