Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Project Title: Urbana-Champaign Big Broadband (UC2B) Public Computer Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

WE WERE INFORMED BY THE STATE OF ILLINOIS AT 2:00 PM EDT ON 3/15/2010 THAT, HAVING ALREADY PROVIDED $3.5M MATCH FOR UC2B'S ROUND 1 PROPOSALS, THEY COULD NOT GRANT ANY ADDITIONAL MATCHING FUNDS TO UC2B'S ROUND 2 PCC PROPOSAL. WE STILL EXCEED THE ROUND 2 PCC MATCH REQUIREMENT WITHOUT THE STATE FUNDING. GIVEN THE VERY LATE NOTIFICATION BY THE STATE, THE CURRENT SUBMISSION COULD NOT BE UPDATED TO REFLECT THIS CHANGE; WE ARE PREPARED TO SUBMIT AT SHORT NOTICE AN AMENDED ROUND 2 PCC PROPOSAL NARRATIVE AND BUDGET, TO REFLECT THE CHANGE IN STATE MATCH. Champaign-Urbana has an acute gap in supporting anchor institutions in our most underserved neighborhoods, which necessitates investment in public computing centers. In 2006, a key community organization, the Urban League, which served thousands of low-income residents with job development training, technology skill building, and a host of adult and youth educational programming, closed its doors and created a vacuum. The UC2B Centers proposal can specifically strengthen the remaining anchor institutions that need to absorb the many residents who continue to need these resources. We still do have a number organizations that have the capacity to increase digital literacy among our most vulnerable populations. This proposal can help expand the ability of these organizations to meet the needs of all our low-income residents. With a population of 113,000, we are home to the University of Illinois, the nation's second largest research university (in research dollars). The University of Illinois developed the first graphical Web browser, NCSA Mosaic, the LED, and alumni from our highly-ranked computer science program invented YouTube, PayPal, and more. Illinois is now building the world's fastest supercomputer, Blue Waters. But our community has the widest digital divide in Illinois and perhaps the nation. Within less than a mile of the university, people do not have access to broadband, to computer workstations, or to the basic digital literacy now critical for jobs and education. We have the fifth largest population below the poverty line in Illinois, and in our public schools 60% of children are federally eligible for free or reduced lunch. We know that roughly 2,000 children in our schools do not have access to a computer at home, and that broadband adoption is below 40% in our target neighborhoods. The population of the project area is 10,660, and compared to the Champaign-Urbana Metropolitan Area, the project area has a higher concentration of Hispanic and African-American residents. While only 2.9% of Champaign-Urbana residents are Hispanic, 4.5% of the project area residents are of Hispanic descent. 48% of project area residents are African-American, representing a much higher concentration than the Champaign-Urbana's overall total of 12%. By placing computing sites within the project area, vulnerable populations such as Hispanics and African-Americans will have better access to the programs offered by this project. With a variety of programs and anchor institutions’ involvement, we anticipate a significant broadband adoption, facilitated by
public computing access, over the course of the next two years due to the funding of the UC2B Infrastructure Middle-mile Proposal. Our proposal will have the following impact by: ' employing 37 FTE people in construction, IT support, trainers and educators, administrative staff, and site managers ' creating 24 FTE indirect jobs from dollars spent on construction, equipment, supplies and furniture ' inducing 14 FTE jobs through other industry jobs created as money is spent by the direct and indirect jobs created ' serving 75,000 people in PCCs, and raising participation and skills ' fostering interest in at-home use that will support sustainable adoption by 5500 households ' leveraging a revenue stream from funding of our UC2B network (funded in Round 1) The following data, collected from an area-wide survey of the 11 lowest-income Census Blocks in Champaign-Urbana (2009), show the following: ' an average of 41% of the households in our lowest-income areas (11 Census Blocks) have broadband access, with some blocks having as low as 16.6% and our highest level of penetration at 54.6% ' 38.4% of the households have no computer ' 13.6% have a computer with no Internet access ' 9% have a computer with less connectivity than broadband Internet ' 44.5% have a computer with broadband internet To support providing access to computing for the 61% of the community without computers and broadband access, we are seeking funds to a) expand the capacity for public computing by creating a new hub and two expanded centers, b) enhance existing neighborhood-based technology centers at anchor PCCs, libraries, schools and health facilities, and c) create a sustainable revenue model within UC2B that directly correlates to the sustainable adoption strategy we have developed. Our UC2B infrastructure grant was recently funded, and UC2B has a revenue model that will provide PCC support from the network subscriber base. What we need is the ability to launch our PCCs and strengthen them until our network is built and subscribers adopt broadband to sustain the PCCs. PCCs will provide a path to broadband in the home for many, while serving the social and after-school computing needs of youth and community organizations that need public spaces and technology to support their work. Further, launch of this effort will create In our region, poor weather conditions for several months of the year challenge many low-income residents who rely upon a limited service public transportation bus system to get to PCCs. Our goal is to provide proximity to programming to train the emerging digital workforce and user base through a network of critical neighborhood-based partners that includes the cities of Urbana and Champaign, Parkland College, Champaign Public Library, The Urbana Free Library, the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club, and the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS). Our public libraries have served over 110,000 computer users in the last 6 months and successfully operate existing public computing centers. Parkland College has a public computer and workforce development training center and an effective program that has already given thousands of people job training in IT skills, resume support, and more. Other key partners include the Public Schools, the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, and a group of community centers, churches, and outreach organizations that specifically serve vulnerable populations.