Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT #508 (INC)

Project Title: Bridging the Gap: Integrating Technology-Based Learning and Broadband in Underserved Communities

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Statement of the problem. According to researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), nearly 40% of Chicago residents, have limited or no access to the Internet. The majority were African Americans and Latino ethnic groups; the main reason given was cost (source: Karen Mossberger, Associate Professor of Public Administration at UIC, "Digital Excellence in Chicago: A City-Wide View.") Of particular importance to understanding the need, according to Mossberger was that the study was 'the first in the country to show how neighborhoods in a city differ in use of technology and barriers to use of technology.' Mossberger reported as more information and services move online, the costs increase for those residents who are excluded, because the Internet has become "a critical resource for work, information, civic engagement, access to government services and health." (Digital Communities - http://www.govtech.com/dc/articles/707329) In addition, the use of technology-based learning (TBL) methods has seen a significant upward shift in recent years, as a result of the increased access to computer connectivity and particularly, high speed Internet access. There is a great appeal to this method, as it is typically an inexpensive tool that conveniently enables individuals to achieve educational and professional goals. This increase however, is more abundant in some areas than others.

In 2007, Kennedy-King College administration developed and initiated the Annual Self-Study Initiatives to enhance systems for continuous quality improvement. The Self-Study Initiatives involved one steering committee and five sub-committees (42 members). The committees and subcommittees included representatives from every department on campus. Ongoing self-study reports have identified various challenges on and off campus: 1) Less than 20% of students have personal computers at home. Students have longer wait times and limited lab space due to increase of student enrollment. The implementation of facility using Blackboard to post course schedules, assignments, and support materials present an overwhelming need to utilize computers with broadband capabilities. Students are challenged to find outside sources to utilize computers after campus hours and public library hours. 2) Partnerships with GED Program satellite centers have declined. Due to shortage of funding to support technology upgrades and pay for technical staff support one location was closed and one declined open lab services. 3) Due to economic challenges individuals have take on additional employment and are required to learn new technical skills. The development of more distance-learning courses are in demand for individuals that do not have the time to attend traditional class settings and need new or advanced career skills sets for employment. 4) The instructional personal has not sufficiently embraced technology to give students the best preparation for a technologically sophisticated world. More seasoned facility members have not advanced in various level of technology to support higher standard curriculums,
which support new age business industry technology. Leadership trainings, membership fees and travel expenses have placed a strained on the operating departmental budgets to accommodate these additional expenses. Approach. Higher learning institutions like Kennedy-King College (KKC) are positioning itself toward becoming part of the technological solution. Many colleges and universities are incorporating TBL into their training delivery options. While Kennedy-King College has made significant technological advances over the years to further enhance providing quality education to a diverse population, the Self-Study Initiative steering committees assess some of the technological needs involve the lack and/or improvement of broadband capabilities. Areas of implementation or expansion include: 1) Technology upgrades for the GED Program satellite centers and campus centers enabling them the capability to access streaming/on-demand programs; 2) PBS station WYCC (KKC's onsite television station) educational programming and tele-web courses are outdated and need to be redesigned, produced and edited to include more diverse content that can appeal to a wider audience through the internet and cable TV; 3) WYCC and KKC websites require a redesign for compatibility, usability, accessibility, and performance to meet the needs of the technology-based learning tools, especially streaming media and webinars; and 4) Web casting services in the distance learning program is currently not available, but greatly needed. Areas to be served. Kennedy-King College (area code 60621) and the two GED Program satellite centers (area code 60609) are located in Englewood community on the southwest side of Chicago. In the 60621 area, the ethnics population is made up of 95.08% African American; the unemployment rate is 9.20% and rising, and the income per capita is $17,835, which includes all adults and children. In the 60609 area, the ethnics population is made up of 35.71% of people who are white, 36.22% are African American, and 25.17% Hispanic; the unemployment rate is 9.20% and rising, and the income per capita is $12,126. Kennedy-King College's full-time enrollment (2008-2009) was 4,865 and of those over 65% of the students utilized the campus technology labs. Over two hundred plus (200+) public participants have access to the GED Program satellite centers and one of the on-campus computer labs. Kennedy-King College is one of seven colleges of the City Colleges of Chicago system and is a separately accredited institution. KKC is uniquely poised to provide underserved learning communities via electronic technology because of its professional instructors/staff, and state-of-the-art facilities including the WYCC-TV 20 public access television station located on campus. We anticipate increasing our potential user rate by 35-40% with support of the Broadband Initiatives funding. Qualifications. The project will be lead by principal investigators, Arthur Woods (Dean of Media Communication), along with lead staff Barbara Searles (Interim Dean of Adult Education/GED Program), and Ben Li (IT Specialist). The TBL / Broadband Board of Advisors for this grant is made up of: John Dozier (President of the College), Jacquie Hood Martin (Vice President of Academic Affairs/Student Services), Dr. Rosemary Jackson (Vice President of Educational Media & Distance Learning), Arthur Woods (Dean of Media Communications), Dr. Phyllis Brooks (Vice President of Instruction), Martha Madkins, (Associate Dean TBL), Kiana Battle (Media Director), Barbara Seales (Interim Dean of Adult Education ' GED Computer Centers), Stanley Young (Associate Dean of Information Technology), Bin Li, (IT) Paul Buckner (WYCC), Selom Assignon (TBL), Kin Yee (TBL) (both instructional design managers). These initiatives will be further strengthened through key partnerships with the U.S. DOC and SRB Communications (SRB). SRB is an award-winning, full-service media and communications agency and post-production facility with more than 19 years of experience providing communications solutions for government agencies, television networks, major corporations and national nonprofits. SRB is a
graduate of the 8(a) program and is a certified Small, Disadvantaged Business (SDB) with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Jobs to be saved or created. The proposed projects' specific focus will be to implement programs to increase educational support through the expansion of all computer labs (basic training, job readiness and career specific training) and streaming/digital network technology advancements, which is executed through the campus television and radio stations. Efforts will improve training, and web-based resources to those who are considered underserved, while providing them access through on-demand training curriculum for public use and distance-learning enrolled students. The college has developed specific criteria to: 1) support incumbent workers through Continuing Education courses who are required to obtain new technology skills for their current employment; 2) offer courses for green energy certificate training through HVAC and Automotive Technology; and 3) increase distance-learning courses for Career Program certificate courses with included nursing, and child development. We anticipate with easier access to technology and educational resources efforts will increase job retention within various industries by 20-30%, even as students enroll in courses for certifications and management level skills. Overall cost of the proposed project. The projected cost is $5,515,160.71