

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** Mission Economic Development Agency

**Project Title:** Latino Microenterprise Tech Net

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### **Executive Summary**

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The Mission Economic Development Agency in collaboration with the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB) and a national network of Latino economic development agencies proposes to utilize NTIA BTOP Public Computer Centers funding to establish the Latino Microenterprise Tech Net (LMTN). LMTN will equip 17 centers at 11 economic development institutions nationwide with public computer centers hosting a total of 300 workstations, standardized bilingual English-Spanish training curriculum for entrepreneurs, and the tools and resources to equip Latino microentrepreneurs with skills to establish and grow their businesses. Through bilingual training and public access, LMTN aims to achieve two primary purposes: (1) increase usage of technology & broadband by low-to-moderate income Latinos; and (2) utilize technology access and training to help Latinos establish and expand businesses in order to create jobs. This project addresses three key issues: (1) the under-representation of Latinos online; (2) lack of access to bilingual training opportunities for low-income Latinos and Latino owned businesses; and (3) the lack of employment opportunities for low-income Latinos nationwide. It is well documented that Latinos are one of the least represented groups online- just one in three Latinos who speak Spanish go online, versus 71% of non-Hispanic whites and 60% of non-Hispanic blacks. As indicated through the low overall rates of Latinos online, cultural and language barriers contribute to a lack of bilingual training opportunities. It is well documented that most online content is in English. Latinos also face inflated unemployment rates- according the U.S. Department of Labor, in July 2009 Latinos had the second highest unemployment rate (12.5%) after African-Americans (14.6%) - by contrast the overall national rate was 9.4% . Our approach addresses these critical issues by providing fully bilingual public access labs, basic computer training, and specialized Latino microentrepreneur computer training. We intend to serve 15,000 individuals per year. In the current economic environment many low-income Latino families are experiencing diminishing opportunities, making self-employment sometimes the only option . Latinos face job discrimination, and wage levels that are too low to sustain family expenditures. This project is designed to address Latino unemployment through microenterprise development leading to job creation of approximately 730 jobs annually, or 2,190 over the life of the grant. In a time of nationwide job shortage, job creation through microenterprise development is a proven strategy for creating employment opportunities that can pull families out of poverty and life the community as a whole.

LMTN's approach is innovative because it utilizes technology centers to create jobs rather than simply train for jobs. The old paradigm of matching technology skills to available jobs has become obsolete in the face of massive layoffs, high unemployment, and a lack of entry level opportunities for less skilled

workers. We are connecting a network of organizations that have already proven successful in providing microenterprise and business development to Latino populations, and seeking to boost job creation with entrepreneurs by offering targeted technology training. Our technology strategy is also innovative in that it employs an application server system and end user terminals for maximum cost effectiveness, efficiency, collaboration, and data tracking, while it minimizes risks. Where computer labs often fail to upkeep and maintain equipment in the face of heavy public use, our system is designed prevent this common problem.

The 13 target areas for this project include a geographic spread from California to Maryland, and Laredo, TX to Minneapolis. Our target demographic for recipients of technology training and public access consists of low- to moderate-income Latinos, as defined by HUD. We are specifically targeting Latino Entrepreneurs to equip them with the skills to start and grow their businesses. We estimate reaching 15,000 end-users per year (45,000 total) through a combination of public access and training, and 3,000 end users per year (9,000 total) with training. MEDA was established 36 years ago in San Francisco and is dedicated to achieving economic justice for low-income Latinos throughout San Francisco. MEDA manages grants and contracts from the City of San Francisco's CDBG program and from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. MEDA's annual budget is approximately \$2 million, and MEDA is the managing a \$9 million capital campaign to complete construction on Plaza Adelante, a community center dedicated to the economic empowerment of Latino families in San Francisco. MEDA has the staff, policies and systems, and internal fiscal controls to immediately begin work on the proposed project, and to successfully manage the contract to federal specifications. Our partner, NALCAB has extensive experience managing national collaborative projects of this size and scope. Our other key partner, Caminos Pathways Learning Center possesses expertise in community technology, training low-income Latinos in computer applications, developing curriculum, building technology centers, and creating community technology infrastructure solutions. The Latino Microenterprise Tech Net will create 730 new jobs annually nationwide, or 2,190 over the life of the grant, and the majority of these jobs will employ low- to moderate-income Latinos. Jobs will be created through the establishment and expansion of microbusinesses in our targeted cities nationwide. The proposed overall project cost is \$3,723,808.00 for a cost per job amount of \$1,700.00 and a cost per client amount of \$82.00.

We hope NTIA will consider this opportunity to reach a strategically targeted cross section of Latinos nationwide through a culturally, linguistically and economically relevant approach.