Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: KENTUCKY ARTS, EDUCATION & HUMANITIES CABINET

Project Title: Kentucky Public Library PCC Workforce Opportunity Expansion

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________Executive Summary_______________________

Statement of Problem Unemployment, educational attainment, and poverty are severe concerns in Kentucky. Between December 2008 and December 2009, unemployment rose in 119 Kentucky counties. Overall state unemployment rose to 10.7% in December 2009, compared with a national rate of 9.7%, indicating that Kentucky is an economically distressed area. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, Kentucky lags on key educational attainment metrics compared with the rest of the country, with 77% of the Commonwealth's Public Use Microdata Samples (US Census Bureau regions) rated as 'critical' or 'most critical'. 2009 US Census Bureau statistics demonstrate that poverty is increasing in Kentucky, rising to the 5th highest poverty rate from the 6th in 2008, and this growth is expected to continue. Improving public access to educational and employment opportunities is a critical component of Kentucky's efforts to reverse these trends, and Public Computer Centers (PCCs) at local libraries play a vital role in facilitating these opportunities. According to a 2009 American Library Association survey, the majority of Kentucky public libraries have expressed that they solely offer free of charge, public computer and Internet access in their service areas. However, with increasing demand and wide-spread use of time limits for computer use, the capacity of these PCCs is constrained. The survey also indicated that Kentucky libraries lack the requisite equipment, quantity of instructional programs, and funding to meet increasing user needs. In addition, One-Stop Career Centers, funded through the Kentucky Office of Employment and Training (OET), are often overcrowded with long wait-times for services, and Kentuckians, especially those in vulnerable populations, need local alternatives to meet their individual needs. Overall Approach to Address Need The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives' (KDLA) participation in the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) will specifically address the issues of unemployment, educational attainment, and poverty through expanding and enhancing participating libraries' PCCs. Because Kentucky's public libraries generally have sufficient broadband speeds due to past initiatives that improved connectivity, this project will emphasize libraries' needs regarding increased training programs and infrastructure, including equipment, software applications, and warranty agreements. With additional funding and up-to-date equipment, participating libraries will be able to expand access to educational, personal, and professional growth opportunities. The 'Workforce Opportunity Series' courses and programs will prepare Kentuckians to seize employment opportunities, enhance their skill sets, and facilitate job creation and economic growth. Increased instruction on e-government resources and benefits, such as unemployment, Medicare, and Social Security, will help low income Kentuckians understand and access all available services. Importantly, technology and furniture accommodations are included to meet the needs of the disabled. Collaboration with key partners will produce programs to address the significant needs of Kentucky's
vulnerable populations. Education programs will target developing and expanding the following skills and competencies: 'Basic computing' 'Basic resume writing and job searching' 'Identifying and utilizing workforce training and available community, state, and federal resources' 'Accessing unemployment services and available community, state, and federal resources' 'Identifying, applying for and enrolling in education opportunities' 'Preparation and training for library-hosted job fairs coordinated with state workforce institutions' Outreach Public library PCC capacity and instructional expansion will be supported by an outreach initiative that targets historically vulnerable populations. Instructional opportunities will be marketed as the 'Kentucky Public Library Workforce Opportunity Series.' Library PCCs will be marketed as 'Workforce & Education Community Centers.' KDLA will develop standard marketing materials that will be made available to each participating library for use in strategic locations. These include existing library user touch points, public service announcements on radio and TV, churches and other faith-based institutions, and social service outlets. Local libraries will determine the best strategies and tools to reach vulnerable populations in their service areas. Key Partners The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) is a key partner for this proposal. KCTCS represents an important collaborator providing qualified instructors to support the offerings of the 'Kentucky Public Library Workforce Opportunity Series' and ongoing educational opportunities. OET's One-Stop Career Centers, provide job seekers and employers with quick and easy access to necessary services from a variety of social service providers. Noteworthy services provided include filing for unemployment insurance, jobs matching, and special assistance to veterans and other eligible individuals. This proposal facilitates agreements between participating libraries and local One-Stop staff to overcome perceptions that libraries do not have the proper PCC capacity for an instructional setting and to collaborate on approaches to support library-hosted instructional courses and job fairs. Kentucky Adult Education (KAE) proposes to achieve dramatic improvements in the educational status of adult Kentuckians who lack a high school diploma, function at low levels of literacy, or want to learn English. KAE focuses on GED completion, English as a Second Language, family literacy, workforce education, and corrections education. KAE has a dedicated staff and a limited budget to provide instruction with goals and objectives that complement this PCC proposal, and provides public libraries with qualified and capable instructors to drive the library's courses in the 'Workforce Investment Series.' 60 libraries, as sub-recipients of this award, will be key partners of KDLA. Libraries are the mechanism for serving and reaching the people of Kentucky through their roles as community anchor institutions. These libraries will be the locations of all enhanced equipment and increased workforce and educational instruction. As community anchor institutions, these libraries know the specific local needs of their service area and how best to engage them. Areas to be Served The population of the targeted areas to be served is 1,301,311. Libraries included in this funding request have service areas with heavy concentrations of historically vulnerable populations, based on socio-economic levels. The most significant vulnerable population estimates indicate a 19% poverty rate for this area, compared with a 13% national average, and an 11.6% average unemployment rate in December 2009, compared with the national rate of 9.7%. The disabled represent 19.5 of the targeted population. The KDLA project will expand broadband access and workforce training at Kentucky libraries' PCCs to at least 7,200 potential new users. Qualifications of Applicant KDLA and Kentucky's public libraries have a demonstrated track record of success in managing federal, state and nonprofit grant funds for programs including those from the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), participation in the Universal
Service Fund E-Rate program for Schools and Libraries, allocation from the Governor’s Office of Statewide Reserve Funding of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act through Workforce Investment, Office of Employment and Training to enhance public libraries and a history of funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Jobs to be Saved or Created This program will create a total of 19.35 job-years in the state of Kentucky. Of these, 0.63 are expected to be direct job-years, 11.76 will be indirect, and 6.97 will be induced job-years. In addition to the much needed increase in jobs in the state, this program will have a direct impact on increasing educational opportunities for Kentuckians which in turn will enable them to tackle the related issues of poverty and unemployment. Overall Cost The overall cost of this program is $1,780,383.83. Support for this program is evidenced by the combined 24.18% matching funds commitment, with The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation providing a $240,000 grant as cash matching and $168,000 proposal development in-kind contribution, and KDLA providing an additional $22,558 as in-kind contribution.