Executive Summary

Throughout the World, communities are embracing a connected society resulting in a global explosion in information availability. This connectedness has transformed economies and opened up education and health care to allow for new modes of delivery of services to global market places. The ease of information exchange will continue to transform lives, but can it reach all our children and our most vulnerable populations like those found in the Yakima Valley? This application includes Native American and Hispanic families and youth, migrants who do not speak English as their primary language, the disabled, senior citizens, and low-income families. In the state the Yakima area has the 2nd highest adult violent crime rate (2.95 per 1,000); youth arrest rates nearly double the state average (88 vs. 50 per 1,000); and the state's 2nd highest poverty level (21%) (DSHS, 2008). In 2007, the FBI ranked Yakima 299th out of 338 national metropolitan areas for crime statistics/worst in the state. Yakima area has been devastated by the recession, with a current unemployment rate at 11% (8.4% statewide). Only 70% of high school students are on track for on time graduation leaving 30% vulnerable for dropping out. In WA State, 11% of the population does not have any access to computers, but for those in the Yakima Valley, without sufficient broadband, the unemployment and under-employment rates which are twice the national average will only increase. Without access to broadband the future promises greater isolation, poor health and increased poverty for this target population. In a recent ESD survey in one community 60% of parents did not have a high school diploma and a priority for parents was access to reliable broadband service. Education is the vehicle by which hope can be given to this vulnerable population for a promising future. This proposal, let by Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105), in the Yakima Valley of Washington, will change the future for those served by providing access to broadband and computer literacy education so that education levels will increase, jobs can be secured, and isolation and safety risks are reduced. ESD 105 has established partnerships with early childhood agencies, K-12 schools, community colleges, multiple community anchor and public and private organizations in a geographical area of Eastern WA that is rural and remote. The purpose of the proposal would be to increase technology literacy and make broadband technology available to vulnerable under/unserved populations; to increase access to educational certificate and degreed programs; to provide training for accessing education, social and health resources and job opportunities; and to make communities safer by bring them together with law enforcement. Participants in the project will include all of the ESD 105 regional early learning centers and K-12 school districts; Enterprise for Progress in the Community (EPIC), Washington State Migrant Council (WSMC), Yakama Nation Head Starts; and WA State Department of Early Learning/licensed childcare businesses. Training will be provided so families, childcare providers, and community members will have access to information technology; and, in turn,
learn techniques that increase the language acquisition, cognitive, and social/emotional skills of their children, readying them for kindergarten. Home childcare providers will be connected to the WA State Department of Early Learning to keep licenses current and to access business management and training resources. ESD 105 will help put early learning providers on career tracks with local community colleges so providers can achieve their Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate and AA and BA degrees in early learning. The ESD 105 Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA) application is being submitted in coordination with three other grant applications. The State of WA Broadband Consortium led by Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet) Comprehensive Community Infrastructure (CCI) Middle Mile proposal to build infrastructure to Anchor Institutions in WA State. This project will build upon the network funded in Round 1 and extend infrastructure into unserved and underserved areas such as the Yakima Valley. ESD 105 is a sub-recipient in the NoaNet proposal, and as a sub-recipient will provide connectivity to the community anchor institutions in the ESD 105 service area. In addition, ESD 105 will link the NoaNet CCI Middle Mile project with the Yakama Nation Last Mile project. Both NoaNet and ESD 105 will use existing Yakama Nation fiber to complete some of the connections. The Middle Mile projects will also deliver bandwidth to state and other non tribal entities located in the Yakama Nation. The Yakama Nation Last Mile project will provide connectivity to over eighty tribal anchor institutions. The ESD 105 Public Computer Center (PCC) project will provide underserved and unserved residents of the Yakima Valley with forty nine facilities where they can use computers and the internet. The PCC's will be available during business hours, evenings and week ends. The combination of these four projects will provide connectivity to almost all of the underserved and unserved populations in the Yakima Valley. The methodology employed to produce the job-years estimates is based on the Council of Economic Advisor's guide to job creation estimates and 44 direct jobs-years will be created from this project. A public awareness campaign will be launched to promote the benefits of using and becoming proficient in computers and the internet, and inform the public about the power of broadband. The overall goal of the awareness campaign will be to significantly increase the awareness and use of information technology by residents within the Yakima Valley who are currently underserved or unserved. A centralized and decentralized media campaign will be conducted. The centralized media campaign will be implemented using local television and radio stations, newspapers (editorials, articles, and paid advertising with contact information). The de-centralized media campaign will be implemented by distributing flyers at public meetings, such as town hall meetings, Rotary Clubs, and senior citizen groups. This will create the opportunity to educate cell phone users without computers to understand the Internet and become proficient with iPhones, Blackberries, etc., and educate them on the potential advantageous of using Internet services. ESD 105 will conduct detailed research to determine the campaign's impact on increasing the number of businesses, community agencies, and residents using broadband, computers and the internet. ESD 105 will undertake a broadband education program. This program will educate underserved and unserved vulnerable Yakima Valley populations on the benefits of using and becoming proficient in broadband, the Internet, and computers. Learning modules will be developed specifically for underserved and unserved early learning and K-12 populations, as well as the general public, many of whom will be first time information technology users. Community members will be taught basic technology literacy by high school students trained in a community service program and extended service of public libraries. The education content will focus on how the Internet and Wi-Fi technology works, how to use the Internet to search and obtain information, and how to communicate
using e-mail, instant messaging software, and social networking sites. An important aspect of the training will be to teach adults and youth how to use the Internet and computers safely to prevent identity theft and fraud, as well as help them stay safe online. Links to resources that already exist on the Internet will be used where appropriate. Programs will be developed to teach job skills and how to find and apply for employment via the Internet; before- and after-school tutoring and English language training will be provided; and early learning centers will host training for parent education and staff development programs. These educational components will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of information technology use, contributing substantially to the Yakima Valley's access to information and, as a result, its improved economic development. Yakima Valley is the most economically depressed area of WA State and the combination of these projects will provide connectivity for almost all of it’s vulnerable populations. The ESD 105 SBA project will create 44 new jobs, with a project budget of $4,075,831 including a 13.5% match. Working together partners will address all of the fundamental goals of the ARRA, BTOP and BIP programs.