Applicant Name: LIBRARY, INDIANA STATE

Project Title: Indiana Libraries: Connecting You with the World (ILCYW)

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _____________________

THE NEED Indiana continues to toil with economic realities of the current recession. As of December 2009, Indiana's unemployment rate stands at 9.7%, according to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. Fifty-six counties reported jobless rates of 10% or higher. Indiana citizens, particularly the unemployed and underemployed, rely on local libraries to provide materials, resources, equipment, and training to meet their technology and information needs during difficult economic times. Historically, public library usage increases during economic crises, when library funding is most in jeopardy. As good stewards of community resources, libraries are accustomed to doing more with less. However, demand for access to computers and employment resource training is so great that libraries are unable to sustain delivery of the highest level of service to those who need it the most. Library budgets, and subsequent ability to offer adequate workstations with stable broadband, will only improve when the communities they serve are once again economically stable. Indiana State Library (ISL) data indicates that public libraries in Indiana served 10 million public internet computer users in 2008. Indiana libraries have the expertise and the desire to do more. In response, ISL has committed to help public libraries meet the increasing demand for public access computers and broadband connectivity. ISL has partnered with other state government agencies to put surplus state computers in public libraries. Additionally, ISL has begun the process of administering a Gates Foundation grant that will add 339 new computers in 59 locations. Yet despite these efforts to maintain our current level of service, a 2007 American Library Association study reported that only 20% of public libraries in Indiana met the demand for available computer workstations. Indiana's public libraries can do more and impact many more Hoosiers by connecting all Indiana citizens, including the unemployed and low-income, with the computers, software, broadband, training, and work-related resources they need to succeed in the 21st-Century economy. The Public Computing Center project funding from the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program would ensure Indiana libraries meet the growing information and technology needs of the communities they serve. THE SOLUTION Indiana Libraries: Connecting You with the World (ILCYW) will bring Indiana public libraries up to a standard level of information technology delivery that provides (a) mobile computing labs in the counties with 10% unemployment or higher, (b) mobile readers to turn printed text into audio, and (c) internet connectivity through the Public Library Internet Consortium, which guarantees a speed of at least 1.544 Mbps. The ILCYW program will ensure electronic classroom capabilities in every public library by providing a cost-effective and flexible solution: the mobile computer lab. Mobile computer labs are increasingly popular in libraries across the nation for their portability and thus flexibility, providing for a 'go-anywhere' classroom that can be housed inside the public library or moved into the community beyond. Mobile classrooms take advantage of the
unparalleled flexibility of 'place' that wireless technology offers ' giving public libraries of all sizes a classroom that can be configured to meet existing space requirements or limitations at the library or travel to the most appropriate location in their community. Mobile computers labs are a model way to raise access standards for public libraries statewide while allowing for greater flexibility in the delivery and accessibility of this technology at the local level. Indiana libraries in the 56 counties with the highest unemployment rates will receive an average of twenty (20) netbook computers, one (1) instructor laptop, and one (1) projector to (a) facilitate in-house or outreach computer and job-related training courses and (b) serve as additional public access and checkout computers when not in use for instruction. Broadband access and computing technology provided by the program will prepare the Indiana workforce for the demands of the modern economy. Our strategy is twofold: (1) The Indiana State Library (ISL) will collaborate with Vincennes University to connect underserved areas with the digital means to enroll in distance learning programs. ISL has already assisted Vincennes University in launching a pilot program with three public library districts to provide students in isolated regions with the technology necessary to earn a degree through distance learning. Our collaboration will reach community college students who would not have otherwise had access to an affordable college education. (2) ISL will provide workshops for librarians and the public throughout the state to support the expansion of computer and job skills-related courses in Indiana public libraries. ILCYW trainers will design and deliver a variety of workshops that expand and improve upon existing courses offered by public libraries, develop new courses that take advantage of statewide online resources, such as the Testing and Education Reference Center and the Small Business Resource Center, and prepare residents for the demands of an increasingly digitally-driven workforce. THE SERVICE POPULATION Anchors in our communities and learning centers for all ages, the 56 public library districts in Indiana that will receive assistance from this grant serve a diverse population of 2,027,434 residents. The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program offers an unprecedented opportunity to equip public libraries with the equipment and training necessary to serve all Indiana communities, including the unemployed and underemployed, as well as people with disabilities. Employing broadband and the related technologies, Indiana's public libraries can significantly increase access to existing online resources for all patrons, and particularly to job seekers, small businesses, people who are blind or visually impaired, and children. Specifically, such an expansion of the number of public Internet computers available in Indiana libraries will serve an estimated 3,647,777 users each year. The 56 flexible computer labs that enhance broadband access and foster technology and professional development instruction provide Indiana residents the tools and educational opportunities necessary to improve their economic situations, employment status, job performance, and overall well being. Providing 250 Intel Readers to libraries in all 92 counties and patrons of the Talking Books and Braille Library program will greatly improve access for people who are blind or visually impaired, and assist students with learning disabilities who need to hear, as well as see, the required reading for classes. OUR QUALIFICATIONS The Indiana State Library is prepared to administer the work required in the grant. The State Library was established in 1825 and has since served as a leader in the development of library service in Indiana. It is the mission of ISL to strengthen services of all types of publicly and privately supported libraries. As the administrator of the Library Services and Technology Act funds for Indiana, ISL oversees grant programs of over $3,000,000 annually. ISL has a history of collaboration with organizations such as the Gates Foundation to get technology into public libraries and has a talented staff with the skills necessary to recommend best
practices. With the legislatively established role of creating and updating all public library standards for Indiana, the Indiana State Library is the organization best suited to monitor and predict needs of public libraries and evaluate the impact of upcoming budget shortfalls. OUR IMPACT While this grant will fund six new positions for a period of two years, each of these positions is expected to interact with thousands of Hoosiers over the grant period, educating librarians and citizens about the many online resources provided by the state to improve their employment and economic situations. Overseeing and implementing this $4,157,256 program will create six jobs in the short-term, but has the potential to enable thousands of Indiana citizens to find new jobs, advance in their careers, or hone the skills necessary to compete in the global economy, and hundreds more would benefit from assistive technology that can read to them.