Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Pennsylvania Prison Society

Project Title: Broadband in Prison Project

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Broadband in Prison Project provides numerous long-term and life-changing benefits for disadvantaged individuals, underserved communities and struggling governmental agencies. While building awareness of and expanding access to broadband technology, this project also breaches walls that until now kept the Internet outside prisons across the country. The impacts are abundant. Consider these: prisoners will learn how to use the Internet to search for jobs and to access community resources; recidivism rates will ultimately be reduced; community based service providers will be able to reach people in desperate need of their services; the City of Philadelphia will offer positive programming for inmates who otherwise would be warehoused; local and state prisons across the country will see the value in instructing the underserved populations they confine. Incarcerated individuals in the Philadelphia Prison System do not currently have broadband access or computer literacy courses. These tools are generally recognized as utilities that greatly enhance abilities to find jobs and build productive lives in the 21st Century. The Broadband in Prison Project will demonstrate the power of technology to assist with the reentry process and open doors to a plethora of services and educational opportunities that are largely unseen in the disadvantaged neighborhoods from which most of these men and women come. By partnering with the City of Philadelphia Prison System, we expect to show correctional administrators in the U.S. and abroad what a powerful tool secure, broadband programs can be to maintain order in facilities, and for curbing recidivism rates. Nine out of ten prisoners eventually will be released into the community. More than 60% will likely end up back in prison within three years because of difficult barriers to overcome, like negative public perceptions, lack of skills and returning to the same bad influences. With years of experience working with former offenders, the Prison Society knows most do not have the basic skills necessary to conduct a job search via the computer and apply for a job using the Internet – critical skills in today’s marketplace. The Broadband in Prison Project seeks to address the issue of this unserved population by educating participants on basic computer knowledge, word processing and Internet navigation. The Project wants to give people the tools so that they will successfully know how to look for a job, find a doctor, help their child with homework or even get an online education. No other program is like the Broadband in Prison Project. Despite the apparent need, very few prisons allow inmates access to computers for fear of abuse. This Project will demonstrate how Internet Protocols can be structured and secure for positive learning. The Project also will show participants, before re-entering the community, they are capable of such knowledge and the computer and Internet can be used to accomplish great things for themselves and their families. The Broadband in Prison Project will serve 1000 individuals incarcerated in the Philadelphia Prison System in North Philadelphia each year by providing computer literacy courses, job search training and community
resource development. Demographics of the 10000 prisoners in the Prison System are: 10% women, 75% minority, 34% considered below poverty level prior to incarceration and 60% have dependents. The Pennsylvania Prison Society has over 200 years of experience of assisting incarcerated individuals, former offenders and working with the correctional system. In doing so, we’ve learned that it is not enough to simply set people free after a prison sentence and expect a successful transition back into a community. With education, assistance and encouragement, these individuals can overcome the hurdles waiting for them. We believe it is not simply enough to conduct a job search or find a job for someone, they must be taught how to do it themselves so they will know how to do it for a lifetime. The Prison Society has a rich history of assisting incarcerated individuals with development skills including various health topics, job searches and preparation for a successful reentry into the community and has developed and conducted multiple programs, both in and out of prison, on such issues. Programs like Services to Elderly Prisoners (STEP) Program, Philly ReNew (ReEntry) and Parenting Skills Education have given thousands of incarcerated individuals not only knowledge, but hope and a new attitude on life. The technical team, S2S Communications, was started in 2007 as a spin-off of Fiberlink Communications, a leader in secure laptop mobility software and services. S2S regularly handles life-cycle turn-key managed infrastructure services to Fortune 100 enterprises, in a variety of fields. The company often manages clients with: a large number of branch and/or remote office locations that require wide area network connectivity, Internet access and implementation of security and/or compliance standards. The Project will create 11 jobs, maintain 10 careers and has the potential to stimulate more than 1,000 jobs each year. The Prison Society will hire one Program Manager, five full-time instructors and five part-time instructors. The 10 careers of prison guard staff will be maintained and guaranteed throughout the duration of the Project. An additional 1000 plus jobs will potentially be sparked through the Project when participants are qualified with gained skills and knowledge discovered through Broadband in Prison. For these services, the Broadband in Prison Project will cost approximately $1200000 to get up and running. In succeeding years, the majority of Project costs will drop. For the Project to run for four years, the Prison Society will need about $4000000 for a month-long program of computer instruction complete with access to the Internet, community resources and job preparation.