

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: California Emerging Technology Fund

Project Title: Digital Literacy for All: A California Emerging Technology Fund Public Computer Centers Proposal

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Digital Literacy for All addresses the critical need to expand the use of broadband-based technologies to stimulate the state of California's economic revitalization. The need for Digital Literacy for All emerges from the deep Digital Divide, which runs throughout California, growing wider among specific demographic groups.

The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) has co-sponsored a comprehensive set of surveys detailing the different locations and particular demographic groups in California that are falling farthest behind in obtaining basic digital literacy skills. The research indicates that 1/4 of the state's population lacks home access to a computer and 45% have not subscribed to in-home broadband access.

Based on CETF's experience and analysis of the research, it is clear that the mere existence of broadband access at public computer centers is not enough to build a digitally literate citizenry, especially among vulnerable populations. To achieve significant impact, public computer centers must utilize clear standards for computer proficiency and link their digital literacy training programs to well-recognized certifications.

Digital Literacy for All will bring to scale a network of public computer centers located throughout California, combining the resources of statewide businesses, educational institutions, and community-based organizations. In order to maximize BTOP funding and align it with current digital literacy best practices and California policy, CETF and its partners have developed a comprehensive Digital Literacy Training Continuum. This Continuum enables individuals to gain progressively higher digital literacy skills, while providing CETF with the capacity to systematically monitor and evaluate progress based on the use of standardized assessments.

CETF and its partners have developed, refined, and evaluated highly innovative methodologies that will be utilized in the next generation of public computer centers and digital mobility centers. Program

participants will be able to make significant digital literacy gains while being linked to a strong network of programs and services. Using BTOP funds and their own matching resources, Digital Literacy for All partners will utilize the public computer centers described in this proposal to coordinate a digital literacy training initiative using recognized standards and certifications as the basis for measuring outcomes and achieving scale. They will realize three principal goals and related outcomes:

- (1) Enable low-income Californians to learn applications requiring broadband technology (27,102 youth and adults will gain digital literacy skills);
- (2) Increase household adoption of broadband technology in high-priority, low-income communities in California (4,825 new households will subscribe to broadband services); and
- (3) Enable low-income Californians to enter and continue digital career paths (581 residents will be placed into full-time living-wage jobs that require digital literacy skills).

13 partner organizations are directly involved in the implementation and evaluation of this application. Each of these organizations has executed a specific Memorandum of Understanding with CETF detailing its roles and responsibilities in this program, including a commitment to thorough monitoring and evaluation. Each partner has also participated in an intensive four-month planning process that included the development of rigorous accountability frameworks for this effort.

Participating partners serve a significant portion of low-income urban and selected rural areas of California. The areas targeted are among the most impoverished and impacted by the economic downturn. It is estimated that 83.7% of the clients currently served by the public computer centers participating in Digital Literacy for All are unemployed. In total, the Digital Literacy for All public computer centers proposal will serve over 90,000 users.

Formed by action of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), CETF is a non-profit organization committed to eliminating the Digital Divide in California. Utilizing \$60 million in seed money to carry out a carefully crafted ten-year plan, CETF is enabling underserved communities to get high-speed Internet access. CETF is uniquely positioned to be an effective manager of BTOP resources as its work to date has resulted in an extensive statewide network of partner organizations who are actively engaged in sharing best practices and resources through the strong learning community established by CETF.

The four-month planning process convened by CETF to prepare the Digital Literacy for All proposal enabled partners to carefully estimate the impact of their work on job creation and retention. In total,

during the 24-month program period, 470 individuals will be placed in stipend-based employment and 581 will be placed in full-time living wage jobs; 190 new jobs will be created; 72 jobs will be retained and 3,050 low-income persons will receive training that will boost their ability to compete for jobs requiring Digital Literacy skills.

CETF proposes an overall project budget of \$9,977,388. Of this amount, CETF requests \$7,723,506 in BTOP Public Computer Centers funds and will provide \$2,253,882 in matching resources representing 22.6% of project costs. Of this amount, CETF and its partners will co-invest \$2,044,403 through a cash match (20.5%). In order to fully leverage the federal ARRA investment in Digital Literacy for All, participating partners are providing all indirect and space costs as a further contribution.