

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

C. Gates Foundation Partnership – Information Item

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Opportunity Online broadband grant program aims to:

- Help library organizations better compete for and leverage federal funds through BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunity Program through NTIA in the US Department of Commerce) to increase and sustain higher levels of connectivity in public libraries, and
- Encourage library organizations to increase public library participation in the federal E-rate program as a sustainable source of funding for ongoing broadband costs.

From 23 proposals, the Foundation selected 14 state library agencies that presented compelling public library-focused BTOP funding concepts. These organizations are eligible for two types of support from the Foundation's U.S. Libraries program:

1. The Foundation will provide each with consultant support to develop its BTOP proposal. Consultant support will vary based on each candidate's need, but can include: project management and meeting facilitation, proposal research and design, technical advice, as well as grant application writing. Starting in January, the Commission will be working with a consultant from Alvarez & Marsal on-site for up to 14 weeks.
2. State library agencies that submit a BTOP proposal on behalf of public libraries in the remaining NTIA funding round will be invited to apply for a Gates Foundation Opportunity Online broadband grant that will include funding, contingent upon a grant award from NTIA, for:
 - Some or all of the 20 percent project funding match that NTIA requires BTOP applicants to demonstrate;
 - Funds to support E-rate technical assistance to help public libraries secure more federal funding to sustain ongoing broadband connection costs;
 - The development and production of an optional statewide convening to launch the implementation of the public library component of the proposed BTOP project and build awareness and support from state officials for connectivity in public libraries; and
 - Administrative expenses to manage the Foundation grant, if awarded.

The Foundation's U.S. Libraries program will provide a letter for each state library agency to include in the BTOP application. This letter will confirm its eligibility to receive a grant from the Foundation to support a specified portion of the project funding match, if awarded a grant from NTIA.

The Notice of Financial Assistance (NOFA) outlining the requirements and timeline for the second round of BTOP applications is expected in February.

The purpose of the Commission's proposed BTOP project is to plan and engineer a systematic upgrade of Idaho public library Internet connectivity to a minimum of 10 Mbps, and to immediately bring those public libraries with the lowest connectivity to at least 1.5 Mbps.

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Broadband service options will be identified, and a plan and engineering design for the provision of 10 Mbps to all 104 jurisdictions (140 locations) will be developed. Approximately 40% of the facilities will be upgraded to a minimum of 1.5 Mbps. To reach the goal of 10 Mbps for all facilities, subsequent phases based on the plan and design completed through this BTOP grant will be pursued with other funding sources.