



FLORIDA LEARNING ALLIANCE

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August 11, 2009

The Honorable Larry Strickling
Assistant Secretary of Commerce
Administrator
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

I write this letter to express the support of the Florida Learning Alliance for the Division of Library and Information Services, Florida Department of State application for federal broadband grant money under the NTIA Public Computing Centers - ***Florida's Broadband Enabled Public Library Services***.

As Executive Director of the Florida Learning Alliance, a non-profit organization comprised of 33 rural school districts, I believe that this proposal will ultimately result in increased services and educational opportunities to our underserved school districts across Florida. It will help to ensure that our students and parents in the rural areas are no longer victims of the digital divide.

For our students in rural underserved areas, public computing centers in libraries are essential to their ability to access educational resources. For parents who cannot afford technology, it provides a means to communicate with teachers, obtain services for their children, and solve real-life problems. Public computing centers located in libraries are safe, accessible and strategically located.

This project seeks to increase the capacity of Florida public libraries to provide access to electronic government (E-government) services and to heighten the ability of public libraries to participate in emergency management activities. In many communities, public libraries are key local institutions that provide many residents with access to online services. Furthermore, they often play important roles in helping residents in preparing and responding to emergencies and disasters. Through a significant investment in broadband connectivity, information technology infrastructure and training (including training in emergency management activities and information, and Internet safety for children and parents), this project will increase the institutional capacity of public libraries to play these key roles in

their communities. This project will also achieve several key stimulus priorities associated with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). They are:

- Simulate local economies through job creation
- Modernize the computing capacity of public library facilities
- Increase broadband access to the digital divide
- Improve residents access to and use of E-government services
- Mitigate the impact of disasters such as hurricanes on Florida residents

These numerous benefits to the state of Florida are in concert with the state goals of the BTOP program as set forth in the NTIA Notice of Funding Opportunity, released in the Federal Register, July 9, 2009.

Thank you .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary K. Bedford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mary K. Bedford
Executive Director
Florida Learning Alliance, Inc.