Applicant Name: QUINCY, CITY OF (INC)

Project Title: Quincy Area CyberLearning Project

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _____________________

Need for improving service adoption rates The project specifically addresses a major problem that bears down on Quincy just as it is affecting other communities: the need to strengthen our workforce so that we can attract new and higher paying technology-related jobs that might otherwise go to neighboring communities or out of state. Currently we are faced with a 10.8% unemployment rate and negative job growth; last year it decreased by 4.5%. Education is a major concern; we are located in Gadsden County, which has the highest drop out rate in the state (10.03% compared to a state rate of 5.42%). As for our students who continue their education, their college readiness, as determined by scores on college entry tests, is the lowest of all counties in the state. A major portion of our economy is based on governmental employment. The city of Quincy is located in a largely rural area that is fighting hard to meet our growing needs for education, transportation, health and child care services. If we are to successfully attract more high-wage industries such as food processing/manufacturing, herbal/medicinal and pharmaceuticals, we need to improve our ability to prepare a workforce that can be attractive to such employers. Overall approach Broadband capability offers our population several important advantages: first, a way to help our students pass the courses necessary for high school graduation, particularly math courses. The text and audio are available in Spanish, so that language barriers are not an issue. The standards-based content combined with the Learning Management System helps parents and students identify areas of weakness for review; thus we should greatly improve our ability to graduate more students. The SAT online prep courses will improve our students' ability to enter college; we will also provide residents without high school diplomas the opportunity to take the GED online. Our goal is to ensure that everyone in Quincy is at least digitally literate, and we will require students to take a short assessment that will document their digital literacy levels and provide a map (based on their prior experience and career aspirations) of potential career paths and the qualifications and skills they will need. All of this work will be assisted by career trainers from the community; they will recruit volunteer mentors to assist learners who have less computer experience and may initially need a lot of hand holding. To maximize the use of this kind of investment, we need to maximize the ability of our residents to benefit from it. Our innovative approaches are essential, and are evident in three main ways. First, we will be using our broadband connectivity to provide customized skills training for jobs that are in demand here and for future-oriented ‘green energy’ jobs that will be a key growth industry in this area. We will not overlook the needs of a significant part of the population we are serving, who may not have graduated high school or who graduated without needed skills. Secondly, we will be setting up teams of businesses, educators, community workers, and others to inform people about the use and value of the courses. The third element is an online job bank that will be available to local employers,
documenting key information about our students, if they wish to be included, such as certifications they achieve. This will provide all parties an incentive to fully participate in the system and to find simple mechanisms to recognize and reward effort and results. We will celebrate achievements through public ceremonies where awards will be issued and media invited. Target population Quincy's population is close to 6,982 people and the target population consists of workers between the ages of 16 and 64 who are either unemployed or under-employed. We estimate a total of approximately 2,000 people would be our target population, comprised of people who may have been unable to find employment through disability or because they have been discouraged given the high unemployment rates. Applicant qualifications CyberLearning's training has helped not only individuals, but also entire national economies, to use education to become more competitive. For example, Mauritius uses these courses in efforts to diversify its economy so it can become less dependent on sugar and tourism and can compete in higher wage industries. The CyberLearning team has strong experience in bringing stakeholders together, organizing a vision and implementing a 'management by objectives' plan. Jobs to be saved or created We will be creating three new trainer positions and one support staff position (four total) and we are anticipating 24 jobs that will be saved in the two years based on the projections of health care growth in Quincy and the need to ensure that Quincy residents are first in line for about some 20-30 new green energy jobs that are expected to grow exponentially once we are out of the recession. In addition, we expect that 5% of the group will want to start their own businesses or will make their existing businesses more viable as a result of our small business courses. NEF courses are designed to prepare citizens to be more competitive when applying for existing and new job markets. For example, Project Management, IC3, and Microsoft Office certification courses make workers in a range of industries (any field that uses basic computer skills or runs projects) more qualified. In turn, these workers then make the companies they work for more efficient and able to save and create jobs. Overall Cost Federal funds needed: $1,051,948 NEF will donate $1,052,100 worth of online courses. This adds up to a combined total cost of $2,104,048.