Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: TRUE BROADBAND NETWORKS LLC

Project Title: True Broadband Technology Empowered Communities Coalition (TBTECC) Public Computing Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

True Broadband Networks will lead a collaborative coalition of small disadvantaged business partners, charter schools, computer learning centers, healthcare organizations, faith-based and community anchor institutions that are currently working to address the critical broadband capacity deficits and unique challenges faced in the ability to serve the public interest especially regarding economic recovery issues like job creation in the face of high unemployment in the particularly distressed low-income communities of the Greater Kansas City and St. Louis Metropolitan areas. These communities are plagued with poverty, unemployment, underperforming schools, illiteracy, adverse credit and the lack of health insurance, access to broadband services, computer and job skills training as well as supplemental education opportunities. The proposed 10 Public Computer Centers are located within the inner cities of Kansas City, Kansas, Kansas City, Missouri and St. Louis, Missouri with a combined targeted population of 605,000. Our project will deliver job skills training to over 250,000 citizens in the first year and create or save at least 76 jobs per year by the utilization of the enhanced training and educational programs offered through the proposed public computer centers. The overall approach to addressing these key issues and improving broadband adoption will be achieved by expanding public access to broadband services as well as enhancing broadband capacity through the deployment of 4 new and expansion of 6 existing Public Computer Centers and by offering discounted residential high-speed Internet service to PCC program participants through the implementation of a new program called 'Intra-Connected Communities'. By utilizing an extensive outreach strategy, we plan to reach over 500,000 citizens within the next 2 years through various educational tracks and career paths surrounding areas such as science and math, robotics, green technology, health and wellness prevention, adult basic education and GED completion, English as a second language, computer literacy, technology certifications, credit repair, job readiness skills, business development, multi-media technology and web development. Our training courses will be delivered in collaboration with several partner organizations and located in underserved communities targeting vulnerable populations and serving as a key catalyst in the quest to bridge the digital divide by providing these needed services. Along with addressing the need to create jobs, this project will also address the significant issue resulting from the ongoing lack of academic accreditation in the Kansas City, Missouri public school system by augmenting the current learning curriculum to include enhanced educational programs delivered via broadband that will provide the necessary training to help students gain in demand skills to enter the job market or prepare for college. Over a third of these citizens in the proposed service area are living below the poverty line and research has shown that areas such as these are underserved when it pertains to broadband Internet. This problem is amplified
by the fact that in households with an annual income of $50,000 or less which is about half of the country, only 35% have broadband service. Households with annual incomes above $50,000 are more than twice as likely to have broadband service. This statistic is from the following source: "Bringing Broadband to the Urban Poor," Business Week, December 31, 2008. This puts a severe constraint on this population to contribute to the economic growth and development of our country. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Statistics reported that the unemployment rate for the foreign born increased to 9.7 percent, compared with 5.8 percent in 2008. The jobless rate of the native born also increased, from 5.8 to 9.2 percent. In 2007, nearly 25% of residents in the proposed St. Louis, Missouri service area lived under the federal poverty line. This poverty rate is almost twice the U.S. average (13.3%) and the median household income of residents was $26,818 as reported in the 2000 Census. Contributing especially to statistics on unemployment are returning adult prisoners. Missouri's challenge is great because it has the fourth largest prison population (30,167) among the 12 Midwestern states and the eighth highest incarceration rate in the nation (University of Missouri, 12/31/08). Like a broken revolving door spinning out of control, 33% of those prison commitments were returning parole violators, many of whom where incarcerated for substance abuse, and/or who failed to transition successfully and were returned to confinement. Lack of employment has consistently been found to be a key contributor to reincarceration rates. In addition to impoverished persons born in America, the region is home to a large population of new immigrants and refugees, including the nation's largest population of Bosnians and large contingencies of Somalis, Afghans, and Iraqis. Varying estimates place St. Louis' population of new Americans at between 10 - 20 percent of the total population. Besides facing the trauma of relocation and the barriers of language, these individuals are often prevented from gaining employment by lack of knowledge of employment resources. City-Data.com statistics reveal that 30% of residents in the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan proposed service area live under the federal poverty line which is more than double the U.S. average poverty rate of (13.3%) as reported in the 2007 Census. The median household income of the residents in this targeted Service Area was $29,613 with the area's unemployment rate remaining high at 9.3% equal to the U.S. average (9.4%). This project is designed as a shovel-ready initiative that will have metrics and key performance indicators in place to measure the success of providing the broadband infrastructure for Internet connectivity along with the build out of the capacity that will address the critical need for broadband services specific to education, employment, and economic development as well as enhanced services for health care education and children. In complete alignment with the BTOP statutory purposes, the key objectives of the True Broadband Technology Empowered Communities Coalition are to provide public computer center access to both adults and children along with training, education and other services such as mentoring, counseling and assistance to low-income individuals with job placement to stimulate long-term economic growth and opportunity. True Broadband Networks has been successfully delivering broadband to both the commercial and residential markets for over eight years and has participated in numerous municipal government contracts with project management as a core competency. True Broadband Networks recently delivered a City-Wide Wireless Network to the City of Kansas City, Missouri and successfully met the objectives. Our partners have several years of combined experience and expertise in establishing and maintaining PCC access in the Kansas City urban core and have substantial experience in providing community and job-related technology training to residents of targeted neighborhoods as well as extensive grant management experience. The overall cost of the
project will be $2,772,307.50 with a 28% match contribution of $778,136.00 requesting $1,994,171.50 in federal funding to achieve the goals of the BTOP priorities. This proposal will also support our additional program goals in the other BTOP categories of broadband community connect infrastructure deployment and sustainable broadband adoption as they will further drive the objectives to generate awareness, demand and economic growth by making broadband available at a lower cost to low-income families' homes as part of this scalable and sustainable project. (1)St. Louis Post Dispatch, February 24, 2001, reported that 'Refugees may represent 10 percent of the City's population'. Reports provided by the area's resettlement agency, the International Institute, indicate that the foreign-born population may number in excess of 60,000 persons, or about 20 percent of the City's population. Other Sources Cited: 2007 Census of Housing and Population, American Community Survey 2007; U.S. Census Bureau City-Data.com, Zip Code Detailed Profile, http://www.city-data.com (2009) Public Broadcasting, KCMO school district still trying to gain full accreditation to avoid a State takeover, http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kcur/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1534549/KCUR.News/New. KCMO.Superintendent.Outlines.Approach.for.District (2009)