

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Broadband Technology Opportunity Program Application – Information Item

Executive Summary

The objectives of High Quality Public Computing in Idaho Libraries (“the project”) are to increase connectivity rates in the least connected public libraries, upgrade public computing resources, and leverage partnerships to offer services in education, workforce development, and e-government. The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL) is submitting this proposal to leverage the current role of libraries as anchor institutions to raise education levels, address economic and employment challenges, and provide access to services for those most in need.

Public libraries are anchor institutions in communities throughout Idaho. Residents count on their libraries —attendance at library programs is 25% higher than the national average. Over the last several years, ICFL and public libraries have worked collaboratively to meet the changing information demands of communities.

Computers and access to broadband are crucial to meet the demand for library use. Idaho is the 7th most rural state (18.1 people/sq mile). Much of it is considered underserved; many communities have no high-speed Internet access. Services can be tens or hundreds of miles away. Many of these areas are most severely affected by the recession; the cost of computers and Internet can be prohibitive for residents. 64% of libraries are the only source of free internet access in their communities, the only local place to access online services and resources. Over the last year, library computer usage increased, especially for education, job search, and E-Government services.

Three years ago, Idaho had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Since then, it has experienced the largest increase in unemployment of any state—over 150%. The demand for workforce and adult education services is difficult to meet as many residents must travel great distances to access state and federal resources. Only 21% of Idahoans over 25 have at least a Bachelor’s degree, much lower than the national average (27%). Many youth do not have free access to the online educational resources that would aid their achievement. And as government services move online, public libraries play a critical role in e-government. Idaho citizens need better access to federal and state agencies and their services, such as filing tax returns and applying for social security and welfare assistance. Idaho libraries offer almost 5 times the coverage area of Department of Labor one-stop centers, almost 23 times that of Adult Basic Education centers and community colleges, and are open when schools are not. With 141 library locations—one in nearly every community—libraries are the most logical solution to help meet Idaho’s needs.

But for libraries to meet demand, they must first address three primary challenges:

- Low Bandwidth: 40% have less than 1.5 Mbps compared to the national average of 17%, and the bandwidth per public access computer is 128 Kbps at best.

- **Lack of Computers:** 25% have three or fewer computers, and many are too old to run online programs, courses, and tutorials.
- **Public Awareness and Training:** Most areas targeted in this proposal are underserved, and the cost of computers and monthly access make libraries the only source for online resources required to develop 21st century skills.

This proposal is aggressive and achievable. It will increase the computing capacity in 40% of public library facilities by 43%, from 391 workstations to 561. It will increase connectivity in those facilities by 400%, from an average of 1.3 Mbps to an average of 6.2, and from an average 200 Kbps per computer to 600. The upgrade strategy emphasizes scalable connectivity solutions, capacity-building training, and E-Rate application support to ensure the one-time investment is sustainable and will meet future demand.

ICFL has developed a broad range of state-level partnerships to plan and implement outreach and training. Through these partnerships, Idaho will expand education, employment, and e-government services to 50 of 104 public library jurisdictions. The Idaho Department of Education and Idaho Digital Learning Academy will ensure that its statewide online student resources are accessible in libraries, and that librarians have teacher accounts for state-sponsored education applications. The Idaho Department of Labor, Adult Basic Education, and community colleges will ensure that information and access to their online resources and courses are available in libraries. ICFL will provide a statewide subscription to Learning Express Library's adult modules to complement efforts in adult education, professional development, and job search. All partners and vendors will provide training to librarians on these resources, and librarians will provide referrals for patrons to relevant partners.

The project will generate nearly 7,700 new users, train at least 1,100 people in basic computing, and offer education, workforce, and e-government services to 376,512 Idahoans (28% of the total population). It will serve the following vulnerable populations

- Hispanic: 54,326 served (40% of Idaho Hispanics)
- Native American: 9,470 served (47% of Idaho Native Americans)
- English as Secondary Language (ESL): 39,807 served (32% of those statewide)
- Disabled: 61,847 served (28% of Idaho's disabled)
- Low Income: \$22,054 per capita income (58% of the national average); 93% of the libraries serve counties meeting one of two BTOP economic distress indicators, 29% meet both
- Unemployed: 37,631 served (31% of Idaho's unemployed)
- Youth: 127,283 served (31.25% of Idaho's youth)

Partners and libraries provide local targeted solutions to meet the needs of their communities, and the resources and partnerships in this project will increase their capabilities to do so.

The project will be completed within two years (60% complete in the first year). The overall budget is \$2,850,347 and includes a 33.1% match (21.6% cash and 11.5% in-kind).

The project will create 20 jobs directly and indirectly. The employment benefit for communities will extend far beyond direct and indirect jobs, however. The access to online resources for education and skill development is an investment in economic efficiency and provides the infrastructure necessary to create long-term and sustainable economic growth.

ICFL is proud to lead this application. As a self-governing executive agency, ICFL has provided continuous service to the citizens of Idaho since 1901 and has an outstanding track record in both fiscal and program accountability. It has successfully worked with the state's public libraries through support for strategic planning, consulting services, delivery of continuing library education, administration of grants, convening advisory groups, and planning/implementation/evaluation of statewide service. This proposal represents a collaborative effort to provide opportunities to all Idahoans that address local and immediate needs.

This proposal supports long-term efforts of our partner agencies, communities, and residents to:

- Lower costs of service delivery. By employing technology to overcome challenges of distance and cost, the state will be able to serve more of its citizens at reduced cost. A one-time investment in technology will significantly expand the reach of services at minimal ongoing costs.
- Improve workforce skill level. By increasing access to existing workforce development online resources and by providing Learning Express Library's professional certification preparation, unemployed and low skill/low wage workers will attain skills necessary for a living wage career pathway. This will improve employment rates, make Idaho a more attractive place for businesses requiring high-skill workers, and help develop a competitive workforce for the 21st century.
- Raise adult basic education. By expanding Adult Basic Education resources to our least-connected communities, and by providing new adult learning resources like Learning Express Library, adult learners will have improved access and greater resources to assist in educational attainment. This will help increase the percentage of residents with at least a high school diploma.
- Raise student achievement. By expanding access to curriculum-based online resources and by adding new complementary resources, Idaho students will have improved access to informal learning outside of school hours.
- Improve higher education attainment. By improving availability of our online college courses, distance learners will have greater access to post-secondary education resources throughout the state. This will help increase the percentage of residents with at least some college and with college degrees, and it will help attract new business to Idaho.

This proposal builds on our great success and recognizes that we must overcome unique challenges to achieve our long-term goals. It addresses those challenges in a collaborative, efficient, and effective way.

Budget Summary

Grant request	\$1,907,531
Total match, all sources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gates Foundation: \$615,100 cash• Gates Foundation: \$79,900 in-kind• IPTV: \$75,000 in-kind• IRON: \$10,000 in-kind• Commission: \$162,816 in-kind	\$942,816
Total project	\$2,850,347
% match	33.1