Executive Summary

Problem Statement: Kentucky's (KY's) unemployment rate is maintaining the highest levels seen in the last thirty years. In November 2009, the 11.2% unemployment rate was substantially higher than November 2008. Manufacturing remains KY's largest industrial sector, although it continues to decline as a percentage of the state's economy. Because manufacturing is the major industry in KY, the current recession has had a disproportionately larger impact on KY's economy versus many other states.

Manufacturing employment fell by 20% since January 2008, representing 50,000 jobs lost. KY's poverty rate is the fifth highest in the nation, increasing to a 2006-2008 average of 17.3%. The percentage of Kentuckians with a high school degree among ages 25 and older was 79.9% in 2006 compared to 84.1% nationally. Kentuckians trail the nation in those reaching a bachelor's degree or higher, at 20% versus 27% for the U.S.

KY's economic situation places increased pressure on libraries and community centers to provide broadband technology access. According to the 2007 ConnectKentucky Technology Assessment, approximately 907,000 KY residents do not own a computer, with over two-thirds having no college education. The assessment revealed about 632,000 KY residents with no college education and no Internet access. Of those with no college education and no home Internet, 74% said their ONLY barrier to Internet adoption is either the lack of a computer, or a perceived lack of demand for Internet service. If those two barriers were eliminated, approximately 467,680 additional Kentuckians would subscribe to broadband. In many KY communities, the public library is the single place where high-speed Internet access is available. KY libraries report record numbers of citizens applying for government benefits, seeking job information, preparing resumes, taking college courses, and completing online programs. Although all segments of the population have been affected through job loss, many of those seeking assistance at public libraries require additional assistance. Many of the older and poorly educated unemployed have no computer skills. Public library staffs struggle to keep up with the increased demand on traditional programs, and find themselves in the position of teaching basic computer skills 'on the fly.' Insufficient numbers of public-access computers to meet the expanded need forces libraries to impose time limits. Limiting access time to public-use computers impedes those needing more time to complete forms, take online classes, write resumes, or apply for jobs.

Solution: KY's children and adults need access to computers and high-speed Internet in order to compete in today's digital world. ConnectKentucky is partnering with the AT&T Foundation, EQT Foundation, Opportunity for Work and Learning, Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Dataseam, Kentucky Housing Corporation, Housing Authority of Newport, Lexington Housing Authority, Kentucky Office of the Attorney General, and Lexmark to help bridge the digital divide for thousands of Kentuckians. The Computers 4 Kids Partnership works to remove the major barriers to broadband access.
adoption including: lack of a home computer, lack of IT literacy, and low awareness of broadband benefits. Computers 4 Kids is a proven working model, having donated over 3,200 refurbished and new computers and other technologies to community centers, public libraries, schools, nonprofit after-school programs, and low-income families. The C4K partnership will perform the following functions: 1. Provide new and refurbished computers and printers to community centers, public libraries, schools, three public housing communities, middle-school kids on free or reduced lunch, and other community anchor institutions. 2. Provide free broadband access to qualifying families in the three public housing communities for 24 months. 3. Collect and refurbish old computers through public awareness 'green' campaigns to ensure a second life for salvageable computers for distribution. 4. Provide basic computing skills training, cybersafety training, and using electronic resources to enhance career opportunities for community anchor organizations and public housing communities. 5. Furnish 10 school districts with 50 iMac computer workstations each. The computer labs will serve as a creation laboratory for Dataseam’s initiative. 6. Provide train-the-trainer programs to ensure sustainable local technology training capacity beyond the BTOP funding. 7. Develop an online cybersafety certified trainer locator service to efficiently provide cybersafety training across the state creating a sustainable model to replicate the KOAG’s training. 8. Develop Neighborhood Technology Sustainability Teams (NTST) responsible for developing sustainability technology plans for the three public housing communities with representatives from nonprofits, educational institutions, government agencies, and residents of the public housing community. 9. Facilitate and promote community awareness events for each community anchor institution receiving technology distributions, with attendance by local leaders and key members of the community. Target audience and impact on broadband use: To identify the targets for the Computers 4 Kids Program, a ranking system was developed to identify KY counties that have the highest 'at risk' populations. The rankings are based on five criteria: percentage of rural households, percentage of children who are living under the poverty line, median household income, percentage of the population that is minority, and the unemployment rate. The counties were given a ranking score using an equal weight for each of the five criteria. Emphasis was given to those counties not previously receiving a technology distribution from past Computers 4 Kids initiatives, to ensure we reached 'new' counties. Library targets were identified from information provided by the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives (KDLA). KDLA identified approximately 60 library systems needing technology resources to meet patron needs for their second round BTOP Public Computing Center grant application. The libraries identified in this grant application are underserved branch libraries from KDLA’s application that will still not have their technology needs met after receiving funding from KDLA’s PCC grant. The libraries selected meet KDLA's sustainability and operational requirements needed for success and were on the 'at risk' county list. Additional counties were selected for community center technology distributions from the 'at risk' list. For the refurbished home computer distribution program, we used the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) Technology Readiness Survey information. The survey collects information on the percentage of students who have access to a home computer, along with other technology resource information. Ranking KDE’s data against our 'at risk' county rankings, two school systems were identified for computer distributions that had a large percentage of students without home computers. For maximum impact, we chose distributions to 6th grade middle school students on free or reduced lunch, resulting in an estimated 190 students from the Adair and Butler County school systems. Computers 4 Kids will be implementing technology inclusion programs in three public housing
communities in Lexington and Newport. The two cities have large pockets of low-income minority housing areas underserved by technology resources. Each housing project will implement criteria to select qualifying residents to participate in the program. Each resident is required to participate in technology training courses before receiving the technology resources. Participation for all three housing communities is limited to 180 households. Ten schools systems will be selected for the Dataseam partnership, with three identified from preliminary interest and capabilities. The criteria for the Dataseam iMac computer and server distributions requires: 1) the ability to support the Mac platform; 2) ability and willingness to support the network system; 3) buy-in from administrators, teachers, and district technology coordinators; and 4) ability to pay for the required training component of $16,500 per school system. Qualifications of the applicant: ConnectKentucky, a subsidiary of Connected Nation, is a nonprofit organization that facilitates public-private partnerships to increase access to and use of broadband and related technology, creating dramatic results that translate into economic and community development, better education, higher quality healthcare, more efficient public service, and improved quality of life. While Computers 4 Kids was formed in KY, it has since been replicated in Ohio and Tennessee and has distributed nearly 6,000 computers and other technologies across the three states.