Applicant Name: RURAL COMMUNITY BROADCASTING SERVICES

Project Title: RCBS MOBILE BROADBAND TRAINING UNITS PROJECT

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _____________________

The proposed project consists of providing three fully equipped broadband mobile units that can be dispatched to all key community anchor institution such as Southern University, the two technical community colleges, 17 high schools and elementary schools, 4 senior centers, 3 libraries, community centers, as well as other underserved areas of West Feliciana, Pointe Coupee and East Feliciana. Our service area; West Feliciana, Pointe Coupee and East Feliciana suffer significant economic depression disabling these communities ability to upgrade, build or improve existing broadband technology. RCBS has an opportunity to address this by deploying three fully equipped broadband mobile units. The mobile units are geared to provide fingertip access to the information highway by taking technology directly to the users. Each unit will boast five computer workstations and will be accompanied by an instructor at every destination/event. In addition, the mobile unit has the ability to broadcast training and skill courses that will help enhance broadband awareness. Each mobile unit will also contain a broadband broadcast studio suite that has the ability to produce and transmit live broadband television programs, containing an education and training unit suite fully equipped and configured to deploy both broadcast operating training, as well as other basic and research access for computer training skills. Each mobile unit contains five state-of-the-art computer workstations, peripherals, and software. Qualified instructors will compliment engagements and other presentations with the mobile units to maximize broadband training opportunities while promoting broadband applications to enhance the quality of life, workforce development and create public awareness. The premier application on board is the fully operational broadband television suite, which features full film, edit and air capability for live broadband broadcast. The broadband access at the training locations is through our area wide wireless network installed under our complimentary proposed BIP grant award. In areas where wired access is available to the unit, it can also be utilized for access to the area network backbone. The microwave portable antenna and radio that accompanies the unit deployment is the 50-megabyte access point for distribution and connectivity of the unit. RCBS has strong community support for this project and has entered into a cooperative endeavor agreement with several community anchor institutions located in these parishes. Leading the partner's list is Southern University, the premi're historically African American University in the United States. The goal is to enable successful implementation of the project by engaging all stakeholders in both planning and delivery stages. The proposed project lies in rural communities with extremely low income residents, a poor education system, low high school graduation, high dropout rates and continued poor access to educational resources and outreach. At fewer than 40% of the state's average, the population density of these parishes is considered 'low', which is an indicator of areas that are starved of access to technological resources. Additionally, due to
lack of access to broadband resources, these communities need a workforce that can support the current national trend in computer technology. This project addresses the critical broadband training needs of key anchor institutions, businesses and residents by delivering access to mobile units in underserved areas. The units will be scheduled for deployment to universities, community colleges, high schools, elementary schools, senior centers, libraries and community centers. Through a cooperative endeavor established with anchor institutions, Southern University and college volunteers will drive these units to areas based on schedule and assist users. For example, the unit arrives at a local high school with a home football game scheduled for Friday night. The qualified operators and instructors configure and prepare the unit to receive students. Classroom training in the unit would take place focusing on film and live television production. Under the guidance of the instructors and the capabilities of the microwave uplink to the local cable outlet the students would announce and broadcast the game live. The end result is a live airing of the school’s Friday night football game engineered, produced and aired using broadband technology available in the mobile unit. The objective is to provide entry-level training in broadband IPTV technology, but more importantly, to provide insight into careers broadband technology applications presents. To target the senior population, the unit instructor will conduct training utilizing the five classroom computer suites. The objective is to provide entry-level computer access training that stimulates the seniors' desire to access information through broadband technology. The training unit will consist of: Virtual advising assistant - answers users’ routine questions through a Q & A database, directs users to appropriate resources for answers to programmatic questions and sends educational programs available. Virtual skill development center - enables any citizen of the community who would otherwise be unable to access such technologies, to receive full hands-on training in the capabilities of the Internet such as online bill pay, online education, etc. Classroom training - offers classroom and web-based training that is relevant to community needs, such as online GED training, tax preparation, internet research, online child care classes, online certification programs, as well as a training program for local employers seeking to hire. The proposed service area includes West Feliciana, East Feliciana and Pointe Coupee parishes/counties. The unique benefit of the mobile unit solution is that it provides an on-demand unit that benefits every household in our community. The project will benefit 398 critical and/or core community facilities, 852 businesses, 18,741 households and 59,234 residents across 1,416 square miles comprised of 'rural' areas. Additionally, the project will connect local municipalities to one another and provide real time broadband broadcasting for emergency services and disaster recovery. In addition to enhancing computer and Internet skills, these computer centers will help keep communities safer, open doors for small businesses and provide job training and skills to more citizens in these communities RCBS has the necessary technical and administrative expertise required to successfully launch and operate the proposed project. As well, our staff is prepared for compliance with local, state and federal rules and regulations. Our team of engineers, project managers and project administrators will ensure effective project management and implementation. RCBS has entered into a partnership with Southern University. The two organizations will work together in sharing equipment, providing the staff qualified to run the program, as well as participating jointly in public outreach efforts geared especially to meeting program goals of increasing access to broadband facilities and providing fingertip access to information highway. According to the Council of Economic Advisors guide to job creation, RCBS will create 58 direct, indirect and induced jobs to our community. Enhanced broadband capacity at public
computer centers in these un-served and underserved areas will spur creation and stimulate long-term economic growth and opportunity. The total project cost over the three-year program including purchase of the mobile units, enhancements to meet the necessary level of technology and specific operation expenses is $3,301,774.