Applicant Name: EVERGREEN, CITY OF

Project Title: Evergreen Conecuh Communications Center

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

The City of Evergreen, located in Conecuh County, AL proposes to open the Evergreen Conecuh Communications Center. The Evergreen-Conecuh Development Corporation, Evergreen-Conecuh Public Library, and Reid State Technical College will partner with the City of Evergreen to complete this project. Conecuh County has approximately 13,066 residents, many of which are considered members of vulnerable populations. There are relatively high numbers of Blacks/African Americans, disabled, low-income, unemployed, senior citizens, and at-risk youth. 24.7% of the county's residents are below poverty level. Due to recent closures of major manufacturing facilities in the area, Conecuh County has a 20% unemployment rate, which is above both the national and state averages. Over 20% of county residents do not have a high school diploma or GED. Also, 33.4% of residents have some type of disability, and only 37.2% of those are employed. The Evergreen Conecuh Communications Center project will address these issues for Conecuh County, AL. The center will 1) more than double the number of computers available for public use, 2) expand broadband availability for county residents, 3) provide training and education to vulnerable populations and public servants, 4) provide easily accessible workstations for people with disabilities, and 5) provide assistance to local entrepreneurs. The center will be strategically located in Downtown Evergreen, making it easily accessible for users. A daily bus service is proposed, that includes transportation for the disabled and will have scheduled routes in unserved broadband areas of our County. The proposed communications center will have 20 workstations all equipped with broadband access, and 2 of the workstations will have specialized equipment and software for the disabled. The project expects over 280 users per 120-hour business week and approximately 80 users per 48-hour weekend. Education and training programs that will be offered include: 1) word processing, 2) statistical analysis, 3) basic principles of accounting, 4) spreadsheets, 5) resume-writing, 6) job-search strategies, 7) GED preparation courses and 8) ACT/SAT test preperation. Additionally, distant learning programs will be established in conjunction with Reid State and the University of South Alabama. There will also be a training component for area entrepreneurs who will participate in the city's business incubator program. Local public servants such as police officers and emergency management personnel will use the center for continuing education courses, and local farmers will also be trained on the newest farming techniques at the facility. The ECDC will manage the center, the public library will use the center for an extension of their services, and Reid State will provide one-full time technical support member to train and educate the center's users. The City of Evergreen's approach to solve problems for Conecuh County not only depends on help from its partners but also funding assistance from NTIA to make this project a reality. We hope that this
project is considered for funding so that we can improve in the critical areas that will improve the quality of life for all our citizens, particularly the large number of vulnerable people in our communities.