

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Gates Foundation Partnership – Information Item

Our work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Opportunity Online broadband grant program is well underway. A draft of our Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) application is due to the Foundation by February 18. The full application must be submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) by March 15.

The Foundation’s support is in the form of an onsite consultant to help us develop a competitive proposal for the BTOP, matching funds if our BTOP proposal is funded, and training to help public libraries secure additional e-rate funding to sustain their improved broadband connections into the future. If our application makes it to the “due diligence” phase in which NTIA requests additional information, the Gates Foundation may provide additional consultant assistance.

If our BTOP project is awarded, the Commission will receive federal funds to:

- Upgrade Internet connectivity in at least 55 libraries to as much as 10 Mbps, from a median rate of 500 Kbps.
- Provide more public access computers any of our 140 public library facilities that can accommodate them.
- In partnership with a number of state agencies, provide statewide licenses to new online resources targeting children, un- and under-employed, and adult learners supported with public information campaigns and end-user training.
- Extend the reach of our partners’ current programs for un- and under-employed, and low skill workers into libraries through upgraded Internet and computing capacity.
- Develop a technical plan for each library public library facility to reach 10 Mbps Internet connectivity.
- Design and deliver E-rate training to public libraries to increase their capacity to sustain higher broadband connections.

With the Foundation’s support, Idaho public libraries have an unprecedented opportunity to improve access to high quality technology and provide broadband access for their patrons that is affordable, sustainable, and scalable to meet future needs.