

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: California Emerging Technology Fund

Project Title: CREATE - Computer Refurbishing and Employment Applications Training and Education

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

California must urgently prepare residents for jobs involving Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) skills. An effective and scalable statewide approach to job training and placement in entry-level ICT positions must be developed, utilizing clear standards and certifications. With 25% of the State's residents lacking access to a computer in their home and 45% not having in-home broadband access, California faces a substantial challenge in preparing a workforce for jobs that require, at minimum, basic computer and Internet skills.

In a concerted effort to provide critical economic stimulus, California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) proposes a systematic approach that recognizes the important role of ICT skills development in the State's economic recovery. Three mutually supportive proposals are being submitted to the NTIA Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP). They represent an integrated strategy enabling California to make major advances towards closing the Digital Divide and developing a next generation workforce. The proposals include: 1) Broadband Awareness and Adoption (fostering awareness and basic skills development); 2) Digital Literacy for All (building the base of skilled technology users through public computer centers); and 3) Computer Refurbishing and Employment Applications Training and Education - CREATE (linking the need to reuse hundreds of thousands of used computers with training for full-time, living-wage jobs). CREATE will benefit from the 700,000 referrals delivered by the targeted outreach of the Broadband Awareness and Adoption initiative.

This proposal focuses on the CREATE initiative. Over the last decade, great progress has been made at increasing ICT training programs that help low-income Californians increase their skills and enable them to progress along digital career pathways. Program models, curricula and training systems have been developed to prepare residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods for entry-level and progressively more advanced positions.

CETF has successfully invested in the systems required to effectively scale up several promising efforts and, through the CREATE initiative, is proposing a major expansion of this work in order to produce a triple bottom-line impact:

- 1) Increase employment opportunities and reduce poverty by enabling low-income residents to qualify for entry-level job openings by starting on a technology career pathway through training. Outreach will be targeted towards limited-English speakers, disabled individuals, and those who are unemployed or underemployed. Low-income youth will be provided the opportunity to gain the digital literacy skills necessary for future success;
- 2) Generate revenue and create jobs by combining social enterprises with job training programs that refurbish computers which would otherwise be discarded; and
- 3) Create environmental benefits by establishing a statewide infrastructure to refurbish and reuse personal computers. These low-cost, refurbished computers with high-speed broadband capability will be available in low-income communities to residents, non-profits, and schools, thereby removing a barrier to adoption.

By implementing the CREATE program, partners will realize four goals:

- 1) Enable low-income Californians to enter and continue advancing along digital career paths (1,355 individuals placed into full-time living-wage jobs that require ICT skills and 21,889 youth gain Digital Literacy skills critical to their academic and professional success);
- 2) Increase availability of low-cost IT hardware/software in low-income communities through its reuse (16,918 computer systems refurbished for use in low-income communities);
- 3) Increase household adoption of broadband technology in high-priority, low-income communities in California (17,904 low-income households subscribe to broadband services); and
- 4) Effectively serve people with disabilities (partners develop and implement an accessibility plan and focus on training and employment services to people with disabilities).

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 promotes high-speed Internet access to underserved communities across California. 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 working to close the Digital Divide.

Area(s) served: CREATE partners are located in the regions of the state that are most impacted by the Digital Divide: Los Angeles; the Central Valley; San Diego; and the San Francisco Bay Area. CETF focuses on demographic groups whose computer and broadband usage has significantly trailed the rest of the state (Latinos, rural residents, and people with disabilities).

Jobs saved or created: The four-month planning process convened by CETF to prepare the CREATE proposal enabled partners to carefully estimate the impact of their work on job creation and retention. During the 24-month program period, 217 persons will be placed in stipend-based employment, 1,355 individuals will be placed in full-time living wage jobs, and 2,302 new jobs will be created. Also, 45,876 low-income persons will receive training that strengthens their ability to compete for jobs requiring Digital Literacy skills.

Overall cost of the proposed project: CETF proposes an overall project budget of \$27,320,851. Of this amount, CETF requests \$20,339,006 in BTOP Sustainable Broadband Adoption funds and will provide \$6,981,845 in matching resources representing 25.56% of project costs. Of this amount, CETF and its partners will co-invest \$6,258,397 through a cash match (22.91%). In order to fully leverage an ARRA investment, partners are further contributing all indirect and rent costs.