Applicant Name: Ada Community Library

Project Title: Lake Hazel Branch Public Computer Center

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Ada Community Library (ACL) district serves 50,000 residents and many nearby Boise City residents. We serve those in unincorporated Ada County, Idaho and Star city, not otherwise served by a city library or other library district. We belong to a consortium of 10 libraries, 7 in the Boise metropolitan area and 3 others in south central Idaho. Ada County, with a total population of 380,920, contains 4 city library jurisdictions and 3 library districts. ACL currently operates 3 locations: the Main Branch at the southwest edge of Boise; Star Branch in the northwest; and Hidden Springs Branch in the north foothills. In 2008 ACL authorized a Geographic Information Systems analysis of our district which is geographically vast, essentially surrounding the cities and other districts, and experiencing high growth from new development. The analysis provided information on our district’s current and expected population densities. An area of our district south of our Main Branch, one we refer to as “Lake Hazel,” was identified as having the highest density of population and the highest percent of population that are not currently library patrons. This is an underserved area transitioning from rural open space, to urban residential with many residential subdivisions but few commercial or public services. The only commercial strip in the immediate area houses a grocery market, a pizza shop opening soon, and a third space is available for the library to lease. According to the analysis, homes in nearby subdivisions are likely to have computers, but the area also includes lower income housing where no computer in the home is equally likely. There are no public computing services in a two mile radius; for those living further south of this area the current distance to services grows to five miles or more. The analysis describes the demographic majority in this area as “Family Portrait.” Youth, family life and the presence of children are the common characteristics. The group is young and ethnically diverse. Many own their single-family homes. The majority of households include married couples with children, contributing to the group’s large household size, averaging more than 3 persons per household. While the youth population is growing, the majority of residents are adults and the area is home to a modest percentage of seniors. The library board is determined to open a branch to serve the needs of this dense and growing population. The analysis indicated the library will do well to provide relevant services and highly informative programs and databases that residents might not otherwise obtain on their own. Library offerings would be resources for information about investments, money management and consumer expenditures, computer and internet training and services. Homework support, college preparation and career development will be very important. Social and economic mobility between blue and white collar industries is important as are transferable skills between businesses within and between industries. Library programs and services, in conjunction with other agencies will not only support economic development goals but also represent an opportunity for the library to create a
touchstone with people it might not otherwise reach. A Public Computer Center (PCC) within this new branch offering job searching, business services, and assisting people in becoming or remaining employable through workshops and training is such a touchstone opportunity, a valuable resource to enhance the traditional services we already plan to offer with available funds. Currently the Idaho unemployment rate is 8.8%, a 26 year high. Unemployment in the Boise metropolitan area, nearly 40 percent of Idaho’s labor force, is at 10.1 percent; Ada County at 9.4%. Residents in the district, particularly the estimated 25,000 residents in this area, are certainly in need of opportunities. Libraries have traditionally served a crucial role in the work of economic recovery. Usage increases as residents endeavor to buffer impacts of recession. ACL already offers many resources to assist in economic recovery. Convenient, free access to PCC to those in need of public computing, career and business resources would be extremely valuable and would assist in preserving and creating jobs and advancing knowledge of computers and technology. ACL, while just 20 years old, has been successful over the years seeking and creating opportunities to offer innovative services: 1990 ACL hired an Information Systems Manager. Internet has been available since 1993, the same year we integrated our LAN and Catalog to access catalog, Internet, e-mail, network databases, and other libraries. A volunteer began to teach free classes Monday evenings on Internet searching; regular staff-led classes followed. 1994 a Satellite Dish/Big Screen Television was installed for distance education, and the first self checkout machine was installed. Website presence began in 1996, upgraded in 2006 to a Drupal based interactive site. A 2000 LSTA cooperative grant made possible computer training lab equipment. NetLibrary digital audiobooks were made available in 2006 as well as MP3 player/ wireless transmitter kits and Wireless access in 2007. The library has had a presence in many social networks for years. The PCC creates one 19 hr/wk position. Additional positions will be added as funding allows. Improving the leased space and creating this PCC room would assist local contractors in retaining employees. While not directly creating many jobs, its primary purpose would be to assist local residents, and those traveling through, in finding new jobs, becoming entrepreneurs, or maintaining or growing their businesses. The total cost of this project is estimated to be $88,000; grant funds used for PCC room creation, furnishings, and equipment. Grant funds requested total $64,500 and local match is $23,500, 26% of the total.