

NYS Public Computer Centers Program ARRA application: . Executive Summary

A statement of the problem or need your project addresses with regard to improving broadband service adoption rates.

New York Public Computer Centers: *Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary* will address three significant problems facing vulnerable populations residing in upstate New York (low-income, unemployed, underemployed, aged, speakers of languages other than English, seniors, persons with disabilities):

- Upstate New York's increasing unemployment rate and severely distressed economy.
- Lack of affordable public access to high-speed broadband services and equipment, education, training and technical support, particularly in geographically isolated upstate communities
- Increasing need for New Yorkers to access essential e-government resources (federal, state and local government services)and other online resources for work, healthcare, education and citizenship at the same time as the economic downturn is reducing consumer ability to acquire the necessary computer technology and broadband access

Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary will expand public computer center services available onsite at 30 public libraries serving 27 counties in upstate New York. This innovative project will also establish five prototype mobile training labs that will reach out to vulnerable populations in 18 upstate counties to provide workforce and digital literacy training. Partner libraries will provide free public access computing services to the general public with a priority focus on services for the unemployed and underemployed and other vulnerable populations. Computer centers will add computer workstations and services accessible to persons with disabilities. The State Library and partners will purchase additional online resources and software to help job seekers with resume preparation, test preparation, interviewing, job research, small business startups and more. The project will also expand public computer center hours of service, improve broadband capacity, provide additional computer equipment for users, and expand education, training and technical support services. This project, an innovative mixture of static and mobile public computer centers and access to 24/7 online job search resources, will be easily replicable as all project materials will be freely available on the State Library's website.

Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary will serve the residents of 36 upstate counties, with populations totaling million. Based on experience with existing computer centers, partners estimate 12 million potential uses of the 35 static and mobile public computer centers over the two years of the project.

The New York State Library is the lead applicant for *Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary*, working with 35 partners. The State Library is a major unit within the New York State Education Department, whose mission is "to raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity for all the people in New York." The mission of the New York State Library, through its Division of Library Development and Research Library, is "to provide leadership and guidance for the planning and coordinated development of library services and to serve as a reference and research library for the people of the State." The State Library has extensive experience in managing innovative statewide grant projects of comparable size and complexity. The State Library, because it is located within the State Education Department, has excellent capacity to effectively lead implementation and evaluation of this project and to efficiently distribute all grant funds to project partners according to the proposed timeline.

For example, the State Library manages \$9 million annually in federal Library Services and Technology Act funds in addition to other federal grants awarded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services and other federal agencies. The State Library also administers over \$100 million annually in state grants for libraries and oversees the State's innovative network of 73 regional library cooperatives and some 7000 academic, public, school and special libraries. The State Library has successfully applied for and managed over \$30 million in private grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in support of public access computing.

The State Library's established relationships and prior work with the regional library cooperatives and local libraries to expand and sustain public-access computing services provides a firm foundation for effective and timely implementation of this project. The State Library, building on "lessons learned" from past grant initiatives, is confident that this project will be successful in New York, having found that employing dedicated staff and partnering with the state's regional library cooperatives, as well as developing a supportive relationship with the individual participating libraries, helps to ensure the success of a statewide grant initiative.

Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary will save or create 66 jobs. In addition this innovative project has the potential to help thousands of New Yorkers find jobs or start new small businesses through extended Public Computer Center hours, dedicated job search resources, printers and software for resume preparation and online job resource software available 24/7 at the library and from remote locations. A number of the partner libraries are designated New York State Career Resource Centers. With the high unemployment rate in New York (8.7% in July), libraries are overwhelmed with unemployed and underemployed job seekers using online resources and seeking expert staff assistance with their job searches. This project will help New York's libraries better respond to the overwhelming demand for public access computing services and online resources.

The overall cost of *Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary* is \$15,939,520 for the two year project

Costs include \$7,221,000 for expanding public computer centers at 30 library locations, \$123,000 to hire an independent evaluator who will assess impact, \$1,277,150 to create and deploy five E-mobile training labs and \$1.9 million to license online job search resources available 24/7 to all New Yorkers. The State Library is requesting \$10,521,150 in BTOP Public Computer Centers Program funds and project partners will provide \$5,418,370 in cash and in-kind services.