Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: High Plains Library District

Project Title: Connecting Weld to the World

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary_______________________

The High Plains Library District (HPLD) requests BTOP funds to establish seven (7) Public Computing Centers (PCC) throughout Weld County, Colorado to improve access to broadband services in rural and underserved communities. Each PCC will provide multi-use workstations that will enable users to access a plethora of functions to assist in modern day life activities including researching and applying for jobs, filing taxes, researching available human services, and studying. The PCCs will also enable free access to Wi-Fi available to users in the area.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The HPLD service area covers almost 4,000 square miles, most of which is rural. This is changing rapidly, with energy-based industries establishing a presence. Displaced workers, including a large migrant population (12,000 primarily from Mexico) and refugees from East Africa and Burma (about 700 in August 2009), need re-tooling. Approximately 34,000 people in rural and underserved areas and live more than five miles or 30 minutes from a library facility, as well as low-income residents and vulnerable populations (youth, seniors, and non-English speakers) are the primary target users of the proposed PCC sites. Less than half currently use library resources due to geographic and transportation barriers, as well as lack of knowledge about the resources available. In addition rural and/or low-income residents have limited internet connectivity services. Internet service of 1.5 MG or greater is not available in many rural areas in Weld County. According to a survey commissioned by the HPLD (Erickson, 2006), the cost of high-speed connectivity for low-income residents can be prohibitive or it is considered a non-essential service within the household. HPLD branches have seen a 38% increase in the past year of use of broadband services, often by people who have canceled home Internet access due to budget constraints. In addition, many residents lack technology skills or interest in the essential use of technology yet need access to do homework, view student grade reports, and find jobs.

HPLD’s APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE NEED

The mission of the High Plain Library District is to connect communities to information, inspiration and entertainment for life. Bringing free broadband access via PCCs meets the mission of the HPLD, as well as fills the need for affordable access to information via a reliable broadband infrastructure in
underserved areas of the HPLD. HPLD proposed to establish PCCs as a collaborative effort with local
governments in rural and underserved areas of Weld County. HPLD is asking the communities to
provide space in existing facilities and to use current staff or to provide staff to insure that the public
have access to the PCC. HPLD will bring in the internet access and computers as well as provide staff to
teach classes on using online resources for research, job hunting, and other information needs. In this
way, HPLD helps keep businesses working, supports local infrastructures, and prepares community
populations for the growing expectation of their computer literacy.

AREAS TO BE SERVED AND POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>2000 pop</th>
<th>2008 pop</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE Greeley</td>
<td>10,000 in 1mi radius</td>
<td>$33,530</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Keenesburg</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>1177</td>
<td>$41,417</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersey Community Center</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td>1460</td>
<td>$41,333</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Salle Town Hall</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>$41,534</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lochbuie Senior Center</td>
<td>2049</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>$40,089</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town of Mead</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>3408</td>
<td>$79,298**</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
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<td>$55,212</td>
<td>17%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bureau of the Census. American Community Survey

**NOTE: Household income in Mead is high due to recent high-end housing development. The target
audience is seniors and youth in the older portions of Mead with limited transportation and lower
incomes.

QUALIFICATIONS DEMONSTRATING HPLD'S ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT & ACHIEVE RESULTS

The project proposed in this grant request replicates a model for a PCC that the High Plains Library
District developed, piloted, tested and fully-implemented in 2008. At the request of town officials in
Evans, Colorado (pop. 19,000), the High Plains Library District established and opened a PCC within the
Evans Community Complex. The purpose and scope of that project emulate the requirements of the
BTOP program: provide improved broadband service in underserved areas, provide broadband
education, awareness, training, access, equipment and support to a community anchor institution, and
stimulate demand for broadband services. Although Evans borders Greeley, transportation, disability
and other barriers prohibited easy access by many residents to a library facility in Greeley with broadband access. Therefore, HPLD installed six (6) workstations that function as those found in HPLD branch libraries. Library staff provides computer classes several times per week in English and Spanish to assist residents in effectively using the technology and library resources. Community center staff contributes by monitoring the PCC and assisting users with printing, peripherals and accessing library materials. Currently, the PCC logs over 400 uses per month, primarily from youth and seniors who have difficulty traveling to a library branch.

JOBS TO BE SAVED OR CREATED

HPLD will hire a 40 hour per week PCC Project Manager as well two part-time (24 hours per week each) PCC Associates to staff this project. Overall administration and technical support will be provided by existing HPLD staff. In addition, each Town is providing staffing to manage daily operations. One site had been on the verge of closing due to budget shortfalls, but the City rearranged priorities in order to keep it open - continuing to employ staff and provide programming, with the expectation that this will become a PCC during 2010.

The total cost to implement these seven PCC sites is $583,910 of which HPLD is requesting $245,200 in BTOP grant funding.