Essay Question: Executive Summary, Project Purpose, and Benefits

(a) Computer literacy and internet access is evermore becoming an essential part of daily life. People without knowledge of and access to computers and the Internet are less able to compete for goods, services and jobs.

(b) Set up portable community labs and provide training to those who become community tutors. Increase staffing hours and upgrade two labs that are currently in use.

(c) Hispanic communities of North Santa Cruz County, Seniors, and unemployed workers without internet resources (mostly trades workers).

(d) Decades of providing Adult Educational Services.

(e) With funding from two county programs approximately 100 directly employed workers; and based on previous data from the Capitola Career Center, 300 to 400 indirectly employed because of effective use of internet resources.

At a projected cost of 670,185 this pilot project will lay the educational ground work for the ever growing need and use of high speed internet connectivity in North Santa Cruz County. Our focus is to develop an effective human network of knowledgeable community tutors and Internet advocates increasing the demand for and effective use of expanding internet resources.

We have provided English Language Instruction and Literacy programs for decades. We know that knowledge is key to self-sufficiency. Now we are faced with a new challenge: digital literacy. Even if we could bring broadband connectivity to every apartment, farming camp, homeless shelter, and community center in Santa Cruz County we would still be left with large numbers of people out of touch with these vital resources. A critical component of safe and effective use of the internet is quality education.

Our program is asking for funds to provide the education needed to bridge the digital gap between the haves and have-nots.

Area & Demographics: The project will take place in the northern portion of Santa Cruz County (population 266,519 in 2008) in the central coastal area of northern California. Approximately 30% are Hispanic, with 13.5% speaking English ‘less than very well’.

More than 16% of the adults live below the poverty level and 34% have a high school diploma or less education. Approximately half live in the northern portion and about 72% are ages 18+ (an estimated 96,000 adults live in our service area). The key targeted groups for this grant are the Hispanic communities who live in the Beach Flats and Live Oak areas of Santa Cruz. The service areas of Beach Flats and Live Oak together include 7,618 households. The service area also includes several major health care facilities: Dominican Hospital, Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center and offices for hundreds of doctors. The County Sheriff has a service station in the middle of Live Oak. The Live Oak School District serves over 2000 students in 3 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 2 charter schools.

We can provide the educational resources needed to develop a cadre of community educators who will take their skills into their communities and help bring to others the training necessary to use internet technology safely and effectively.

Overall Approach: If funded this project would:
station public computer center on the 'new' La Fonda campus of Santa Cruz Adult School that will provide training on weekends in computer literacy and Internet access to 180 adults that meet the income qualifications of this two year program. 1 Establish a new 16-station public computer learning center in the Workforce Santa Cruz Career Center, the 'One Stop' partnership site of the Workforce Investment Board where the unemployed would get targeted instruction in computer literacy and job skills. Funding would also provide for development of a shared data base and clerical support. 1 Establish two satellite computer centers, each with a part time teacher and 15 larger sized netbooks brought in and set up on a regularly scheduled basis. These classes would be held in the Live Oak Family Resource Center, and the Beach Flats Community Center. 1 Provide a mobile outreach program using 30 large netbooks from Verizon Wireless. The intent is to set up scheduled introductory classes in underserved areas (apartment complexes, community centers, churches, public parks) to encourage people to attend labs available to them in the community. 1 Provide 180 low-income adults (30 students per trimester for two years) in the region who complete the requirements of the program with free computers, broadband Internet access and tech support (by trained interns) in the home. Requirements will include attending a minimum of 32 hours of computer literacy classes, community service and completion of a portfolio containing a cover letter, resume, an Internet research project and 2 projects of personal interest related to online resources. Those interns who qualify for Workforce funding will be hired as part time tutors to work with the mobile lab Teachers and with staff at the Santa Cruz Adult School Lab and the County Workforce Career Center lab 1 Train (in partnership with the City of Santa Cruz Senior Center) and pay senior citizen interns (through NCOA funds) to install computers in the homes of program participants, provide supervised tech support and personalized training in participants' homes. Three seniors will be employed as babysitters during class time as well. 1 Develop distance-learning curriculum for GED Test Prep and Job Skills. 1 Develop database to track users of WIB Career Center & Adult School classes and survey areas that are not wired in the local communities. 1 If this pilot is successful, replicate this project in other low-income and underserved areas of northern Santa Cruz County, including Davenport and San Lorenzo Valley.