Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: SOUTH PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Project Title: Anson Going Global with South Piedmont Community College (SPCC)

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

Problem Statement ' To compete in today's global economy, communities must have affordable broadband and a skilled workforce. Both are challenges in Anson and Union counties which make up the service area of South Piedmont Community College (SPCC). Anson County is 73.6 percent rural; Union is 49.8 percent rural (NC Economic Development Intelligence system ' NC EDIS). A lack of affordable broadband in remote areas of Anson and Union County contributes to a lack of skilled Internet users. A skilled workforce is computer and digitally literate and has acceptable workplace skills in math, reading, communicating, and locating information. Many low-income students at SPCC do not have sufficient computer skills, likely the result of limited resources at home and/or lack of affordable broadband. As SPCC increases its web-enhanced or online courses, students lacking computer or online skills face a major barrier. As online courses have increased, GPAs at SPCC have declined 14 percent from Fall 2006 to Fall 2008. More training and support are needed, especially for technology-challenged students, to improve success in distance learning experiences. Those unable to use word processing or download outlines and class notes, can not complete research or class assignments. Anson County, with its Tier 1 designation, is one of NC's most economically disadvantaged counties. Its 2009 population is 25,381 with a per capita income of $18,076, or 45.7 percent of the national average of $40,208 (NC EDIS). The population is 51 percent minority (mainly African-American), largely low-income, with a poverty rate of 18.7 compared to a 13.2 percent national average (US Census 2006-08 Estimates). Only 74.5 percent have at least a high school education compared to the national average of 84.5 percent. Only 10.2 percent have a four-year degree or higher (NC EDIS) compared to the national average of 27.4 percent. Anson has consistently had the highest unemployment rate in the region. Its December 2009 unemployment was 14.8 percent compared to a 10.9 percent state rate of (NCESC) and a national rate of 10.0 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Union County, with a population of 201,245 has a more vibrant economy, due largely to affluent suburbs in its western region. While the 2009 per capita income is $27,469 (68.3 percent of the national average of $40,208), the demographics of Union's inner city and eastern areas are similar to Anson. The eastern area that includes towns of Wingate and Marshville is contiguous with Anson County and is poorer and more rural than Union County as a whole. Union County Public Schools (UCPS) data indicate high numbers of low-income and minority students (African-American and Hispanic) in ten schools located in eastern Union County. As of December 2009, 76.7 percent of students attending these schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches, compared to 33.1 percent in a total of 53 schools system-wide. Minorities in the same ten schools account for 75.2 percent of the student population compared to 31.2 percent system-wide. (Note: Because most demographic breakdowns are based on county data, the prevalence of low-income families in eastern
Union County is projected based on free/reduced lunch and minority data from individual schools in that region. Demographics reflected in these figures are considered representative of the central and/or eastern region because school attendance lines are based on a neighborhood school concept. Proposed program solution - The proposed solution is a public computer center (PCC) for public access and training and a high-tech mobile PCC for isolated areas. A fixed-site PCC housed at SPCC's Lockhart-Taylor Center in Wadesboro will require BTOP funding. Grant funds are requested for renovation, additional bandwidth and networking equipment, peripherals, related software, word processing and other practical software to take full advantage of Internet opportunities and options. Training, education, support, awareness and facilitation of broadband utilization will require BTOP funds for staffing. The PCC will be available to the general public, but will actively target the unemployed and low-income. The facility is fully accessible to the disabled. The Career Cruiser, with its 13 computer stations and broadband access, will serve as a mobile PCC and train residents in remote areas. Funded by a Golden LEAF Foundation grant, the Career Cruiser will be in-kind match for federal funds. During year two of the BTOP grant, the Career Cruiser will be further expanded to begin serving remote areas of eastern Union County, providing similar services as the fixed site PCC. With its chair lift, this mobile unit is handicapped accessible. SPCC will need federal dollars to renovate 6,000 square feet at its Lockhart-Taylor facility and provide broadband access, instructional staff, security services, and technology, including 50 computer stations and peripherals. A 4,000 square foot computer lab for public access, a 1,000 square foot classroom, and a 1,000 square foot testing center will be created. By providing computer and Internet skills, the PCC will help residents get a job and utilize online educational opportunities. PCC clients needing improved work skills will have access to additional services. After assessment, an individual career and educational plan will identify training options provided by SPCC, including computer and Internet training, basic education, continuing education, and college level courses. SPCC's Small Business Center will help PCC clients wanting to start or expand businesses via the Internet. PCC clients will be supported if they choose to pursue a four-year degree online. Renovated space will allow SPCC to establish a testing center equipped with computers, furniture, and monitoring equipment that meet standards for national certification. It will assess PCC clients and those needing certification exams to help get jobs, including Career Readiness certificates (CRC). A Microsoft Prometric testing center give students credentials needed to start/advance their careers. A designated testing center gives the region a potential site for national standardized exams such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). Population to be served - The PCC program is available to the public but actively targets the low-income and unemployed. Elements include public access, Internet education, job training instruction, creation of individual plan to improve work skills, and training to increase employability and expand online business opportunities. Estimated number of users includes:

- Program elements # Users Anson # Users Union Public access 600 400 Internet education 500 200 Skills assessment 400 100 Individual plan to improve skills via the Internet 200 80 Training options for employability 200 80 Applicant qualifications and partnerships 200 80

SPCC, with its mission, 'Learning, student success, and workforce and community development' understands that the Internet is critical to its success. Citizens who can utilize the Internet have access to a better quality of life. The need for residents to tap into the vast knowledge base and economic opportunities via the Internet is sufficient cause for an SPCC response. A comprehensive community college, accredited by the Southern
Association of Colleges and Schools, SPCC provides adult basic skills, GED preparation, and developmental/remedial education. A human resource development (HRD) program works with the unemployed and underemployed to teach computer and other job-seeking skills. Curriculum programs and continuing education courses prepare students for work. WIN skills development software will help participants overcome deficiencies in computer skills at their own pace. It will help them to learn use word processing and downloads needed for class assignments. Education and training programs will increase awareness about and demand for broadband. SPCC works with organizations that do not meet the NOFA's definition of partner, including Departments of Social Services (DSS), Employment Security Center (ESC), JobLink, and Anson Women's Center. They work with low-income and/or unemployed residents who can benefit from the proposed project. JobLink programs work with SPCC to promote the CRC program. New Ventures Business Development, Inc. (NVBDI) assists entrepreneurs to achieve success, often via the Internet. It has been successful at creating jobs through its initiatives. SPCC's Small Business Center works closely with NVBDI, assisting in the development of sound business plans. Jobs created/saved - 45 construction jobs over a period of 6 months; three part-time instructional jobs, and two part-time security jobs Cost of project - $1,456,040 with $1,017,769 federal dollars.