



## About BTOP

The Delaware Division of Libraries (DDL) is collaborating with multiple program partners to support a statewide learning laboratory program aimed at improving workforce skills and job searches for Delawareans at each laboratory and library throughout Delaware. The initial partners include:

- Christina Adult Education Program
- Delaware Department of Labor
- Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI)
- Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO)
- Delaware Technical Community College
- Delaware Workforce Investment Board
- Department of Education/Delaware Center for Distance Adult Learning (DCDAL)
- Literacy Volunteers Serving Adults
- Sussex County Retired Seniors Volunteer Program

### Understanding the Need

Delaware has been particularly hard hit by the recession, with the loss of over 3,100 manufacturing jobs in 2009 alone. Delaware's economy has traditionally depended on farming, trade, transportation, utilities, and manufacturing, all of which have been severely affected in the last 18 months. The closing of major sources of long-term employment, such as Valero Energy in the city of Wilmington, have contributed to unemployment rates of up to 12.1% in some areas (versus the U.S. average of 10.0%). Many recently displaced workers are struggling to adapt to a 21st century job market, in which computer skills and technological literacy are critical success factors.

In 2008, the Delaware Division of Libraries created the Delaware Library Community Resources Exchange in order to understand the resources available to Delaware residents struggling with unemployment, rising quotidian costs, lack of education, etc. The Community Resources Exchange worked with numerous state and non-profit partners to create a database of available programs and resources for vulnerable populations. In addition, the Community Resources Exchange holds biannual partner showcases in which agencies meet with library staff to show them how people in need can best use the resources available to them. Throughout this process, libraries remain the first point of contact for people seeking information on resources.

DDL will use BTOP funding to expand the Community Resources Exchange through job and lifelong learning centers in libraries statewide. DDL will create one dedicated center, or learning laboratory, in four key libraries throughout the state, with job and lifelong learning services in all libraries.

### **Role of Participating Libraries**

- **Job Centers**

Throughout 2009, Delaware libraries have worked with state organizations such as DEDO, and RSVP to provide Delawareans with the workforce skills they need to succeed in a changing market.

The Dover Public Library opened a dedicated Job Center in October 2009. This Job Center uses mobile laptops, a dedicated Job Center area within the building, and human resources professionals to provide one-on-one assistance, such as job counseling, interview preparation, and resume development, to job seekers. Every applicant who visits the Job Center leaves with a résumé, e-mail account, a referral to Delaware JobLink (an online jobs database created by the Delaware Department of Labor), and either a job lead or a completed job application. The program is currently limited in capacity, largely due to staffing, space, and time constraints.

Funding by the BTOP award will allow the DDL to establish comprehensive Job/Learning Labs in libraries across the state by leveraging unique partnerships between libraries and social service organizations to combat unemployment through workforce development and educational programs. This initiative will ensure unprecedented levels of service to a wide spectrum of people in every community across the state.

DDL believes a renewed focus on lifelong learning can help develop a more skilled workforce that is better able to compete in the future. DDL will continue to combat unemployment and low literacy by creating job training and education centers (Job/Learning Labs) in four anchor libraries which are located in the most economically underserved areas, in the Dover, Georgetown, Seaford, and Wilmington libraries.

The four PCC anchor locations are in areas of high need; and have the capabilities and space needed to impact a broad swath of the population. All four cities have median annual household incomes that are 8-19% below the 2004 U.S. average of \$44,684. The main school districts of Dover, Seaford, and Wilmington rank first in their counties for high school dropout rates (7% in Dover, 9% in Seaford, and 11% in Wilmington versus a U.S. average of 4%; Georgetown's rate is 4%), indicating that there is a large target market for educational programs.

In this project, the central job/learning lab locations have been selected based on the demographics of greatest need; as the need also exists throughout the state, PCC services will be available at every library. The librarians headquartered at the anchor labs will coordinate services among the satellite libraries in the corresponding county and among the other Job/Learning Labs in the state.

