Executive Summary

a. Statement of Need: She cradles the sleeping child in one arm, grateful that everything on the monitor in front of her is in her native language. The baby will grow up being fluent in English, happy and confident and productive ’ as long as she can afford the day care she'll need to find and get settled in a job. Employment' child care' where should she begin' With a sigh, she relaxes. It's almost as if this computer knows what she's thinking, and what she wants. This sense of support is the outcome Project Access strives to achieve. There are 34 cities in Orange County, California that represent the highest and lowest median incomes in the state. Residents in low income neighborhoods face all of the challenges found in inner city neighborhoods, compounded by the stark contrast in education, job related skills, health resources and civic participation of more affluent residents, sometimes within the same city. This economic and social divide presents significant challenges/hardships for at-risk youth, low income families, senior citizens and the unemployed. Despite the fact that broadband Internet access is widely available from commercial providers, some residents do not or cannot afford access in their homes. In a survey done with community and correctional school students, 25% said they had no Internet access at home. Of those who did have access only 38% of their parents regularly used the Internet. In a Pew Internet Research report, low educational attainment and low income were the most significant reasons for lack of connectivity. In the neighborhoods targeted for this project, 28.1% of heads of household do not hold a high school diploma. In a 2005 Net Day survey only 24% of families with low educational attainment had Internet connections at home. When one combines these data points, it is clear that 25% of people with low educational attainment and low incomes are more likely to opt out of having Internet connection at home. These very same people tend to have little or no Internet connectivity at work. Consequently, they have limited experiences using the Internet and often struggle with the new cultural norms demanding Internet skills to apply for jobs, find employment, complete training, complete applications for civic and social services, gain information about educational opportunities, or be informed about their child's education. The lack of connectivity is, in fact, a form of disenfranchisement.

b. Approach Innovation is not always a brand new idea, rather innovation can be taking existing ideas, bring them together, and using them differently to achieve better results. Project Access will leverage grant funds with existing talents and resources to implement five empowerment strategies that will increase Internet literacy skills and broadband adoption for residents of low income neighborhoods. Project Access will: 1. Establish Public Computer Centers (PCC) in anchor institutions: libraries, a senior center and storefront locations of the Alternative, Community and Correctional schools. These PCCs will serve low income families, at-risk youth, senior citizens and ESL residents in Anaheim, Santa Ana and Garden Grove; 2. Customize training by highly qualified teachers delivered in
innovative ways on site or via webcast supported by highly qualified Library Media Teachers, trained volunteers, bilingual college interns and site staff; 3. Design a web portal connecting the underserved to valuable information from key community organizations in a format that is easily understood; 4.) Train Neighborhood Advisory Committees to provide leadership in developing each PCC as a sustainable community resource; and 5.) Convene City Technology Forums of policy makers and major stakeholders to address universal broadband access in their cities. Any one of these actions alone would do little to alleviate the digital divide in our community, but combined they represent a surge of actions that exponentially increases the possibilities of success and sustainability. PCCs will provide the structure, programs and physical access to broadband Internet information. They will have both formal and informal schedules, allowing users to learn at their own time and rate. PCCs will have paid staff and volunteers to assist users with both training and tutorials. PCCs provide the context for the delivery of quality programs and information uniquely addressing user’s needs. Each PCC will have 20 workstations, offer Basic Training in cyber citizenship, Internet navigation, systems operations and strategies for taking on-line courses. A Library Media Teacher at each site will be responsible for training, advisory committee operations, leadership development, volunteer training and outreach campaign. Both Basic and Customized training will be developed and delivered by highly qualified instructors who are certificated K-12 teachers. The training will be delivered in person and by webcast, allowing for capturing and storing this valuable training for use at dates beyond the grant funding. Trainings will be augmented by trained volunteers who can provide tutorials and mentoring. The project will establish and train a Neighborhood Advisory Committee at each site to work with the grant and site staff in determining needed programs, establish a volunteer program, implement an outreach strategy to increase users and build a plan for sustainability. This empowerment strategy is essential to the viability of Project Access because relevance, adequate support and ownership are paramount to increasing usage and sustaining the centers as valuable community resources. Technology Strategy: The project will use state of the art equipment and strategies to provide an optimal learning experience for users. Some training will be delivered by webcast with onsite tutors and trainers. Webcasts can be stored and retrieved for future trainings and tutorials. A Community Web Portal (CWP) will be developed with our targeted users in mind; Navigation aids ensure a gratifying browsing experience, even for those who have few if any computer skills. The CWP will connect users to valuable content presented in multiple languages, various formats (video & audio podcasts) and in readability levels for easy understanding. Hospitals, superior court, workforce development and other vital public service websites will redeveloped content by adjusting readability, providing content in English, Spanish or Vietnamese augmented with video and audio podcasts. The project will convene City Technology Forums in each of the three cities to gather policy makers, community organizations, Internet providers and local business to address the civic and economic necessity of increased broadband Internet access for all residents. c. Areas to be served: Anaheim, Garden Grove and Santa Ana have a combined population of 831,187. The targeted neighborhoods for this project represent 9% or 75,216 residents. These neighborhoods are predominantly Hispanic and Asian where 60 to 80% have a primary language other than English, 12,607 families have incomes less than $30,000 per year and 28.1% have no High School Diploma. County unemployment rates continue to rise with March 2010 figures slightly above 10%. Estimated unemployment in some of the targeted neighborhoods is as high as 14.2%. Based on current user information from anchor institution we estimate 8300 potential PCC users. We also estimate that 20% of
those will be new users (1660). d. Applicant qualifications: The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) has a successful track record with community collaborations and administration of federal grants. OCDE annually administers more than $80,091,109 in federal and state grants, many of which are in partnership with other community agencies. Our cabinet and administration serve on numerous boards of community organizations and work with local agencies to address the challenges of low income families and students. OCDE is a state leader in Educational Technology, helping 27 school districts provide more than 3000 trainings each year on various software applications. e. Jobs to be saved or created: Project Access will create 15 jobs between the project and partnering anchor institutions. Additionally, in collaboration with Orange County Workforce Investment Board, the project will offer a wide array of job skills information and training to assist youth and unemployed residents with job search skills, work experience and mentoring. This support will help PCC users increase their employment prospects. f. Overall cost of the proposed project: The total project costs are $5,803,453. With 8300 potential users this translates into approximately $700 per user for two years. The cost/benefit ratio will be greatly enhanced by the fact that so many of the resources developed by the project will be sustainable beyond grant fun