Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name:  TALLAHASSEE, CITY OF (INC)

Project Title:  Apalachee Ridge Technology Learning Center Broadband Initiative

Project Type:  Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary ____________________

The Apalachee Ridge neighborhood and the Southside of Tallahassee have been historically underserved in terms of technology and access to broadband. Many of the area's residents are minority, low-income families with limited opportunities to access the wide variety of advantages offered by a high-speed internet connection. By enhancing the technological outreach and skills training at the existing Apalachee Ridge Technology Center in combination with targeting at-risk student populations throughout Leon County this project will expose and train a group of underserved individuals and thereby increase the adoption and utilization of broadband technology. B. The City of Tallahassee, Florida seeks to educate and train individuals in unserved and underserved communities about the global benefits of broadband services and the digital empowerment that flows based on its use. The key to expanding opportunities for all communities is through Digital Empowerment. The City of Tallahassee will accomplish this with its partner the Alliance for Digital Equality (ADE). With funds from BTOP, the City of Tallahassee will establish the ADE Learning Without Walls (L WOW) Initiative at the Apalachee Ridge Technology Learning Center (ARTLC) and enhance the Go Beyond Foundation's Digital Harmony (DH) program. L WOW is a two-part, community based collaborative program to cultivate and promote broadband adoption, workforce development training, education and online tutorials in unserved and underserved communities. We will target computer illiterate adults and youth using community-based resources designed to extend broadband content into every corner of their communities, there by meeting new and existing requirement of educators and employers. L WOW Initiative will be launched in Tallahassee by expanding the capacity of the Apalachee Ridge Technology Learning Center (ARTLC) and the Go Beyond Digital Harmony GBDH) project. The ARTLC is a community center devoted to serving the computing needs of a neighborhood housed along side community-anchored institutions such as libraries, schools, and churches. ARTLC has a concentrated effort in two major areas: First as an effective after school program, we merge a variety of arts, recreation and literacy activities with technology and as a safety zone where students receive homework help, academic enrichment and opportunities to explore new ideas and interests. Second, the ARTLC functions as a community based digital media learning lab committed to the task of generating more public and private sector resources for technology education for youth living on Tallahassee's south side. The lab also fosters children in an environment where they can identify and build individual appreciation of the value of technology in the community. The Learning Without Walls Initiative will be delivered in two Parts: Part 1: The 'Workforce Development and Job Training Track' will cater to the needs of underserved and unserved adults. Through this track we will provide adult participants with computer-based career training and job enhancing skills courses and live online tutoring. ADE will develop educational competencies and career
opportunities within specific careers such as industry, allied health, financial services, education and civil service. Part 2: The 'Education and Tutorial Track' examines and addresses the need to educate and provide resources for our children. ADE will collaborate with educators, school systems, local libraries, and community centers to bring technology to students and their families. We will provide students with relevant online and portable broadband accessibility, through the use of after-school online tutorials. This program will stimulate and promote educational dialogue, digital literacy, e-learning, research, and peer education. LWOW will undergo qualitative and quantitative measurements and evaluations to measure the effectiveness of these broadband adoption programs and look for opportunities to adjust programs to meet the needs of participants. Program effectiveness will be monitored on a real-time basis in an effort to stay apprised of reoccurring trends and potential training shifts that may need periodic addressing. In addition to monthly reviews, annual qualitative progress reports will be produced. The implementation of ADE’s LWOW will advance two of BTOP’s statutory purposes: 1.) Provide improved broadband access to consumers in underserved areas and 2) Stimulate demand for broadband. LWOW will directly employ six people with a network effect that will maintain jobs at all our partner organizations. This initiative will impact thousands who are out of work through their participation and completion of the education and workforce development tracks. Digital Harmony (DH) is a program where families with middle school students are given a desktop computers and connectivity for their homes at no cost to the families. However, with the troubled economy, donations of money and computers have slowed to the point where not enough computers were available. The new approach to create a supply is to refurbish computers. DH will work with Florida State University to teach middle school students how to refurbish computers. The resulting inventory will then be given to families. The refurbishing training also includes teaching the students about the hardware of computers. This program not only teaches the students about various aspects of computers, the students gain a skill while protecting the environment. The need for affordable broadband services is critical. Underserved and unserved families face this additional challenge as they struggle to obtain employment and to improve their competencies and basic skill sets. The lack of available and affordable broadband services compounded with limited education puts too many families at a disadvantage as they compete for a limited number of employment opportunities. C. The population currently served by the ARTLC is 98% African-American; 78% between the ages of 7-13; and approximately equal distribution between male and female users. Tallahassee currently has an unemployment rate of approximately 7.7% and recent statistics show that the national unemployment rate continues to escalate. Employers now require workers to have basic job skills that include competencies in computer usage and familiarity with the Internet and other broadband technologies. To address this demand for basic computing skills, the ADE has made a commitment to the development of program initiatives that foster the revitalization of these working families. D. The City of Tallahassee has selected partners with proven track records and successful programs. ADE’s LWOW has been implemented in Clayton County, GA, Charleston, SC, and Houston, TX. The ARTLC currently delivers computer basics classes. The Digital Harmony program has given computers and connectivity to almost 400 families at Nims Middle School. The City and its partners seek to educate and train individuals in underserved and underserved communities about the global benefits of broadband services and the digital empowerment that flows based on its use. E. Created or retained jobs: 5 F. Overall Cost: $ 1,414,658.86