Applicant Name: PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, THE

Project Title: Broadband Millenial Centers for the Promotion of Community Education in Economically Distressed Area

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

Problem and Solution

Broadband is a cost-effective way to provide instructional tools for strengthening impoverished communities. We propose to build Public Computer Centers, here called Broadband Millenial Centers (BMCs), to serve economically distressed areas through a program of health information, entrepreneurship and outreach led by millennial youth leaders selected from local communities. They will act as a bridge, taking broadband health outreach to the community and relaying community input back to the BMC for design and modification of programs. While exclusion is typically cited as a reason for how broadband has worsened poverty by increasing economic inequality, as evidenced in a recent SSRC study, www.ssrc.org/publications/view/1EB76F62-C720-DF11-9D32-001CC477EC70/ , we aim to use this technology to engage the poverty problem directly in three key areas: (1) reduce the cost of living and thus increase effective income (health costs), (2) improve the quality of life (better health), and (3) create jobs and job futures for millennial youth (ages 15-25) and other community residents. We address broadband service only by providing mechanisms to increase its adoption and use in vulnerable populations, and create new mechanisms for job creation and economic growth.

Overall approach

The project will create phased interventions in six distinct economically distressed communities throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The BMC model entails the establishment of a cluster of publically accessible community computer centers having a main hub center and potential satellite centers. The functional vision for these centers is that they can be used for three distinct but related activities: (1) creation and delivery of educational content to community residents; (2) supporting community-based development by providing broadband-connected workstations for individual use, and (3) facilitating development of interactive educational programming and fostering social networking. BMCs are designed with the goals of being 'easy, useful, safe, and enjoyable'. A front end process, 'strategic doing,' will convene community leaders and millennial youth leaders to create a narrative about the community's future with regards to health and technology, generate collective commitment to the program success, and increase quality of life. At each site, a group of 30 local millenial youth leaders will be guided through leadership, entrepreneurial, and content training as they design the BMC enterprise prior to its launch. Team members will specialize in health, marketing, and IT, and small teams will generate programs to design, promote, and deliver health solutions that leverage broadband capability. Supporting the millennial youth leaders are a series of tools and processes: 1) a local facilitator who will serve as a mentor, and a broker for regional health resources, 2) training of the millennial youth leaders maximizing their capacity to leverage broadband resources to build and deliver community-relevant health solutions, 3) a content-training-education
system that allows for organization and retrieval of multiple health informational and entrepreneurial resources appropriate to the BMC, and 4) consultative services in marketing, IT, health, and business incubation to support both the millennial youth leaders and community members. Population served Communities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois that represent a range of demographic profiles with regards to living wages and minority populations were selected. They range from small satellite communities around small city cores, to small cities, to large metropolitan cores. Fayette, PA: 64% below living wage, 5.7% minorities W. Philadelphia, PA: 68% below living wage, 84.8% minorities Greater Pittsburgh, PA: 53% below living wage, 18.9% minorities Youngstown, OH: 55% below living wage, 19.8% minorities Kokomo, IN: 44% below living wage, 12.3% minorities The total population for the five areas existing below a living wage is 1.05 million, of whom 205,800 are millennial youth. The BMCs are designed to fit a community profile and maximize access, leveraging a cohort of 30 millennial youth leaders at each site to serve as active connectors to the community. The particular segment of the overall population that each site targets through its millennial leaders will be determined at the site kickoff. Overall, we will plan for 30 high impact, 12 training and 12 other content visitors per day for more than 202,000 millennial visitors. Qualifications Penn State University is uniquely positioned to both convene and deliver a program of the scale proposed. Capabilities come from a specific faculty as well as Penn State Outreach, one of the largest university outreach organizations in the nation, with over 600 personnel engaged in providing economic and workforce support to the state. Some of the Penn State Outreach organizational units that will be engaged in the project include:  Economic Engagement Initiatives (strategy facilitation)  Cooperative Extension  PennTAP (technical assistance)  Small Business Development Center  Marketing  WPSU(public broadcasting and media)  Continuing Education  World Campus (on-line degrees and certificates)  Outreach Health Initiatives  Penn State Center  Engaging Pittsburgh In addition, well-established Penn State research faculty will have key roles in content and assessment, drawing from expertise in economic geography and poverty, information sciences and communications policy, social inclusion in technology professions, user interfaces, and computer modeling. Partnerships The range of partnerships reflected in the proposal include:  Other university partners (Purdue University), a partner for process facilitation in 'strategic doing'  Community Colleges such as Westmoreland Community College and Community College of Allegheny County, based in the local community that provide curriculum, programming, and most significantly, students who can act as millennial youth leaders.  Community groups including housing authorities, neighborhood councils, high schools, libraries, and block captains, providing locations for BMC's as well as community leadership for strategic implementation. Jobs created/saved The project will focus most direct attention on 150 millennial youth leaders, hired to form the leadership and implementation team for the BMCs. We anticipate that millennial youth leaders will utilize their experiences to enhance their future employability, leverage existing BMC services and networks to launch their own enterprises, and choose to augment existing community services. Examples of such jobs are (1) community exercise facilitators; (2) diet, nutrition, and cooking counselors; (3) prevention counselors giving advice on the role of monitoring, diet, and exercise in diabetes, cardiac disorders, hypertension, and obesity; (4) environmental health advisors working on pest infestation, prevention programs for cancer and asthma; (5) marketing work in the sale of preventative health devices such as glucose monitors or radon detectors. Project costs The project will deploy 6 BMCs in 4 states, (PA, OH, IN, IL) with a BTOP
investment of $8,319,618. Each BMC will receive approximately $945,000 in capital and services creating local jobs in these distressed communities.