**Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:**  OSHEAN Inc.

**Project Title:**  Beacon 2.0 LCC (Library Computer Center)

**Project Type:**  Public Computer Center

_____**Executive Summary**_____

A) Need Addressed

During recessions, Rhode Island's 49 public libraries always feel the pinch.  They make do with less and squeeze every dollar.  When a town is faced with a downturn in the economy, libraries are among the first services to be trimmed.  Rhode Island's libraries have experienced layoffs, furloughs, and devastating reductions in funding.  At least six Rhode Island libraries have just survived threats to close them. Many are very late in paying their vendors.  The library in Central Falls, one of our poorest communities, had to layoff 60% of its staff. Another library building was condemned. Some are borrowing money to pay salaries.  For libraries to survive, they need to be nimble and creative.

At the same time all libraries are cutting back, many of their patrons are out of work.  Rhode Island now placing in the 1st through 4th highest unemployment rate in the nation, currently 12.5%. These people are in desperate need of support with resume writing skills, how to apply for a job on-line, retrain for another field, use a computer, search for jobs online, learn English, and much more.  As people lose jobs, families are canceling their home internet service and depend more heavily on the libraries to be their internet resource, their community connection, and their place to learn.  The American Library Association studies say that 62% of the people coming to a public library are there to use a computer.  Without a BTOP grant, libraries cannot afford to provide the access that everyone needs.  Without a BTOP grant, it will not happen.

B) Approach to Addressing the Need

Through its Beacon 2.0 Library Computer Center program, OSHEAN (pronounced ocean) will provide 600+ computers/printers and 10 mobile computer centers for 49 public libraries at over 70 locations throughout the state, i.e. every public library in Rhode Island.  394 of the computers are to replace existing library computers that don't work or are "so slow we don't even bother to turn them on." These new computers will:

• replace outdated and non-functional equipment

• expand the libraries' capacity to offer public-use of personal computers

• enable expanded employment training and workshops

• provide streaming video equipment to promote regional access to state wide education programs; and, to allow libraries to offer classes in one location and allow the content to be shared at any public library.

Mobile computer centers exist in public classrooms around the country and have been proven effective. These 10 units will be clustered for special programs and dispersed throughout the libraries.

Our partner, Ocean State Libraries (OSL) is a substantial organization with 49 member libraries that provides the public with over 6.9 million items borrowed per year from member libraries. It has a membership of over 520,000 registered OSL library card holders. Nearly all RI residents have access to an OSL library in their own communities.

OSL has the perspective and experience to address the technology problems in its member libraries. It has been actively engaged with its member libraries to articulate their needs for this program.

C) Areas to Be Served

All Rhode Island libraries will benefit from Beacon 2.0 LCC, including 49 libraries at over 70 locations, issuing library cards to over half of the state's total population. Because the state's public libraries collectively blanket the state, the service area covers a population of approximately 1,050,788 people. The additional computer capacity will allow libraries to increase its estimated weekly patrons served by about 20,000 (26%), system-wide. And because these are public libraries, they serve all demographics and accommodate persons with disabilities. In particular, library computer resources are heavily utilized by lower-income and vulnerable populations that are most victimized by the nation's "digital divide."

D) Qualifications of the Applicant

OSHEAN is composed of 28 non profit member organizations, representing some of New England's most prestigious non profit institutions, including 18 colleges and universities, six hospitals and health maintenance organizations, and three state government agencies. OSHEAN has a track record of success in implementing technology projects.

Our partner, OSL staff spends a great deal of time researching the best possible options in terms of future trends, value and compatibility.  They have the staff and structure in place to organize and implement the purchase and handle the delivery and installation of hardware and software. OSL is able to maximize the benefit to member libraries and optimize the value of what is purchased by imposing uniform standards, group buying, and negotiating for all our libraries together.

E) Jobs Saved or Created

Beacon 2.0 LCC will create jobs for two computer trainers and one project manager.  The slight easing of the libraries' financial burden due to BTOP will probably save some librarians' jobs; possible ten jobs in the aggregate.  More importantly, patrons will obtain jobs due to training workshops, resume workshops, learning to post a resume on the Internet, etc. Given that Rhode Island has 70 library locations; if each location produced only one patron per month who secured a job because of the libraries' new computers and job related workshops, that would mean 840 jobs created per year.  We believe that number is very reasonable.

F) Overall Cost

The total program cost is $1,559,975.  This is to purchase computers, monitors, printers, mobile computer centers, switches and routers, and training costs.  Of that amount, $1,245,500 is requested in this application and $354,475 will come from a cash match grant from the Champlin Foundations who has made a formal commitment.  Given that the public library system serves 520,000 library card holders, Beacon 2.0 LCC represents a budget of only $3 per patron.