DDL is working with a number of partners in both the public and private sector to develop and deliver a robust schedule of training programs and educational activities. These partners will be providing trainers and programs for DDL's BTOP project, thereby allowing them to impact more people at minimum cost. DDL's

Job/Learning Labs not only provide broadband access, training, equipment, and awareness to vulnerable and potentially underserved populations, but also focus specifically on improving workforce skills, thereby stimulating demand for economic growth and job creation.

### **National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)**

NTIA is providing funding to Delaware Division of Libraries and numerous other organizations to fund comprehensive broadband infrastructure projects, public computer centers and sustainable broadband adoption projects via its Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration is an agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce that serves as the executive branch agency principally responsible for advising the President on telecommunications and information policies. In this role, NTIA frequently works with other Executive Branch agencies to develop and present the Administration's position on these issues. Since its creation in 1978, NTIA has been at the cutting edge of critical issues. In addition to representing the Executive Branch in both domestic and international telecommunications and information policy activities, NTIA also manages the federal use of spectrum, performs cutting-edge telecommunications research and engineering, including resolving technical telecommunications issues for the Federal government and private sector, and administers infrastructure and public telecommunications facilities grants.

The Delaware Division of Libraries (DDL), through the E-Rate program and now the BTOP grant, are committed to harnessing the power of broadband technology to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and help lay the foundation for long-term prosperity for all Delawareans.

### **Sustaining the Grant Through E-Rate**

E-Rate – or more precisely, the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism – makes discounts available to eligible schools and libraries for telecommunication services, Internet access, and internal connections. The purpose of the program is to ensure that schools and libraries have access to affordable telecommunications and information services. Delaware has entered into its second year in participating in the E-Rate program and is one of very few states to implement this program statewide. Through the E-Rate program, the DDL was able to secure a 69% discount on telecommunication services. These savings were then passed on to the Delaware public libraries.

In a distressed economy and job market, now more than ever, libraries find themselves on the frontline for people seeking help. Through the BTOP grant and with the sustainable support of the E-Rate discounts, the DDL will expand broadband access through the Job/Learning Labs in libraries across the state by leveraging unique partnerships between libraries and social service organizations to combat unemployment through workforce development and educational programs.

## COMMENTS FROM THE FOUNDATION

Jill Nishi, Deputy Director, U.S. Libraries  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Dear Library Supporter:

On behalf of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, I would like to thank you for attending today's important event. We are pleased that you have joined your state library agency, library colleagues, project partners, and other community leaders to discuss and launch a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). It has been an honor to support state library agencies in their work to secure federal stimulus funding that will expand critical access to broadband in your state through public libraries—access that will enable more people to benefit from employment, education, and e-government opportunities online.

Public libraries play a critical role in connecting Americans to technology and the Internet. More than one-third of Americans ages 14 and older—roughly 77 million people—used a public library computer or wireless connection to access the Internet last year to find employment, further their education, and seek important health information.<sup>1</sup> But too many libraries struggle to provide the high-quality online access their patrons need. More support and funding is needed to ensure that libraries can continue to provide broadband connections, as well as the training and resources people need to benefit from all the Internet has to offer.

We are excited about the work you and your partners are embarking on together. This meeting is an important step toward improving Internet access to libraries in your state, and more importantly, enhancing the programs and services your library offers by leveraging technology and innovative partnerships.

We challenge you to take full advantage of your time together today and in the months ahead. Push yourself to build new relationships and collaborate with your colleagues, and commit to keeping access to high-speed Internet in libraries a priority.

Thank you for supporting public libraries and for your leadership in helping them sustain high-quality access to the Internet. I wish you the best of luck in your work.

Sincerely,

Jill Nishi  
Deputy Director, U.S. Libraries  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

<sup>1</sup> “Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries,” University of Washington Information School. 2010.