Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: SC STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

Project Title: SC REACH FOR SUCCESS - PCC

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_____**Executive Summary**_____

A. Problem/Need Statement

• With 12.1% of its workforce unemployed, South Carolina has the 4th highest unemployment in the nation (US Department of Labor, BLS Statistics, June 2009).

• With only 39.1 % of its households having broadband access, South Carolina ranks 49th in the United States (US Census Bureau, Internet and Computer Use Supplement to the Current Population Survey, 2007).

• 20.6% of children in SC live in poverty, the 11th highest in the nation. (American Communities Survey, 2007).

• With only 56.5% of entering 9th graders graduating from high school, South Carolina is ranked 47th in the United States in high school graduation rates (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2006).

• With 788 offences per 100,000 population, South Carolina ranks 1st in the nation in violent crime (Crime in the United States: 2007, Federal Bureau of Investigation).

Ranking among the last where we need to be first and among the first where we need to be last is a tragic reality for our struggling state. In South Carolina's rural communities and underserved urban areas, most residents do not have access to educational opportunities or workforce training, and have limited healthcare and entrepreneurial resources. High speed internet access and the skills to use it are critical for personal and professional health and prosperity; therefore expanding broadband access to these targeted populations will have a positive effect on all measures of health and welfare in South Carolina. The South Carolina Technical College System, comprised of sixteen comprehensive technical and community colleges, has developed a broad-based approach to expanding broadband access through Public Computer Centers. This PCC proposal and its partner Sustainable Broadband Adoption proposal will stimulate broadband adoption, a critical first step toward improving South Carolina communities' health, education and economies, so that all South Carolinians can REACH FOR SUCCESS.

As community anchor institutions, the Colleges in our System are extremely well positioned to provide expanded broadband access, but the lack of financial resources is an obstacle. South Carolina has been particularly hard-hit by the economic downturn. Within the past two years the state has cut allocations to our Colleges by 25%. These cuts have forced the Colleges to postpone replacements of technology equipment and reduce or eliminate service contracts. Colleges have little or no room in their budgets to support additional bandwidth or innovative approaches to explore the benefits of broadband use with less expensive devices. Federal stimulus funding is a necessity to make this project a reality.

B. Overall Approach

The SC REACH FOR SUCCESS Colleges and partners, will work together to implement a three-pronged approach to expanding broadband access and use in South Carolina:

1. A statewide network of Public Computer Centers. Partner Colleges with service areas that include rural and underserved populations will open 19 new and 51 existing PCCs to the general public (see map in uploads section).

2. Increased bandwidth and expanded access for credit and continuing education students. Nearly a quarter of a million strong, the SC Technical and Community Colleges' students, many of whom are socially and economically disadvantaged, are a key target population for this project.

3. Public awareness campaign and training opportunities. The SC REACH FOR SUCCESS public awareness campaign will include a variety of radio and print marketing tools. Project staff will develop and offer in-person workshops and online training opportunities. Project partners will assist in disseminating information to target populations.

C. Areas and populations served (with demographic information) estimated number of users of PCCs.

A demographic profile of the PCC users will most likely mirror the state's overall population demographics. In 2008, the ethnic composition in South Carolina included 65.2% white, 28.1% African-American, 4.1% Hispanic, and 2.6% other races (US Census Bureau estimates). The South Carolina Technical College System currently serves 114,000 credit students and 128,000 continuing education students. Of students enrolled in the fall 2008 semester, 49.1% received federal Pell Grant assistance and 36.9% of credit students were minorities. We estimate the number of potential new users of the PCCs statewide will be more than 21,000 per year.

D: Qualifications demonstrating ability to implement project and achieve intended results.

The SC REACH FOR SUCCESS Colleges have: 1) a strong history of successful system-wide collaboration, 2) extensive experience administering federal and state grants, 3) existing broadband infrastructure, and 4) IT staff with qualifications and experience in implementing and administering broadband service. With existing campuses and training sites, no SC resident lives more than 30 miles from one of these locations (see map in uploads section).

E. Jobs saved or created.

This project will employ a minimum of 6 full-time employees and 65 part-time employees who will implement broadband infrastructure, administer PCCs and provide training.

F. Overall cost.

SC REACH FOR SUCCESS is requesting $5,903,040 in BTOP funds. The System and its member Colleges will commit a 26.3% match of $1,524,183 to broadband access, training and outreach.