Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: MANAGEMENT SERVICES, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF

Project Title: PRO-JOBS- Partnership for Readiness Online - Job Opportunities through Broadband Sustainability

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

______________ Executive Summary ______________

Florida's most economically depressed counties fall within three distinct regions of the state: the northwest panhandle, the north central region, and the south central region. These three regions are identified as Florida's Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC), and these 28 counties and their 844,419 residents comprise the highest per capita concentrations of Florida's most vulnerable populations. (Supplemental attachment A) On average, the median household income of $36,000 across these 28 Florida counties is 25% lower than the state median household income of $48,000, and 31% lower than the national median household income of $52,000. Approximately 29% of children in these RACEC counties fall under the poverty line, compared with 18% statewide and nationally. Meanwhile, residential broadband adoption in the RACEC counties falls well below average at an estimated 53%, compared to 65% nationally. In a collaborative effort to help the people of Florida's at-risk regions overcome the high poverty rates and low broadband adoption, the PRO-JOBS initiative proposes to develop regional broadband teams for coordinated broadband demand-side planning and awareness campaigns, in concert with local digital literacy and e-business training programs that are customized to address each distressed region's specialized needs. These targeted programs will be led by community anchor institutions and community volunteers, with implementation support from the three Florida RACECs, Connect Florida, and the Florida Department for Management Services. PRO-JOBS is the Partnership for Readiness Online ' Job Opportunities through Broadband Sustainability. The partnership is comprised of the FL Department for Management Services, Connect FL, the Northwest RACEC, the North Central RACEC, the South Central RACEC, various community anchor institutions in each region, and community volunteers from across Florida's most economically depressed areas. The cornerstone and driver of the PRO-JOBS initiative will be a regional broadband task force in each RACEC, driven by leadership from the region's community anchor institutions and supported by local working groups of community volunteers to improve broadband adoption for the purposes of job skills development and economic growth across the region. Connect Florida, in coordination with local community anchor institutions and the RACECs, will facilitate the task force meetings and provide tools and materials based on local research and community planning best practices. Each RACEC will work in close collaboration with the regional broadband task force to develop and implement the digital literacy and e-business training programs with the participating community anchor institutions in each region. In the program's first year, each of the three regional task forces will develop a regional strategic plan for enhanced education, healthcare, and job growth through sustained broadband adoption. The digital literacy and e-business training programs will empower vulnerable populations particularly minorities, low-income
families, and the unemployed ' with computer, broadband, and entrepreneurial skills through training options from basic to advanced courses. Lower-level programs will include training in basic computer and online applications, typing, electronic resume creation, and online job searches. More advanced programs will include e-business and online storefronts, online marketing, and teleworking strategies. Additional broadband-related job training activities may be identified by the task force and county working groups, according to the specific needs of the community and region. Additionally, online GED and online college courses will be offered and marketed to targeted vulnerable populations for improved educational attainment. All coursework will be accompanied with an Internet safety training curriculum. Existing computer centers at participating community anchor institutions will be used for the digital literacy and e-business training programs. Through the PRO-JOBS initiative, community anchor institutions will receive new computers where needed to provide adequate computing resources to the community’s vulnerable populations. Training participants who complete the coursework and the associated Internet safety curriculum will be eligible for a new computer for their home. The computer distributions will be managed by Connect Florida, in close collaboration with the RACECs and participating community anchor institutions. The operational model and infrastructure used for the computer distributions will be Connected Nation's Computers 4 Kids program, widely identified as a best practice nationwide. PRO-JOBS will be guided by statistical telephone and web-based survey research to understand the local challenges related to broadband and computer use. The surveys will measure the rate of home broadband adoption, computer ownership, online application use and frequency of use, barriers to home broadband adoption and computer ownership, prices paid for broadband service, and similar broadband related questions across demographics in each county. This local research will ensure that the county working groups and regional task forces have access to community-specific data as they develop regional broadband strategic plans and build training programs to meet specific community needs. The telephone and web-based surveys will be administered on a recurring basis to track progress and provide data on which program elements are effective and which are not. Web-based surveys through the Connect Florida and RACEC websites will continue beyond the federally funded project period to capture subsequent and recurring measurements of broadband adoption and computer ownership. PRO-JOBS will leverage the State of FL's broadband planning and decision-making tool, BroadbandStat, which empowers program participants with a one-stop-shop for understanding local broadband service availability in relation to local geography and demographic/socio-economic data at a community and neighborhood level. The interactive, web-based tool, funded through the NTIA's Statewide Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBDD) and administered through the FL Department of Management Services, provides a user-friendly, web-based source for PRO-JOBS participants to integrate and analyze local broadband adoption data gathered through the PRO-JOBS program in relation to broadband service availability data gathered through the SBDD program, resulting in a comprehensive resource that aggregates data across various federal, state, and local programs to identify solutions for increasing broadband adoption and improving economic development, education, and healthcare. The PRO-JOBS initiative is proposed for a period of 2 years, and it is expected to create a minimum of 9 direct jobs. Additionally, an estimated 16 indirect jobs and 20 induced jobs to be created as a result of sustained broadband adoption increases through PRO-JOBS. The program will be targeted to serve the vulnerable populations in Florida's Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern. This includes an estimated 3360 residents per year directly served through the digital literacy and e-business training
programs, along with an estimated 1763 residents per year who will gain access to broadband either at home or at a community anchor institution. Overall, the PRO-JOBS local broadband awareness campaigns, training, and computer distributions will reach an estimated 421,588 potential broadband subscribers who are currently without a broadband connection at home. The PRO-JOBS initiative requests federal funding of $3,656,965.39, with a non-federal matching contribution of $1,573,506.87. PRO-JOBS will be overseen by the Department of Management Services - Division of Telecommunications (DivTel). DivTel provides telecommunications and information technology (IT) services to support all state agencies, local government, university, K-12, and non-profit eligible entities serving the citizens of FL. Connect Florida, a subsidiary of Connected Nation, is an internationally recognized non-profit leader working to overcome the digital divide across communities in both urban and rural America. Connected Nation has nearly ten years of experience working with hundreds of communities and thousands of local technology champions to identify and overcome the key challenges to broadband adoption and digital inclusion, particularly among vulnerable populations. The FL Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC) are non-profit regional organizations comprised of rural communities that have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events. The purpose of the RACECs are to coordinate and market regional assets and identify issues that serve as impediments to job creation and increased economic g