

## Executive Summary:

A partnership among public libraries, community colleges, and the state educational and research network proposes a project to create 66 Centers geographically distributed throughout California to provide individuals, families, and community groups access to an array of Internet-based videoconferencing resources and tools. These institutions have always been instrumental in providing public access to the Internet. Nearly all California's public libraries offer public access to the Internet, and for many, libraries are principal or sole access points. This project will allow libraries and community colleges to expand and enhance that commitment by offering new leading edge applications that require high-speed broadband.

This project will install high-definition videoconferencing equipment in 66 Centers, procure applications to support and use the facilities, and train project coordinators and the public in their use. The Centers will develop and deliver interactive programs, including online adult and family literacy, children's services, job training and placement programs. These programs will focus initially on the immediate needs of vulnerable populations in the state, including the poor, the elderly, minorities, and unemployed workers.

Many of the online programs will be available as "cloud" applications, meaning after training at Centers, users with high-speed Internet at home will be able to access from home the applications maintained centrally at Centers. During the lifetime of the project, the Partners will seek to extend the project to include other key local and statewide services that would benefit from these new facilities—such as health-care, emergency management, and E-government. Developing such new partnerships will contribute to the long-term growth and impact of this project.

This project advances the following key purposes of BTOP:

1. Providing broadband education, awareness, training, access, and equipment to support individuals, economic growth, and job creation across the state, and
2. Stimulating demand for broadband.

Additionally, although this project is not specifically focused on increasing broadband access or adoption at home, it does address public access needs identified by the ARRA and BTOP by serving a significant and most vulnerable portion of the population that, for a variety of reasons, turn to libraries for their principal Internet access and are likely to continue to do so in

the foreseeable future. Libraries also serve as showcases for high-speed Internet applications, encouraging people who can do so to obtain home access.

The project has been designed to address three major problems in broadband use and adoption:

1) Low usage and high resistance among vulnerable populations, including low levels of awareness of the Internet and the services available on it. Public libraries already have been successful in drawing vulnerable populations to their Internet services, and this project will extend those outreach programs. Programs will be offered in collaboration with selected non-profit organizations that can help interest and engage non-technology users and help attract them to the sites. Center staff will work with users to develop their interest and confidence.

2) The need to adopt newer, interactive, and collaborative approaches to Internet-based program delivery, particularly in literacy and education.

Using an array of technology resources and tools, the Partnership will work with libraries and colleges to plan, implement, evaluate, and refine the services available to residents, community organizations, and program providers. Centers will support public access to wholly and partially online programs that address basic literacy needs, information technology skills, job search and workforce preparation, lifelong learning, preventative health guidance, and business development.

3) The need for anchor institutions such as public libraries and community colleges to remain on the leading edge of broadband technology to serve their users.

Libraries and community colleges need to stay on the leading edge of Internet services to serve their communities. Many programs that serve the community at large require high-speed broadband and, in many cases, specialized facilities such as high definition display and videoconferencing. Yet, in recent years, severe financial difficulties have caused many to fall behind. This project will allow California libraries and community colleges to move into the twenty-first century digital world with new services and resources. Without BTOP funding, such a move forward would be impossible.

The project will be led by the Executive Director of the Califa Library Group, a nonprofit membership consortium established in 2004 with funding from the California State Library to serve libraries and information organizations in California.

The project will be conducted in partnership with the California State Library, CENIC, the California Community College Chancellor's Office, and the California Virtual Campus. A steering committee including representatives from partner organizations will be formed to guide the project.

At a minimum, 70 jobs will either be directly created or preserved at library, community-college, and other participating sites to implement the project. Indirectly, many more jobs will be created and much economic development will be stimulated by the ability of libraries and community colleges to 1) help individuals enhance their skills and employability and 2) help small businesses increase their competitiveness.

Total costs of the project over the entire three-year period are estimated at \$13,763,038. Matching funds and in kind of \$4,327,309 are being provided by project partners, and \$9,435,729 is requested from the BTOP program. The project will be substantially completed by the end of the second year.