Applicant Name: LIBRARIES, OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF

Project Title: Get Connected @ Oklahoma Libraries

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Get Connected @ Oklahoma Libraries will upgrade broadband and computing resources in 45 public libraries throughout Oklahoma. Because Oklahoma is a large rural state with significant challenges across key socio-economic metrics, it is crucial to leverage broadband and implement technologies providing access to online information, distance learning and video communication. To reduce these critical problems, $3,353,062 is needed for the addition of 326 videoconferencing capable laptops and desktops, as well as 36 room-based videoconferencing systems. To better support existing and new computers and to support high quality videoconferencing, the project would upgrade the broadband connections at 42 locations and to provide Internet at a minimum speed of 1 Mbps. Oklahoma is among the lowest ranked states in many core areas that are addressed by elements of the proposed project: - In the US Census (2007), Oklahoma is ranked the 10th poorest state in the nation and the 41st in percentage of population with a bachelor's degree or higher - In a report by the Kauffman Foundation (2008), Oklahoma is ranked 45th in percentage of population that is online, 40th in Health IT, 39th in e-Government, and 43rd in high tech jobs and 39th in knowledge based jobs To most efficiently address these challenges and critical BTOP objectives, ODL carefully selected the main library branches in the neediest 44 of 77 Oklahoma counties (serving 1.58M Oklahomans ' 45% of the population). Of these 44 selected counties with the largest concentrations of vulnerable people: - 100% have higher than national average % of Native Americans - 98% have an estimated broadband penetration lower than the NTIA benchmark of 40% (qualifying as underserved) - 77% have literacy rates lower than the national average - 75% have median incomes below the national poverty level - 73% meet at least one of the two criteria for economically distressed as defined by the NTIA - 71% have higher than national average % of senior citizens Recognizing the depth and breadth of the need in these counties, the project proposes an ambitious but achievable plan to combine the power of upgraded technology and targeted community programs focusing on four main pillars: 1. Education: Encourage and actively market distance learning opportunities through videoconferencing to empower Oklahomans in rural areas to participate in online education available anywhere in the state or the world. Offer computer literacy courses to enable people to realize the many benefits and encourage adoption of computers and broadband at home. Educational opportunities via videoconferencing/webcast for distance learning will include: - Online college courses (taught by instructors from community, state, or national colleges) - Courses in continuing education/professional certification. - Expanded/enhanced curriculum for K-12 2. Poverty Alleviation: 'We have people coming in every day who ask for help in filling out online job applications. Our largest local employers all require online applications, many of which also have tests or assessments of some kind along with the application. These people are at a serious disadvantage because they are
not experienced on the computer, even if the job they are applying for will require no computer use whatsoever.' (Public Library of Enid and Garfield, Letter of Support) The local libraries will actively use videoconferencing equipment to provide job skills training, enable online interviews, and allow small businesses to communicate globally with users and partners. Some libraries will offer netbooks for check-out from the library premises to allow completion of resumes and cover letters. Specific workforce development opportunities will include: - Job skills training and workshops with national employers through videoconferencing - Access to basic communication tools such as email, virtual phone numbers, and voicemail services (e.g. Google Voice) so that even the poorest can be reachable by prospective employers 3. Health Encourage videoconferencing for patients to attend tele-therapy/consultations with national specialists and enable healthcare workers to attend training. Specific health related opportunities will include: - Teletherapy sessions for the disabled (e.g. Hearts for Hearing) - Teleconsultation between generalist in Oklahoma and specialist elsewhere in the country 4. eGovernment Encourage the use of tax software and offer online and in-person training on filing taxes online and filling-out other online government forms. We conservatively estimate that the computing centers will serve an additional 8,538 persons per week (~20% increase on the 42,693 persons currently served per week). This increase will be driven by added computers, improved connectivity, new videoconferencing capabilities, additional use of Wi-Fi after hours in parking lots, and also by significant increase in community outreach using both traditional and modern means. As a result of the proposed project, a number of direct and indirect jobs will be created and/or saved: - 3 Direct jobs-years will be created for 3 years of a program manager, a grant administrator, and a training coordinator working part time on the project - 13 Indirect jobs years will be created by spending on outsourced IT services, facilities renovation, computer hardware, broadband connection installation and monthly recurring charges, networking equipment, graphic design, and printing services - Additional 9 induced job-years will be created as a result of direct and in-direct job creation inside and outside OK - ODL plans to partner with local businesses for outreach and IT support - ODL also expects that the newly available workforce development resources will enable hundreds of additional job applications The overall project cost is $3,353,062. Of that, $2,333,250 (69.6%) would come from BTOP funds and the remaining $1,019,812 (30.4%) will be matching funds in cash. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries has extensive experience in administering grants, and coordinating statewide projects. ODL has successfully administered E-Rate funds from the FCC since 1997 and today Oklahoma has a 96% participation rate (one of the highest in the nation) with an average discount of 80%. The ODL has also been administering Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds since 2000 ranging from $1.8M to $2.3M per year. Finally, ODL has also successfully administered private grants totalling over $800K from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The team is well versed in grant administration using processes and administrative systems that have withstood repeated audit scrutiny. In recognition of the substantial implementation and management burden, the project budget reinforces the team with a dedicated grant administrator, supplemental IT support, and support for training participating libraries to apply for E-rate in order to build their capacity to sustain the project following the conclusion of the BTOP project period. The proposed project will directly impact millions of citizens across the state and address fundamental issues that will transform OK from a state that lags behind its peers to a positive and inspiring example for others. The key partners for the project are: - The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation - Oklahoma Public Libraries - Friends of the Library (Tahlequah, Fairview, Shawnee, Purcell,
Cherokee, Chickasaw Regional Library System - Secretary of State (CCI Application) - National Network of Libraries of Medicine South Central Region - National Association of Black Veterans - Cherokee Heritage Center - Altus Hispanic Association - Western Oklahoma State College - An additional 150+ partners who will be critical for community outreach have been included in the Partners section