Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Project Title: ACCESS TO JOB SUCCESS: DISTANCE DELIVERY VIDEO UPGRADE

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

Executive Summary

PROBLEM/NEED Central Community College's (CCC) challenges are diverse, with the adoption of broadband service being an overarching problem for our 25-county, rural region. Core challenges, addressed through partnerships and this grant application are: 1.) Adoption of broadband for resident and business use is sporadic. 2.) Equipment and service is critical to reach our educationally isolated residents. 3.) Workforce development and community vitality is threatened. While service is available in about 90% of our communities and 100% of our college satellite and community anchor learning locations, the usage of broadband by consumers is intermittent. Beyond that, no reliable data is currently available from broadband providers to determine penetration for the state of Nebraska. While we have made inroads in seeking information through state resources, granular data is elusive. Nationally, one of the recognized information mapping systems, Connected Nation, has mapped only four states (Colorado, Minnesota, Ohio, and Tennessee). According to Nebraska Advantages (http://sites.nppd.com/NebraskaAdvantage.asp), Nebraska is 'the first state to be served totally by digital switching, (and) continues to be served by one of the nation's most advanced telecommunications networks. Survey results show that 95 percent of the state's population has broadband Internet access available through use of DSL, cable modems, or wireless technology. All circuits between community telephone switches in the state are provided on digital facilities, with most provided on fiber.' We surveyed 12 regional broadband providers seeking granular adoption data; all of the providers cited subscription information details as being proprietary and refused to disclose that information. Therefore, our assertions are based on information from partners representing more than 260 organizations and reveal: Our region's residents have access to broadband, but adoption is still lagging. We will capture broadband usage data through this project and commit to proving all adoption numbers noted within our application. CCC lacks the equipment to fully integrate broadband educational and workforce and community development solutions; our current equipment is almost a decade old and experiencing myriad breakdowns. At the same time, demand for distance learning has increased more than 130% in the last decade (see Supplemental Information). That demand far outstrips our current capacity. And we need to make our education more relevant to our rural residents by emphasizing workforce development, entrepreneurship, telecommuting and ensuring our rural communities have the trained emergency responders that ensure the fabric of our rural lifestyle is preserved. APPROACH/INNOVATIONS The overall approach is to deploy infrastructure enhancing equipment in 22 classrooms and adding another six classrooms within our seven distinct locations. Beyond these locations, we will additionally deliver education solutions to more than 60 learning centers throughout our region. This supports our continuing evolution in delivering education directly in
response to our population's needs. These 60 additional learning centers are in a variety of locations ranging from public and private school buildings, libraries, community volunteer fire centers and others. The centers are equipped with computers, network connections, and other equipment including video conferencing units. Learning centers that are housed in high schools are used to connect secondary students to college level courses. All small learning centers are generally open one or two evenings per week for up to three hours per evening. Much of our budget centers on our 28 classrooms in seven locations. Four of the locations are permanent learning centers located in Kearney, Lexington, Ord and Holdrege. The centers are open year round and operate 5 days per week from 8 am to 10 pm. These sites are leased or owned and maintained by the college. They are managed by full time personnel and most have professional staff providing instruction, tutoring, or student services. The remaining locations are full-service campuses in Grand Island, Hastings, and Columbus. Currently the Grand Island campus acts as the 'hub' for the college network. All data, video, phone systems within the college are connected by high-speed broadband internet. These classrooms will be configured to best meet the needs of our residents and students and include small, medium and large classroom formats, netting a total of: three classrooms in Lexington; four in Holdrege; four in Kearney; six in Grand Island; five in Columbus; three in Hastings; and three in Ord. Following a 'wheel' schematic, Grand Island will continue its role as a 'hub,' with other locations being the 'spokes.' We will deliver relevant, job-enhancing education that will highlight broadband adoption and sustainability in every situation. Our innovations touch every facet of our project; truly, we are driving adoption through ingraining broadband’s positives into our very educational and economic development culture. For instance, telecommuting is overlooked as a means to full employment and presents another aspect of our innovative project. With our rural isolation, our unemployed and under-employed residents face a host of issues beyond education: Jobs are simply scarce. We can transform that scarcity into abundance with education focused on education specific to our telecommuting employers. Additionally, we will use innovative coaching and consulting services through several of our economic development partners to ensure the support to build entrepreneurs, telecommuters and business savvy employees will be successful. To that end, we will offer incubator services at Valley County Economic Development plus our three main campuses (Grand Island, Columbus and Hastings) and plan to offer them at the four learning centers (Ord, Kearney, Holdrege and Lexington). Physical incubator space will be available at Hastings, Columbus and Ord for students and residents. To ensure these workers are good fits within innovative entrepreneurial environments, we will offer a systematic, normed, validated behavior-based assessment tool to at least 200 residents. Additionally, we will be offering distance learning solutions to our police, fire and other emergency responders. Beyond ensuring certifications are up to date for these employees and volunteers, we know that having these critical resources in our counties, is a way to specifically assure residents' safety and prevent our rural areas from further unemployment and 'brain drain' that many rural areas experience. AREA/POPULATION/DEMOGRAPHICS Our project covers the 25-county region within our Central Community College service area, including: Adams, Boone, Buffalo, Butler, Clay, Colfax, Dawson, Franklin, Furnas, Gosper, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Howard, Kearney, Merrick, Nance, Nuckolls, Phelps, Platte, Polk, Sherman, Valley, and Webster. The population of our entire area is: 300,581 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Our demographics include: Black/African-American: 0.32%; Asian: 0.62%; Native American or Native Alaskan: 0.30%; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.05%; English as Second Language (ESL): 7.7%; Disabled: 17.7%; Low-income: 11.2%; Senior Citizen (50
and over): 30.59%; Senior Citizen (60 and over): 19.92%; Senior Citizen (65 and over): 15.96%; Youth: 29.79%. We anticipate we will serve a total of 12% of our region's adult population (ages 18-64), or 20,838 people. We estimate 50% of our student population of 25,961 will be accessing learning directly through this project's resources. QUALIFICATIONS CCC has a proven track record of securing more than $21 million in federal grant monies in the last six years. We have managed these funds to accountability, meeting or exceeding our targets for both budgets and measures of success. This funding will be managed in a fiscally responsible manner, leveraging our established systems as well as those of the Recovery Act. We will use a dedicated accountant who will be responsible for financial reporting and budget management of the grant. Our project director will be responsible for all measures of success data, in collaboration with our partners and our accountant. Many of the key partners currently assist with the college's current Community Based Job Training Grant and High Growth Job Training Grant projects, providing specific experience in implementing federal grant projects. Additionally, we are highly experienced in delivering distance learning solutions to our residents. For example, in the last year, we offered 70 different courses in 101 sections. JOBS & COSTS We will save or create 1,300 jobs. Our total cost of this project is $4,157,690, with our total federal request being $2,827,476.