Executive Summary

Broadband access is currently available to Davenport residents. Adoption rates, however, remain low. One major indicator of this is that while there are 16,000 families in Davenport with children attending a public school, only 3,000 of the parents in those families logon and use the tools provided by the school system to allow them to learn about and participate in their child's education. There are large geographic areas in Davenport in which residents do not have the income to purchase a computer, let alone pay the ongoing costs of an internet connection. This same population desperately needs training to find steady employment or to leave dead-end minimum wage jobs. According to the 2000 Census, in the area around the Main Library, 60% of residents do not even have a high school education. Also, the vast majority of assistance programs for the homeless, poor, and legal offenders are within 1 mile of the Main Library location. This includes the Social Security Office, Scott County Social Services, a transitional program for state prison inmates leaving the prison system, and a variety of non-profit organizations providing homeless shelters and transitional housing. Obviously this is a population that has great need for access to broadband services and training in making use of these services. In addition to the population described above there is a second group of residents who would greatly benefit from additional training. This group has a computer at home but does not use the internet even though they might be able to afford the connection fees. They are mostly age 50 and over and the reason they don't access the internet at home is that it simply seems too complicated and frightening. They have heard horror stories about viruses and internet scams and they know that they can purchase anti-virus software but again, they don't what to purchase or how to proceed. This is another group that will greatly benefit from training as well as exposure to all the resources that broadband access can offer them. For residents who are retraining after a job loss, or to expand their employment opportunities, online courses often provide the flexibility and low cost they need. However, lack of broadband access and unfamiliarity with using interactive learning tools present significant barriers. The Enhanced Computer Center at the Main Library and the proposed Outreach Centers at the Roosevelt Community Center and RiversEdge Recreational facility are designed to meet these and other technology and training needs of the community. The Outreach Centers will be equipped to provide access to basic computer and internet training - filling out forms online, searching for employment information, using email, etc. We also plan to teach beginning and intermediate level courses on using commonly used software packages such as MS Word, Excel, etc. The Enhanced Computer Center will provide a space in which our partners, Scott Community College and the Minority Enterprise construction council, as well as grant staff, will provide training in basic, intermediate, and advanced computer skills. The Center will also provide access to distance learning for groups of up to twenty via video-conferencing. The
conference room will also be available to small businesses and to not-for-profit organizations that need these capabilities to have meetings and make connections with colleagues in other communities. As budgets for all these organizations are strained, funds available for travel and training become very limited. The Computer Center will provide the means for these organizations to take advantage of less expensive distance learning options for their staff and volunteers. Scott Community College has indicated that their students would greatly benefit from the means to provide the space or equipment needed for this purpose. Some of the workstations in the Enhanced Computer Center at the Main Library will be set up for this purpose. Other workstations will be set up for online coursework. Scott Community College operates a classroom facility less than a half-mile from the Main Library so it is easily accessible to their students. Many libraries have public access computers and training labs and this service is critically important to the community. The Outreach Centers at the Roosevelt Community Center and RiversEdge will enhance the availability of these resources to low-income and underserved residents of the city. The Enhanced Computer Center at the Main Library will offer access to systems and technology that demonstrate the fuller range of opportunities offered by broadband technology. This Center will greatly improve the variety and range of technology training we can offer and encourage users to adopt these technologies in their homes and businesses. The Davenport Public Library serves all the residents of Davenport. This project targets those who have minimal education and income levels and live within a 1.5 mile radius of the Main Library and a 1.5 mile radius of the Roosevelt Community Center. The services all Centers will, however, be available to all Davenport residents. The Davenport Public Library has a strong history of successful completion of similar projects. In 2007 the public areas of the Main Library underwent a major renovation that was successfully managed by library staff. The year prior, in 2006, we opened a new 26,000 square foot branch in a previously unserved area of Davenport. The staff that managed that project, including coordination of all equipment purchases, will also be working on this project. The grant project will create 2FTE positions for two years: one full-time project manager position and two part-time technician/trainer positions. The actual renovation of the Main Library to host the Enhanced Computer Center will employ a variety of carpenters, electricians and other trades for limited periods of time. Furnishings for the center will likely be purchased from Hon Industries, a local company that has experienced recent layoffs. The overall cost of the proposed project is $752,832.68. The amount of the grant request is $505,644.62