Idaho Public Libraries Public Computer Center BTOP Project

The Idaho Commission for Libraries received a federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) award in the Public Computer Center category from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Over 69% of public libraries in Idaho report that they are the only free public Internet access point in their communities. With 141 locations in Idaho, public libraries as public computer centers are in a unique position to extend the reach of agencies providing services in workforce development, education, and e-government.

What “online@yourlibrary” Looks Like

Partner: Idaho Department of Labor
- Career Information System
- Classes in basic computing, job and office skills, test prep (college entrance and placement, licensing)

BTOP funding
- LearningExpress Library
- Online Idaho Jobseekers Handbook

Partner: Idaho Department of Administration
- Tax workshops
- Professional licensing, auto, etc.

BTOP funding
- E-government public information

Partner: Professional-Technical Education
- Classes in adult education (Adult Basic Education, GED, test prep (citizenship, GED, licensing, etc.)
- SkillsTutor

BTOP funding
- LearningExpress Library

Partner: Community Colleges
- Test prep (GRE, LSAT, etc.)
- Subscription study resources
- Distance learning courses
- LLI databases

BTOP funding
- LearningExpress Library
- Scout
- SEGP Internet2

“online@yourlibrary” connects people in rural areas with the resources they need for developing job skills, seeking employment, and accessing many other government and education services. The success of this program is critical for Idaho’s future.”

- Idaho Department of Labor Director Roger B. Madsen
The BTOP grant covers:

- Cost of expanding broadband connectivity in at least 55 public libraries
- Cost of expanded connectivity and bandwidth during the two-year grant period for these public libraries
- Cost of new computers for public access computing in these public libraries
- New statewide online resources:
  - LearningExpress Library
  - Scout (Teachers’ Domain for library use)
  - Internet2 SEGP
  - Idaho Jobseekers Handbook
- Direct cost of delivering training to public library staff
- Grant project management

Project Partners
- Department of Labor
- Idaho Public Television
- Professional-Technical Education
- State Board of Education
- State Department of Education
- Idaho Regional Optical Network (IRON)
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- National Telecommunications and Information Admin.

BTOP Project Objectives
- Expand the scope and reach of services in education, workforce development, and e-government to all Idahoans.
- Expand access to the Internet and provide free access to informal learning resources for children, job skills and adult basic education for the unemployed, and e-government services for all Idaho residents.

Determining participating libraries

Connectivity speed
Low connectivity speed is the first factor in defining the candidate pool for the computer and connectivity upgrades. Public libraries that have current connectivity of 4 Mbps or less are included.

Demographic criteria
Public libraries that serve higher percentages of (BTOP-defined) “vulnerable populations” are included.

Expectations
The Commission and BTOP project partners will:
- coordinate to leverage existing state online resources related to the needs of the under-employed and students.
- deliver training to public library staff on E-Rate, public computer center maintenance, and online services.
- coordinate public information about public access computing in libraries, BTOP project online services, and workshops in public library computer centers.

IdahoPTV will produce and deliver statewide public information delivered as broadcast spots and http://IdahoPTV.org web content, targeting kids and parents as well as adult learners and workers.

BTOP Project Strategies
- Expand broadband capacity in 40% of Idaho’s least connected public libraries.
- Upgrade public computing resources in those libraries.
- Expand online resources statewide.
- Provide library-based workshops centered around online resources.
- Publicize online library resources and free public access at the library.
- Ensure sustainability.

Sustainability
After review of the RFPs from Internet and telecommunications providers, the projected costs and abilities of the candidate libraries to sustain those costs when the BTOP project is complete will provide the final filter for determining the participating libraries.

Participating public libraries will:
- expand their Internet connectivity bandwidth and the number of computers available to the public.
- host workshops in partnership with the Regional ABE Center and the Idaho Department of Labor, introducing adults to online resources.
- provide staff who are familiar with Libraries Linking Idaho (LiLi) portal online resources and trained to maintain their public computing centers.
- consider E-Rate funding as a strategy for sustaining their public computing centers.
New Online Resources Available through the LiLI Portal

**LearningExpress Library**  
*Available Now*

LearningExpress Library provides over 800 up-to-date test-preparation and skill-building resources, helping both students and adults prepare for a wide range of academic and career-oriented exams as well as improve basic skills in reading, writing, and math. In addition, job-skills tutorials are available to assist in creating a great resume, honing interviewing techniques, and improving business communications.

Patrons also have the option of selecting from more than 150 e-book titles to help learners of all ages prepare for success.

The platform includes self-paced study, instant scoring, and diagnostic feedback and can be accessed from any computer that has an Internet connection.

**How to Access LearningExpress Library**

All users must be authenticated as Idaho residents; accessing LearningExpress Library through the LiLI Portal at http://lili.org accomplishes this.

Users accessing LearningExpress Library for the first time will need to create a personal login and password. That personal login can be used when accessing LearningExpress Library from any web-accessible computer.

LiLI Portal at http://lili.org/
Student Tutorials and Programs Available through the LiLi Portal

“Scout” (a version of Teachers’ Domain customized for Idaho students)
Coming in Summer 2011

This digital media service for student use from Idaho Public Television and WGBH Boston will offer thousands of media resources for student use that support state and national education standards. In addition to including award winning resources from NOVA, Frontline, American Experience, and other national productions, Idaho Public Television is customizing this service with Idaho resources, such as its award-winning fourth grade history series; its science program for elementary students, Dialogue for Kids; and catalogued video segments highlighting Idaho’s natural resources and history.

Internet2 resources for libraries via Idaho Regional Optical Network (IRON)
Coming in Summer 2011

Internet2 offers a unique collection of online museums, field-trips, and other resources available only through libraries and K-12 institutions.

Apangea Learning’s Apangea Math: Grades 4-8, Algebra 1, and Geometry
Available Now

Apangea Math—an online, supplemental math tutoring program—provides students with instruction, access to live certified teachers, and a motivation program with rewards for working on math problems.

Previously, only schools assigned passwords to students. Since November 2010, staff members at public libraries have the ability to create student accounts and assign passwords. Apangea Math can be accessed from school, home, or public library.

PLATO Learning
Available Now

PLATO Learning provides self-paced intervention and remedial solutions for 9–12 students in language arts, mathematics, and reading curriculum aligned to the Idaho Achievement Standards and Idaho Student Achievement Test (ISAT). A school-assigned password is required to use PLATO at the public library.

Apangea Math and PLATO are available for Idaho students through a partnership with Idaho State Department of Education.