CALIFORNIA CONNECTS: OVERVIEW

FCCC ESTABLISHED TO SERVE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
The Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC) was established in 1998 by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office to benefit, support, and enhance the California Community College system. As the official auxiliary organization partnering with the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office, the FCCC has the resources and capacity to leverage innovative solutions to address statewide challenges that individual colleges cannot meet on their own. The FCCC’s overarching goal is to ensure that the opportunity for higher education continues to be extended to all Californians. Today, the FCCC has the capacity and expertise to respond quickly to the needs of California’s colleges and communities. The FCCC has secured over $150 million in grants, contracts, and gifts, and provided more than $100 million in direct grants, support, and cost savings to colleges over the past ten years.

ARRA/BTOP
The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided the Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) with $7.2 billion to expand access to broadband services in the United States. Of those funds, the Act provided $4.7 billion to NTIA to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure, enhance and expand public computer centers, encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service, and develop and maintain a nationwide public map of broadband service capability and availability. NTIA made all grant awards by September 30, 2010.

California Connects was submitted with two other (round 2 BTOP) applications: one focused on a robust middle mile network serving the 18 counties in the Central Valley that part of our proposal’s plan to focus on for direct digital literacy awareness and training while the other supports libraries across the state with much needed hardware and personnel to support new adopters to the Internet.

1. The Central Valley Independent Network (CVIN), in partnership with CENIC, an entity that manages the largest and most robust statewide fiber-based network for education in the nation, is proposing to build, maintain and operate a 600+ mile fiber optical network in the Central Valley to provide connections to education anchor institutions including 18 county offices of education, 11 community colleges, four community college districts, three universities and 23 county libraries in order to enhance their existing high speed networking capability.
   a. CVIN was awarded $46.6 million in BTOP funds (August 2010)

2. Califa Library Group (CALIFA), a non-profit membership consortium serving libraries and information organizations in California, is proposing to expand the public library computer access centers in 136 libraries statewide by providing much needed desktop workstations and laptops, 24/7 wireless access, new or upgraded wireless routers, and staff to help users access library resources.
   a. CALIFA was not awarded BTOP funds but continues to seek alternative funding to support the state’s public libraries
CALIFORNIA CONNECTS - Overview
California Connects offers a multi-pronged approach to increasing digital literacy and broadband access for underserved communities. The project reaches these communities through two primary partner efforts. The Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program serves economically disadvantaged, first generation community college students who come from underrepresented populations. The Great Valley Center (GVC) is a non-profit organization targeting services to the Central Valley; residents with the lowest computer and broadband use, and high concentrations of Latinos who also have low computer and internet usage.

California Connects’ strategy demonstrates innovation by: 1) the development of open access online digital literacy tools that can be accessed anytime anywhere – in libraries, public computing centers, homes, places of business; 2) utilizing student volunteers (MESA students) and GVC staff to assist users in accessing the digital literacy resources, and 3) leveraging efforts and maximizing outcomes through collaboration.

California Connects is funded by a $10.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration for Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). California Connects, in partnership with the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office and the Great Valley Center/UC Merced, will provide outreach, training, and learning support to increase digital literacy skills and broadband adoption, targeting historically underserved communities (including, an 18-county region in the Central Valley: Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Kings, Kern, Mariposa, Merced, Madera, Nevada, Placer, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tuolumne, Tulare, and Yuba Counties). California Connects is targeting users with little familiarity with computers and the internet many of whom are native Spanish speakers.

California Connects will also provide laptops to approximately 5,800 economically disadvantaged students who provide a designated community service and are currently enrolled in Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) programs at California community colleges. The equipment will help encourage and enable broadband adoption among students, their families, and communities.

CALIFORNIA CONNECTS – Primary Goals & Objectives
1 – Generate 61,120 new broadband users and 9,168 new broadband subscribers.
   • Provide and improve access to broadband through community college MESA programs, local libraries, and community-based organizations.
   • Providing access and awareness will be accomplished by outreach from MESA students and GVC staff, exposing the target population to products and services that are designed to add value to the individual’s life – such as helping them find work, develop work-based digital literacy and basic skills, or any form of lifelong learning.
   • A public awareness campaign will increase community outreach and acceptance by emphasizing the advantages of digital skill attainment and broadband access.

2- Provide laptops to 5,800 MESA students for students use in college level courses and MESA activities, and to assist them and their families in acquiring a range of lifelong learning and digital literacy skills.

3- Provide Microsoft software training and certifications to 5,800 MESA students.

4- Create two free, open-source, online, self-paced digital literacy tools (1) digital literacy training and (2) basic skills English and math training. Access to both tools will be further enhanced by community trainers from MESA and GVC who will assist individuals in navigating online resources.

5- Serve the underserved. California Connects aims to serve community College MESA students/families (economically disadvantaged, STEM majors) residing throughout the state and Central Valley residents – economically disadvantaged, Latino, Spanish-speaking/English Language Learners.