

Florida Broadband Projects

DISCUSSION DRAFT ONLY

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Community Based Health Information Networks (CBHIN)

Abstract

This \$9-11 million statewide project would design, deploy, and implement local Community Based Health Information Networks (CBHINs) in partnerships with county health departments, community organizations and individuals (e.g., senior centers, clinics, health professionals, etc.), public libraries and other organizations. The goal of the CBHINs would be to increase Florida residents' awareness of, and access to, consumer health information and local health services. CBHINs are especially interested in (1) increasing residents and especially vulnerable populations' access to, and use of, consumer health information; (2) assisting community residents to take better advantage of local health and medical resources, services, and programs; and (3) utilizing various forms of health information technologies in the provision of these services. Through the purchase of increased broadband and the funding of support staff, the creation of CBHINs statewide would address several priorities outlined in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA):

- Create 500-700 jobs in a number of different areas;
- Modernize Florida's Information Technology (IT) infrastructure;
- Increase access to consumer health information;
- Inject increased broadband capacity in local communities; and
- Better protect Florida residents who are underserved and in rural areas.¹

In a state where 33 of its 67 counties are formally designated as "rural,"² these networks would provide much needed assistance to vulnerable and underserved Floridians, by bridging the digital divide and providing access to often underutilized services by target populations. In addition, these networks could assist in the collection of critical population data to inform current and future public health policy, as well as coordinate the provision of health services to the most vulnerable in times of crisis. One especially telling statistic from the Florida Health Disparities Strategic Plan 2008-2011, describes the percentage of Floridians without health insurance: White 16.3; Black 25.5; Hispanic 42.1.³ To assist in the effort to address this and other health disparities, the State Library and Archives of Florida, the Florida Department of Health (DOH), and local County Health Departments (CHDs), and others would partner together to provide access to a range of consumer health resources and services through local CBHINs.⁴

¹ Source: <http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/frequently-asked-questions#8>

² Source: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/workforce/ruralhealth/ruralhealthhome.html>

³ Source: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/minority/pdfs_and_word_docs/2008MHStrategicPlanHealthReport.pdf

⁴ NOTE: These organizations are being proposed for involvement and have not agreed as yet to participate.

Example programs and services that might be provided with the assistance of the CBHINs include the following:

- Advance new outreach programs for underserved and/or vulnerable populations;
- Provide trusted information services that promote health literacy, and the reduction of health disparities, in communities throughout Florida;
- Provide trained librarians to serve communities and assure deployment of consumer based health information programs and training;
- Promote the awareness, and use, of library services through the World Wide Web to obtain health information (topical and personal);
- Test and evaluate digital infrastructure improvements, which would enable ubiquitous access to health information in homes, schools, libraries and work places via various personal mobile devices, such as laptops, cell phones and/or PDAs;
- Create partnerships between the CBHINs and local community colleges to provide face-to-face and distance education related to consumer health information and local health-related services;
- Work collaboratively with local emergency response providers to identify vulnerable individuals and assist in the provision of emergency health information and services;
- Provide access to broadband infrastructure to be used by community members to obtain up-to-date health information, as well as support educational programs and digital teleconferencing/telemedicine.

These, and additional programs and services, may vary and expand depending on the needs of the local community.

A number of benefits would result from the successful implementation of the project:

- Healthier and better informed residents through increased awareness, and appropriate utilization, of local services;
- Increased broadband capacity in public libraries, county health departments, and selected community organizations;
- Workforce creation and development;
- Enhanced consumer health information resources and services made available to Florida residents through the Florida Electronic Library (FEL) and by other means;
- Leveraging statewide consumer health information and services for local communities; and
- The organization of a community “safety net,” reducing the cost for the provision of services.

County health departments and local community organizations, particularly those serving rural communities, would receive much needed aid from a range of health and information professionals in the adoption of Web based services, as one way to reach otherwise underserved local populations.

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