

Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Community Outreach

Oklahoma's public libraries have a strong chance of receiving grant funding from the federal economic stimulus package (American Reinvestment and Recovery Act) under the BTOP program

- The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) includes funds to provide broadband access to communities in unserved and underserved areas at Public Computing Centers (PCCs) across the United States
- The BTOP has made available \$2.6B in a new round of funding. \$150M is available for Public Computing Centers like libraries
- The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) is applying for a BTOP Public Computing Center grant of \$3 million.
 - Federal funds may not exceed 80% of project costs: i.e., applicants must supply at least 20% of funding
 - The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) have committed to provide up to \$1,000,000 toward the 20% match requirement. Oklahoma was selected through a competitive process and is one of only 14 states selected to receive this support.
- CSMG, a Boston-based consulting firm hired by the Gates Foundation, is helping the ODL prepare its stimulus application

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries' PCC application will be well positioned to achieve the policy objectives and funding requirements outlined by the federal government

Public Computer Center Policy Objectives

- Provide broadband access to communities in unserved and underserved areas
- Provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to anchor institutions, organizations that provide outreach to vulnerable populations, and job-creating strategic facilities
 - Anchor institutions include schools, libraries, medical and healthcare providers, higher education facilities, and other community support organizations
- Improve broadband access and use among public safety agencies
- Stimulate consumer demand for broadband

Oklahoma Broadband Funds Focus

- Oklahoma's public libraries are community anchor institutions that already serve a broad range of community needs, support organizations help vulnerable populations, and promote job skills development
- Stimulus funds will be primarily directed to libraries in lower-income and distressed counties
 - **Education:** The percentage of Oklahomans with at least a bachelor's degree is much lower than the national average (22% vs. 27%)
 - **Jobs and Poverty Alleviation:** Oklahoma has a higher poverty rate than the national average (16% vs. 13%). Lack of Internet access and long distances make job searching and interviewing difficult
 - **Health:** Oklahoma ranks towards the bottom of national health metrics (diabetes prevalence and heart disease deaths among others). At-risk individuals and chronically ill patients must often travel long-distances to hospitals for information
 - **eGovernment:** As government services move online, citizens without broadband service will face growing obstacles in accessing these services

If the proposal is funded, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has agreed to provide up to \$1,000,000 for funding match

Sources: American Family Housing Survey 2006-2008, US Census Bureau, OK State Department of Health



The BTOP and Gates match would fund the purchase of technology to address Oklahoma's core needs

Technology Upgrades and Benefits

- Internet connection speeds would be updated to broadband speeds enabling interactive real-time video conferencing and/or streaming at each workstation in each location
- The purchase of new desktop and laptop computers would reduce patron wait times and expand the reach of services
- Room-based video conferencing systems would let roomfuls of local library customers engage in communication and distance learning with fellow Oklahomans and the world
- Improved connection to other Oklahomans and the world would address core need areas:
 - **Education:** Room-based video conferencing and online classes would allow for distance learning from the elementary to graduate school levels and continuing education
 - **Jobs and Poverty Alleviation:** Local libraries could become hubs for internet job searching and work skills training
 - **Health:** Telemedicine appointments via room-based video conferencing would allow for education and counseling of patients in remote areas
 - **eGovernment:** Citizens would have greater civic engagement through virtual town meetings and video conferencing with service members stationed around the world

The success of your local library's application hinges on your expressed support of the application

Asks from Community Institutions

- The federal government is looking for projects that are collaborative and engage the entire community
- Oklahoma's BTOP grant would support improved internet speeds and new computing and communications equipment at libraries in needy areas statewide. Improved connections and equipment will allow for crucial educational, health, and social services to be implemented in at your local public library
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has pledged \$1 Million in matching funds to support Oklahoma's application. Oklahoma is one of only 14 states to receive this support
- CSMG, a Boston-based consulting firm hired by the Gates Foundation, is helping the ODL prepare its stimulus application
- ***The ODL's application for Public Computing Center funds require letters of support from community institutions***
- ***If you would like to get involved with the project, please provide us with a letter of support explaining how this might help your organization's needs (206 received)***

The federal government is asking each library to include letters from community partners who would share in the benefits of the BTOP grant

How could your group benefit from the stimulus application?

Current Problems

- Do difficulties with internet access and technology limit your institution's ability to carry out its mission?
 - What technology or services would you like to see implemented or improved in your community?
- How would improved broadband connectivity and new technology help advance your institution's goals?
 - How many of the people who use your services could use them at a public library?
 - How could you measure the benefits? How many more people could you serve in your community?

Solutions

- *"BTOP funding to the local library would be welcome because..."*
 - *... our customers would benefit from having increased ability to access ..."*
- *"We have --- individuals that use our services every week..."*
 - *... improved broadband connections would enable us to increase the number of individuals in the community that we could serve each week..."*
- *"The individuals we served would benefit from the program by..."*
 - *"...becoming healthier?"*
 - *"... furthering their education?"*
 - *"... developing their literacy?"*

The BTOP and Gates match would fund the purchase of technology to address Oklahoma's core needs

Technology Upgrades and Benefits

Oklahoma is among the lowest ranked states in many core areas

- In the US Census (2007), Oklahoma is ranked the 10th poorest state in the nation and the 41st in percentage of population with a bachelor's degree or higher
- In a report by the Kauffman Foundation (2008), Oklahoma is ranked 45th in percentage of population that is online, 40th in Health IT, 39th in e-Government , and 43rd in high tech jobs and 39th in knowledge based jobs

To reduce these critical problems,

- \$3,353,062 is needed for the addition of 326 videoconferencing capable laptops and desktops, 36 room-based videoconferencing systems.
- To better support existing and new computers and to support high quality videoconferencing, the project would upgrade the broadband connections at 42 locations and to provide Internet at a minimum speed of 1 Mbps

To most efficiently address these challenges and critical BTOP objectives, ODL carefully selected the main library branches in the neediest 44 of 77 Oklahoma counties (serving 1.58M Oklahomans – 45% of the population). Of these 44 selected counties with the largest concentrations of vulnerable people:

- 100% have higher than national average % of Native Americans
- 98% have an estimated broadband penetration lower than the NTIA benchmark of 40% (qualifying as underserved)
- 77% have literacy rates lower than the national average
- 75% have median incomes below the national poverty level
- 73% meet at least one of the two criteria for economically distressed as defined by the NTIA
- 71% have higher than national average % of senior citizens