Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR’S OFFICE, INDIANA

Project Title: Bring IT Home Indiana

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

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According to research published February 2010 by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration adoption of broadband remains a formidable roadblock to the goal of digital inclusion. The report finds that a nearly 32% of the US population still does not access high-speed Internet at any level. Demographic groups such as those living in poverty, older Americans, African Americans, are particularly vulnerable to Digital Exclusion.

(http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/2010/NTIA_internet_use_report_Feb2010.pdf) According to the Digital Impact Group's report The Cost of Digital Exclusion published March 2010 'in the US, over 100 million individuals representing over 40 million households are unable to use high-speed internet, or broadband, because they cannot access it, cannot afford it, do not know how to use it, or are not aware of its benefits. This 'digital divide' is costly not only for those who lack computer access and skills, but for businesses, government, and the nation as a whole' They estimate the total impact to be 55 billion per year. (http://www.digitalimpactgroup.org/costofexclusion.pdf) The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) proposes to expand the Bring IT Home Indiana campaign currently being piloted in Charlestown, IN, and in Starke and Decatur Counties to increase broadband adoption throughout Indiana. OCRA will partner with One Economy Corporation to bring the power of broadband technology to low-income people in 30 new sites across the state by: 'Establishing a Digital Connectors program to train local youth to become technology ambassadors, instructors and community leaders; 'Creating broadband opportunities for low-income families in their homes; 'Fostering entrepreneurship and business development through online access; and 'Increasing individual and community self-reliance through technology and Internet use. Communities engaged in Bring IT Home Indiana will be supported and connected to each other through the Indiana Digital Partner Network, which will allow them to share and learn from each other as they increase the technology culture of use within their communities and among their residents. The cornerstone of the partnership is One Economy’s Digital Connectors program, a best practices youth development program that trains teens and young adults in technology, leadership/life skills, and community service. Through this program, young people gain knowledge that helps them succeed in school, prepare for employment or continued education, and become community leaders. They learn to make decisions, engage in hands-on learning, and become team players. They also learn about career opportunities, hone technical competencies, and grasp lifelong principles that inspire educational advancement and workforce preparation. Digital Connectors are community ambassadors, reaching out to residents and teaching them how to use computers, become familiar with the Internet, and access educational and self-help resources. Digital Connectors participate in community projects that include building local computer labs, mapping available technology resources, providing Internet
and computer training, helping residents procure free or low-cost computers, and building localized
information portals with resources on health, schools, housing, and jobs. OCRA and One Economy will
reach out to libraries and community-based organizations to secure sites for Digital Connectors
programs, identify program instructors, and conduct regional workshops to prepare instructors to lead
local programs. Trainings cover program logistics and expectations, hiring program staff, managing
budgets, developing/reporting outcomes, understanding curriculum structure, and handling public
relations, as well as teaching youth technology, leadership and life skills. One Economy will provide the
Digital Connectors curriculum package, including an affiliate guide and instructors manual, and ongoing
support to instructors. Through the curriculum, youth learn to identify, set up, install and repair
computer hardware. They develop software competencies in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel,
PowerPoint); Internet Explorer or Firefox; website building, mapping and blogging via the Google Suite
and other applications; and Photoshop, Movie Maker, and Adobe Premier Elements. Integral to the
program is the Connectors Club (www.connectorsclub.org), an online site that will allow Indiana Digital
Connectors to become part of a national movement. The site invigorates a network of youth, youth
workers, and sponsors, and allows them to communicate with each other. Digital Connectors also
prepares youth to serve as self-reliant leaders, creating a new digital culture in their own communities.
Young people are uniquely positioned to bring technology to their communities—they are peers, family
members, neighbors, students and citizens. They understand their communities and are therefore able
to help their neighbors embrace the value of technology. Young people can help families get computers
in the home, provide a sense of comfort to first-time users, and deliver the message that technology is a
means to a better life. OCRA will work with the Indiana State Library to target at least 30 specific
communities for the Bring IT Home Indiana campaign. The first targets will be counties with an
unemployment rate of at least 10%. These are the same communities that the Indiana State Library has
applied for funding from NTIA to increase Public Computing Center capacity. The Indiana Community
and Housing Development Authority will work to identify partners in affordable housing who will help
build hot-spots and deliver Bring IT Home localized programming to Indiana families. Jobs will be
created or maintained by hiring two regional and 30 local instructors. The 450 Digital Connectors are
each compensated with an estimated $500 computer in lieu of wages. Longer term, the program
encourages Digital Connectors in micro-enterprise development through the DigiPreneurs and offers job
placement through DigiCon Staffing, a new service currently in development. New jobs will be created
as businesses and corporations throughout the state take advantage of the technology instruction/skills
youth acquire through the program. Furthermore, the state economy will improve as thousands of
currently unserved and underserved residents learn to use technology particularly Internet resources to
improve their lives. Both OCRA and One Economy have significant experience and expertise in working
with local, regional and state organizations, housing associations, business and government leaders, and
will effectively deliver this program to areas in Indiana most in need of technology access and adoption.