

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: LEECH LAKE RESERVATION BUSINESS COMMITTEE INC

Project Title: Headwaters Tribal Computer Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Problem statement The Leech Lake, Red Lake and White Earth Bands of Ojibwe live on the three largest land-based reservations in Minnesota. The residents of the reservations face many, many challenges. The reservations are located long distances from the job growth areas of Minnesota; all three are over 200 miles from Minneapolis-St. Paul. Each reservation is extremely rural and each reservation is over 1000 miles in area. The result is extreme poverty exacerbated by transportation issues, isolation, crime low education levels and employment. For Leech Lake, key demographic statistics are: per capita income is \$9,453; unemployment in 2006 was 46% compared to a statewide average at that time of 3.7%; 31% of Native Americans living on the reservation was 31%. For Red Lake: Unemployment was 39%; 46% of all children live in poverty; per capita income is \$8,080; 81% of the children are on free or reduced lunch. The White Earth Reservation is centered in Mahnomen County which is ranked highest in the State of Minnesota regarding children living in poverty, highest in juvenile apprehensions of violent crimes and serious property crimes, and highest in teen pregnancy rates. Mahnomen County ranks second highest in the State of Minnesota with children living in poverty and high school drop out rates. The factors take their toll. A glaring example is the number of Red Lake 9th grade children who have contemplated suicide ' 81% of girls, 42% of boys. This is three times the state average. High poverty and low education levels combine to limit tribal members access to computers and broadband technology. In fact, telephone subscription by tribal members is barely equal to broadband use of the majority population. According to the 2000 US Census, 31% of Leech Lake, 41% of Red Lake and 35% of White Earth homes lacked telephones. A recent survey on Leech Lake showed that only 20% of Leech Lake tribal members had broadband access at home. With similar demographics on the other two reservations, it can be safely assumed that their numbers of broadband subscribers are similar. Overall approach This proposal will focus on the children of the reservation, specifically those who participate at Boys and Girls Clubs on the reservations. The proposal will also enable the general population of the reservations to have enhanced computer access at least six days per week and into the evening hours. The project will also focus on increasing the technological capabilities of small businesses on the three reservations by providing access, computer and technology training, and small business counseling through the area Small Business Development Center. The grant funds will be used to purchase 224 new computers and have them installed at 17 public computer centers to be located at the Boys and Girls Clubs on the three reservations. Some Boys and Girls Clubs are freestanding facilities; some are co-located at tribally operated community centers. The grant funds will be used to purchase software, printers and networking equipment, and furniture. This new equipment at 17 centers will replace 79 computers at six existing Boys and Girls Clubs computer labs. All of the existing equipment is at least five

years old and inadequate for today's applications. The grant funds will also be used to hire staff to manage the computer centers. These managers will maintain the computers on a daily basis, organize and provide training, conduct outreach to the tribal community and coordinate with tribal MIS departments for more intensive computer support. Each center will have a dedicated staff. The distances between computer centers makes a staff sharing approach not feasible. Area(s) to be served/population of the target area(s)/estimated number of potential users The areas to be served are the Leech Lake, Red Lake and White Earth Reservations of northern Minnesota. The population of the Leech Lake Reservation is 9,894. The Red Lake Reservation population is 6,300. The population of White Earth Reservation is 9,192. The public computer centers will be open to all who wish to use them, Native American or not. The Boys and Girls Clubs serve over 3,000 registered users. These children will be the primary users of the computer centers. They will be able to do homework after school, learn new skills, explore cultural heritage and learn Ojibwe languages and have fun with the computers and the broadband connectivity. Small businesses and prospective business owners will also be targeted. Bemidji State University Small Business Development Centers will offer a series of eight classes on computers, web, Internet, and small business management. Each series will be offered four times on each reservation over the two-year period. It is anticipated that 10 people will attend each class for a total enrollment of 960 (8 classes x four offerings over two years x three reservations). Two groups from the general public will also be encouraged to use the computers. The parents of children enrolled in the Boys and Girls Clubs will be targeted so that they see the value of the computers and the Internet connection. Tribal elders will also be encouraged to learn how to use computers. This will represent an inter-generational opportunity, especially in regard to Ojibwe language and culture. Qualifications of the applicant The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is well qualified to apply for and manage this project if the grant funds are awarded. The Band has successfully managed other federal grant dollars in the past. The Boys and Girls Clubs are particularly well suited as sub-recipients to implement this project. The Boys and Girls Clubs are well-established organizations on the reservations with strong ties throughout the community. They have existing facilities and staff. The Clubs are a safe place for children to come and learn. The National Boys and Girls organization has a strong set of computer curriculum and procedures that will ensure a productive, safe and fun environment for the children of the reservation to increase their computer skills and to learn. The Boys and Girls Clubs are experienced in working with grant funds and being accountable for how funds are spent and accounted for. They are expert in building community support for projects. They are closely aligned with the area schools and their respective tribal colleges. They have support available from the national organization that delivers partnership opportunities with leading technology corporations. For example, Microsoft has programs to provide some software; the existing Boys and Girls Clubs computers were too old to make use of this program. New computers will enable them to more fully participate in national club opportunities. Jobs to be saved or created. This project will create 31 jobs, which includes 17 computer center managers, one project manager and 4 small business instructor positions, other jobs are induced by the project. Overall cost of the proposed project. The total project cost is \$2,516,102. The requested grant amount is \$1,722,371. The project partners are providing \$793,731 in match, which is 31.5% of the project total.