

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** California State University, Fresno Foundation

**Project Title:** Central California Computer Learning Center (CCCLC)

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### **Executive Summary**

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A. Need -- California State University, Fresno (Fresno State) proposes to establish the Central California Computer Learning Center (CCCLC) to provide a wide range of economic development opportunities for one of the largest and most needy regions in the United States. Unemployment in Fresno County is now 16%, which mirrors the region's overall unemployment rates. The California Department of Housing recently noted that "there are only two counties in which the poverty levels reach a critical level, and these are Tulare and Fresno Counties" both of which are in the Central Valley

B. Approach --The primary focus of the CCCLC will be to provide assistance to job seekers and small business entrepreneurs alike by providing broadband education, job awareness, access to training and equipment for vulnerable populations, and expert on-line business counseling and assistance to small businesses serving these populations. As a result of the Center's hands-on education and training approach, those who utilize one or more of the Center's services can learn more about what skills are needed to achieve their employment goals, how best to develop those skills, and, once developed, how to make the best use of them.

CCCLC will operate on two tracks: (1) the workforce development track and (2) the small business development track. CCCLC is a partnership between the ACT Center (ACT), the University Business Center (UBC), and the Central California Small Business Development Center (CCSBDC), which have administrative offices on campus and operational centers off-campus at a revitalized mall in one of Fresno's poorer areas. CCCLC primary partners will work closely with each of the region's county economic development agencies, the CalWORKs Welfare-To-Work program, the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and a variety of other agencies to advance the goals of this project. The Central California Computer Learning Center will have an immediate impact on employment and has the potential to have significant long-term impact on employment that will reduce layoffs and expand hiring by assessing workplace and educational skills for thousands of underemployed residents in Central California.

C. Area Served -- The eight target counties are almost the size of the State of South Carolina, with four million residents and the nation's largest number of migrant farm workers. Hispanics make up nearly 40% of the residents

D. Qualifications and Ability to Achieve Results -- Providing responsive educational opportunity to this Valley's growing underserved population has never been more important or challenging. Nevertheless, given significant infrastructure investments over the past five years, the CCCLC partners have the facilities, expertise and experience to expand the community outreach that a public computer center can provide.

The ACT Center, which is licensed through ACT Inc., the international testing organization, consists of a nationally-recognized battery of WorkKeys assessments correlated with a job profiling component to assist individuals and organizations or businesses to analyze the skills needed for specific jobs and to describe those needs to educators, students and job applicants. WorkKeys assessments has job profiles from a cashier to a CPA detailing the skill levels an individual must have to be successful in that position. ACT is the only certified center of its kind now in operation within a nearly 300-mile radius and is the largest in California, providing more job-skills testing and professional certifications than any other ACT Center. It also offers an array of on-line courses geared toward the employment needs of many of its users. UBC and CCSBDC will have primary responsibility for the Small Business Development track, which will provide heightened access to current CCSBDC services by increasing the availability of SBDC Technical Assistance (TA) services to previously underserved populations. It will utilize the technology and manpower made possible by federal funding to provide expanded access to business information and consulting services and training in rural areas via web based videoconferencing. The CCSBDC will provide services utilizing the web videoconferencing tools which will also reduce vehicle travel time, fuel usage, and green house gases; gaining the ripple effect that is created when a sustainable strategy is employed.

E. Jobs Saved or Created – It is impossible to predict with certainty the number of jobs created or saved by this grant. However, county employment planners have estimated that expansion of outreach to unemployed and underemployed workers along with increased and more effective small business planning would provide the groundwork for saving or creating up to 500 jobs in the next three to five years. So, although these goals may not be realized during the project period, but they will certainly have a positive impact in the latter stages of the project and in subsequent years. We also believe that without this stimulus funding it is highly likely that the ACT Center, a key workforce development asset in central California, will either be forced to close or, at the very least, to significantly reduce services to the most needy workers in the Valley.

F. Overall Cost of the Project - The cost of the two year proposal will be a total of \$ 444,469 of which \$ 168,955 (38%) is cost share(Cash Cost Share = \$ 104,661; In-Kind Cost Share = \$64294). Cash match equals 38% of the Department of Commerce funding. By partnering with county and state agencies that are directly involved in employment and training, the CCCLC has the ability to enter into long-term contractual arrangements that will provide for long-term sustainability. In addition, the Computer Learning Center has the real potential to provide direct service skills training of potential employees for small businesses that do not have the capability for their own jobs skills training.