

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: California Emerging Technology Fund

Project Title: Broadband Awareness and Adoption

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

Broadband use represents an essential component of 21st century citizenship and economic life. In California, the birthplace of the Internet, substantial progress has been made toward connecting all residents to these critical communications tools. Nevertheless, over 37% of Californians are not connected to broadband—a total of 14.4 million people. This figure includes disproportionate numbers of rural residents, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals. The sheer magnitude of this gap mandates that California play a leadership central role in any national effort to close the Digital Divide, particularly as our country strives to realize the economic recovery goals articulated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

While great progress has been made toward closing the Digital Divide, the systemic changes needed to enable all low-income Californians to adopt broadband technology have not yet taken place. This proposal for a comprehensive Broadband Awareness and Adoption program will enable thousands of low-income Californians to gain the awareness, skills, and resources needed to adopt and utilize broadband technology in their households. It represents the first time that organizations statewide will be coordinated around a joint, systematic, digital inclusion approach, supported by an intensive, awareness-raising media effort and on-line software applications targeted at the hardest-to-reach low-income communities.

As an immediate response to the urgent need to provide stimulus to the California economy and to maximize the role of broadband technology in future economic development, CETF has convened a group of partners to build upon the resources and skills of its statewide network. Together, these partners have articulated a set of strategies that will provide California with the capacity to sustain a strong, IT-based economic recovery. These strategies are grouped in three proposal areas, each representing a critical step in the effort to close the Digital Divide: (1) Broadband Awareness and Adoption; (2) Digital Literacy for All (13 partners focusing on increasing digital literacy statewide through a network of public computer centers); and (3) CREATE - "Computer Refurbishing Employment Applications Training and Education" (23 partners focusing on higher level Information Communication Technologies (ICT) applications training and training for ICT-based jobs).

This proposal focuses on Broadband Awareness and Adoption, providing households in low-income communities with the basic building blocks necessary to adopt broadband technology. It mobilizes the talents and resources of 8 partners statewide who were vetted by CETF through its “venture capital” approach to grantmaking, which incorporates disciplined documentation, assessment of key outcomes, and measurement of significant returns on investments (CETF Strategic Plan 2007).

Project partners have engaged in an intensive four-month planning process and have articulated work plans which will result in realizing significant outcomes over the 24 -month project implementation period. Key activities will:

- (1) Increase basic awareness of broadband technology (reaching over 5 million low-income people with strong and targeted media messages);
- (2) Increase basic skills related to broadband technology (providing orientation training to 797,807 persons); and
- (3) Increase household adoption of broadband technology (156,829 households subscribing to broadband services).

CETF has selected for participation in this proposal those communities around the State that are most impacted by the Digital Divide (Los Angeles, Central Valley, Orange, San Diego, and the Inland Empire). Within geographic communities, CETF is focusing on racial/ethnic and other demographic groups whose computer and broadband usage has significantly trailed the rest of the state (Latinos, rural residents, and people with disabilities). These areas and populations have been particularly impacted by the recession: the unemployment rate among the clients being served by participating partners is over 30%.

Formed by action of the California Public Utilities Commission, 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 promoting high-speed Internet access to underserved communities across California. CETF is uniquely positioned to be an effective manager of resources made available through BTOP because its work to date has created an extensive statewide network of

partner organizations working alongside CETF 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 Broadband Awareness and Adoption proposal enabled all partners to carefully estimate the impact of their efforts on job creation and retention. In total, for the 24-month program period, 128 jobs in low-income communities will be created; and 301,505 low-income youth will gain digital literacy skills that can be used to obtain employment.

CETF proposes an overall project budget of \$9,360,672. Of this amount, CETF requests \$7,251,295 in BTOP Sustainable Broadband Adoption funds and will provide \$2,109,377 in matching resources representing 22.5% of project costs. Of this amount, CETF and its partners will co-invest \$1,862,143 through a cash match. The balance of the match is being provided by partners in the form of in-kind resources. In order to fully leverage the federal ARRA investment in Broadband Awareness and Adoption, participating partners are providing all indirect costs as a further contribution.