Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: SOUTHERN TEXAS B.E.E. LEAGUE INC., A CDL CHARTERED

Project Title: Southern Texas B.E.E. Public Computer Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_________________________ Executive Summary __________________________

Overview: A large percentage of the Southern Texas citizens being connected by this regional public computing center (PCC) network project, called Southern Texas Broadband Enablement and Enhancement (B.E.E.), at each of this 54 county region's 103 libraries and 31 community colleges, plus a 13 station mobile broadband on wheels bus. Southern Texas B.E.E proposes a unique regionally networked computing center model to bring affordable, fourth-generation broadband services to all residents across the state. The Southern Texas B.E.E League is focused on using broadband based technologies to improve the quality of life in its largely Hispanic communities, whose vulnerable and typically low-income populations face a consistent uphill battle, where many are immersed in predominantly Spanish speaking households and experience disproportionate struggles in learning broadband technologies shrouded in mostly English language centric packaging.

Southern Texas B.E.E’s approach serves the largest possible segment of the population in each of the Southern Texas communities it connects through broadband, by leveraging engaged local leadership, technology-based innovations in online training and teaching methods, bottom-up transference of Southern Texas B.E.E.’s economic development and rural entrepreneurship models, and the use of software designed to create information and general presentations, online training materials, web conferencing, learning modules, and user desktop sharing. The appreciation for what broadband can do to improve one's life cannot simply be taught, it must be conveyed to those new to its potential, especially the most vulnerable populations in our communities, in a way that is thoroughly caught. The Southern Texas
B.E.E. PCC's labs and programmatic initiatives will assist multiple critical sectors including healthcare, lifelong learning and early childhood development. This broadband centric fully web-based network maximizes network dollars spent when compared with most other traditional computing center models in use today, while still delivering the latest proven technology center functions to improve lives and transfer life-long self-empowerment skills.

The Southern Texas B.E.E. League has formed a strategic alliance with Community Development Leagues of America (CDL) to tackle its important mission. CDL, a not-for-profit community-based educational national organization has operated for several years in its target communities, using broadband centric technology delivery methods to improve quality of life for their challenged and vulnerable populations. CDL brings a track record and management team needed to ensure increased broadband adoption rates and sustainability across this region. Southern Texas B.E.E. will also be assisted in these efforts by their other project partners, including Telamon Corp. and the libraries and community colleges across the state's seven southern congressional districts.

The need Southern Texas B.E.E. addresses

Southern Texas B.E.E. is particularly focused on using broadband based technologies to improve the quality of life in its predominant Hispanic communities, whose vulnerable and typically low-income populations face a consistent uphill battle, where many are immersed households speaking Hispanic and yet are confronted with broadband technologies shrouded in mostly English language centric packaging. All constituencies in the Southern Texas B.E.E. network service area - residents, schools, libraries, healthcare and public safety facilities - need better broadband access and the opportunity to experience the transformative impact of broadband. In many of the counties and communities being interconnected with this proposal, affordable high-speed broadband access lacking, and a smaller percentage of consumers are
currently subscribed to broadband services, so there is a dire need to both deliver and convey to the entire public in this region, a new appreciation for the difference broadband can make in direct improvement of their quality of life.

Southern Texas B.E.E. innovative approach to addressing the need

While leveraging maximum use of the small, often stretched pool of personnel available to administer its current PCCs in the libraries and community colleges in this region, Southern Texas B.E.E. will help by delivering its labs and programs via a virtual computing center, with public accessible PC workstations, providing customizable online meeting rooms; multiple meeting rooms per user; breakout sessions within a meeting; VoIP; video conferencing; meeting recording; screen sharing, chat and white-boarding; user management, administration and reporting; polling; and a central content library. Southern Texas B.E.E. workstations are very easy to use, emphasizing the PC, a browser, and pervasive internet tools, e.g. adobe flash.

Area(s) to be served; population of the target area(s), including demographic information; and the estimated number of potential users in the Southern Texas B.E.E. public computer center(s).

Each of the 103 libraries and 31 community colleges will be used as PCC sites in the 54 county service area covered by the project, with its population of 4,561,333. Over sixty two percent (62.2%) the project region’s residents are Hispanic. It is estimated that fully one half (50%) plus of the project’s population will be reached by its extensive footprint of all the libraries and community colleges.

Working in concert with the substantial delegation across Texas’ seven southern congressional districts, and its other institutional partners around the state and in neighboring predominant Hispanic states, e.g. the
Global Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship, Southern Texas B.E.E. is well positioned to implement the project most successfully. Southern Texas B.E.E.'s collaboration organization partner, CDL, is particularly qualified to help it run this project having already facilitated community development processes, including community center design and deployment, in other states, as well as having designed and assisted in the deployment of similar types of regional "collaborative networks". Also, Telamon Corp., the project’s lead integrator, which has much experience deploying large dispersed installations similar to those in the project, will also supplement their experience with on-going help desk functionality. CDL’s software/web development team is fluent, first-language Spanish speaking. Southern Texas B.E.E. will be working with its partners to provide selective free broadband access, and its public computing/broadband education, awareness, training, together with key equipment for anchor institutions located throughout the region. Additionally, Southern Texas B.E.E. is developing turnkey programs for housing projects, assisting/working with housing authorities and, towards horizontal federal agency collaboration, by helping establish HUD neighborhood networks as part of Southern Texas B.E.E.'s future planning.

It is anticipated that over the project's beginning 3 year staging and outreach period, that over 60 new jobs will be created.

Overall cost of the proposed project is $5,585,149 and a 20% match of $1,117,052 is being provided by the applicant as well, and the applicant is not receiving other federal support for non-recurring costs in the proposed funded service area.