Michigan State University (MSU), on behalf of the State of Michigan, the Michigan Department of Information Technology, and the State of Michigan Planning Consortium for Broadband, is submitting this computer center proposal to strengthen the computing and training capacity of anchor institutions throughout Michigan. The computers will be coordinated with libraries, public housing centers, tribal community centers, community colleges, and other anchor institutions. This proposal is an extension of our successful first round proposal. We are expanding access in regions not covered in the previous proposal. In addition, we are enhancing the previous proposal by including community colleges both as recipients of computers for computer centers and as sources of students for our internship programs. Finally, we are including more community centers and other anchor institutions as locations for our computer centers. Problem Michigan faces unique challenges in taking advantage of the opportunity for economic recovery. The state is leading the country in unemployment and struggles with economic changes resulting in fewer manufacturing jobs, which has previously been the major employment sector in the state. Even as the national economy rebounds, Michigan will be challenged to change its underlying employment structures to take advantage of new economic opportunities. The solution to this problem is workforce retraining, moving more of the population from manufacturing jobs to the new economy. However, this is a problem that cannot be solved solely through the traditional avenues of continuing education. To retrain all of Michigan's half-million unemployed workers would require a doubling of the capacity of the state's colleges, universities, and vocational training facilities, and even then that system may not be the best to meet the needs of re-training. Instead, non-traditional educational methods must pick up the excess demand and offer novel opportunities for people learning new job skills. Online education and training materials, and training through small courses offered at libraries and other community anchor institutions are an effective way to accomplish these training goals and have already been widely used in the state. However, these training opportunities have strained the capacity of Michigan libraries. Recent surveys indicate that the average Michigan library is operating at their maximum computing capacity 82% of the time. Furthermore, rationing policies' a requirement given the excess demand'often limit access to half-hour or hour-long appointments. This restricts the patron's ability to use the computers for education, job search, access to government employment development resources, and online job systems for companies who offer entry level employment to economically disadvantage workers. Approach Our approach uses an evidenced-based formula for determining which locations can most benefit from additional capacity. Using a system developed by the Colorado State Library, we have assessed Michigan's libraries, community colleges, and other community center computing capacity. Using this approach we identified those locations that
have the greatest need for additional computers and that can most efficiently meet the community needs by using existing available facilities to keep total costs low. In addition to expanding the number of desktop computers in these areas, we will be investing in upgraded wireless networking in these locations. This has two benefits. First, it allows us to more efficiently use space. Although some locations may not have available space for the desks and chairs to create a traditional computing lab, the wireless networks will support a laptop checkout program so that patrons can use other available spaces in the facility. This helps us expand capacity without construction costs. In addition, it will allow those patrons who have personal laptops to bring them to the computer center and use it for access. This further helps leverage the existing broadband connectivity at the library to serve a larger population with minimal additional cost. To provide the training, we are using a two-pronged approach. We envision these computer centers as both a platform for delivering training materials and as a learning opportunity in and of themselves. First, we will provide access to a variety of online course materials consisting of materials available at the local library, materials on the Michigan e-Library, and newly developed material coming from our parallel Sustainable Adoption proposal. These materials can be both accessed independently and will also be covered as part of training classes taught by local librarians and other trainers. Second, we will use the computer centers as a direct training opportunity as we use teams of college students to set up and maintain the new hardware. These student teams will come from MSU, Mott Community College, Jackson Community College, and Lansing Community College. This will provide students with concrete hands-on internship opportunities to apply the theoretical knowledge they have learned in the classroom. All interns will work under the guidance of faculty supervisors and local technology staff (where applicable) to ensure the quality of the final installations. Target Areas: This is a statewide proposal, though we used the following criteria to prioritize the selected locations. First, we chose locations in Michigan’s Cities of Promise, a group of eight economically challenged urban centers that are part of the governor’s economic development focus. Second, we included centers in tribal areas. Third, we chose locations where first round broadband infrastructure awardees are providing access to community anchor institutions. Finally, we chose locations based on partnerships for second round comprehensive community infrastructure proposals. Qualification: As a first round computer center grant recipient, Michigan State University already has a background in administering and conducting a similar grant. This proposal is intended to be an extension of our first round grant, covering regions not reached in our first round proposal. Furthermore, Michigan State University is well positioned to administer this program based on the institutional capacity for grant administration and our prior experience with related projects. Last year, MSU managed $405 million in externally funded projects. We have the institutional structure to provide grant oversight and compliance, legal oversight, connections throughout the state, and online course development support. Our department has been working for several years in related fields, providing experience in how to effectively provide enhanced broadband capacity and to understand how to most effectively use these limited resources. In addition, we have established partnerships throughout the state to help us successfully implement this project. First, we are closely collaborating with the Library of Michigan to help administer the program in our Libraries. Second, we are working with Jackson Community College, Lansing Community College, and Mott Community College. These community colleges will be serving both as recipients of computers and will be contributing students to the internship program. Third, we are partnering with Community Outreach Services Corporation, a small business with experience working in public housing facilities and
providing technology training in low-income regions. These other community partners will help to enhance our capacity to successfully expand the computer center capacity throughout Michigan. Jobs Created: This program will directly create 60 unpaid internship positions to train students in the deployment of the computer centers. A majority of this internship work will be conducted as part of classroom experience, but we will be creating 1 FTE for oversight and additional support. Based on the computations from the Council of Economic Advisors, we will also create 52 indirect jobs and 30 induced jobs. Overall Cost: Our program has a total cost of $7,600,956. This cost includes $6,060,415 in funds requested and $1,540,541 in matching cash and in-kind.