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Welcome to the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) Update! This regular e-mail provides recipients with information on the program, best practices, tips, and project highlights. For more information on BTOP, please visit www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandusa and www2.ntia.doc.gov/management.

★ Program Update

BTOP Projects Promote Workforce Development and Economic Growth

The U.S. economy increasingly demands workers with Internet and computer skills. According to DigitalLiteracy.gov, more than 90 percent of working Americans use new communications technologies every day, and nearly two-thirds of working Americans use the Internet as an integral part of their jobs.¹ Internet and computer skills, as well as high-speed Internet access, are often required to pursue, apply for, and obtain jobs.

BTOP projects are helping promote the development of the U.S. workforce by providing high-speed Internet access to community anchor institutions, training workers, offering job search and placement workshops, and enhancing prospects for small businesses to develop markets beyond their local communities. Project recipients, subrecipients, and partners are not only boosting workforce skills but also increasing job opportunities through their broadband initiatives.

For example, Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA) projects support broadband education, awareness, and training, particularly among vulnerable populations. The C.K. Blandin Foundation, through the BTOP-funded Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities initiative, is facilitating broadband adoption among rural Minnesota residents, businesses, and communities. In the first quarter of this year, the foundation's project partner, University of Minnesota Extension, led 44 training events involving 443 businesses and provided technical assistance to 13 businesses.

"Four months ago I was in a shelter with my five year old son. I was completely computer illiterate. I wanted to learn because it would open up my opportunities for jobs. I completed a course [and] they helped me with my job search. I now have a job."

—Julia, Las Vegas (Las Vegas Urban League, PCC recipient)

Training is also integral to the Public Computer Center (PCC) project of the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino. The project is enhancing services at public computer centers in public housing developments in this California county. The centers offer job training ranging from basic computer skills to certification programs, such as the National Retail Foundation's certification in customer service. Through the first quarter of this year, the computer centers helped place 91 program graduates (public housing residents) in local jobs. Additionally, the PCC grant has created six full-time and six part-time jobs for staff in the computer centers, as well as several jobs for contractors related to job training, data collection, and security.

Comprehensive Community Infrastructure (CCI) projects under BTOP also contribute to workforce development. CCI projects are providing new or improved broadband service to libraries, schools, and hospitals, as well as enhanced Internet speeds and availability to community members and local businesses. In addition, many CCI projects have hired new staff or construction crews and provided installation and technology training to workers. The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, for instance, began construction in April on more than 110 miles of aerial fiber-optic cable. This is the first phase of a project that will activate 570 miles of fiber-optic network to link more than 70 percent of the 27,000 square miles of the Navajo Nation homeland across parts of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico, where most residents only have dial-up connections. In the second quarter of this year, the project added more than a dozen staff. The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority is also providing lifelong learning opportunities and training to its employees, who are Navajo Nation citizens, to install and maintain these new technologies. The authority is working with technology suppliers and partners to use classroom instruction, webinars, mentors, coaches, and hands-on training to sustain the infrastructure when construction is done.

See the project highlights for other examples of jobs creation and career training.

¹ Pew Internet and American Life Project, Most Working Americans Now Use The Internet or Email at Their Jobs, Sept. 24, 2008, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2008/Networked-Workers/1-Summary-of-Findings.aspx>.



★ Project Highlights



Deltacom Inc.

In May 2011, Deltacom, Inc., now part of EarthLink, Inc., completed Phase II of the East Tennessee Middle Mile Fiber Broadband project. Extending from Knoxville to Bristol, the 131 miles of newly lit fiber-optic cable are part of a BTOP-funded 544-mile network that will allow high-speed broadband connectivity to more than 34,000 households, 5,000 businesses, and 270 anchor institutions, including educational and healthcare facilities. The network will enable residents, businesses, and service providers to connect to the Internet with speeds up to 10 Gbps. Phase I of construction ended in March 2011 and included a 343-mile fiber-optic route from Nashville to Knoxville and Knoxville to Chattanooga. BTOP funds have also allowed Deltacom to hire vendors, which have established 56 part-time positions, equivalent to 13 full-time staff members, for construction. Deltacom will start the final phase of the project this summer. Deltacom estimates that it will begin offering Internet service to the entire project area by December 2011. For more information about the organization and the project, visit www2.ntia.doc.gov/grantees/DeltaCom.



Monterey County Office of Education

The Central Coast Broadband Consortium Public Computing Alliance, led by the Monterey County Office of Education, is working to open three new public computer centers, upgrade 26 existing centers, and offer free training to residents of the Salinas River Valley region of California. The alliance, made up of educational organizations, libraries, and other community groups, hopes that improved broadband access will help address the needs of an area where more than half of the population speaks a language other than English at home, and high school graduation rates are low. On May 4, 2011, Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue joined the alliance in celebrating the reopening of the Chinatown Community Learning Center. The center's 16 lab stations are used to provide free training to the community. Classes include an introduction to the digital world as well as training for Spanish speakers and job seekers. Students say the center feels like a community and that classes are creating opportunities for them by helping them to develop skills and rejoin the workforce. For additional information about the organization and the project, visit www.connectionmonterey.org.



State Library of Louisiana

The State Library of Louisiana's BTOP project, Louisiana Libraries Connecting People to Their Potential, has held more than 1,200 free digital literacy and software classes and will supply 640 laptop computers to libraries throughout the state by the end of the year. With these efforts, the State Library seeks to improve the job skills of Louisiana citizens and provide an economic foundation for strengthening Louisiana communities. The free classes provide workers and job seekers the technology skills needed to succeed in the digital economy, including professional-grade classes in widely used business software. Louisianans also can take classes such as Getting Your Job Search Started, Mastering the Interview, and Business Etiquette. In addition to the classes, the State Library also created the Louisiana Jobs & Career Center website, www.lajacc.org, which offers career tools and displays searchable job postings for the public. For more information about the organization and the project, visit www.lajacc.org, www.homeworkla.org, or www.state.lib.la.us.

★ Extending the Impact

As BTOP projects continue to progress, recipients are identifying best practices in a number of areas. Each month, *BTOP Update* will reprint some of these practices to help benefit other projects and leverage the lessons learned more broadly.

Use Existing Resources

The **New Mexico State Library** promotes its Internet training program by using existing community resources. The SBA recipient has partnered with community leaders and given them credit for the success of the program, which ensures that they take ownership and that training attendance is high. In addition, "It is extremely important that registrants are called before classes start in order to ensure maximum participation at training events."



Prequalify Contractors and Try Various Media

Columbia County, a CCI recipient in Georgia, notes that the construction process can be accelerated by prequalifying contractors and staking the routes during the environmental assessment. Meanwhile, the county has used traditional and new media to promote its project. The county developed an article introducing the project and included it in the local water utility's direct mail insert, which reaches some 44,000 households. Columbia County also set up a website and a Facebook page to communicate project milestones and share pictures and videos about the project. It created a Twitter account that has more than 500 followers. In addition, the county uses RSS feeds and text updates to keep citizens informed of project progress.

Build Partnerships

PCC recipient **Sante Fe Civic Housing Authority** suggests taking advantage of all available city and state government resources, as well as partnering with other non-profit organizations. SFCHA has found that with the "help of other non-profit organizations, government agencies, educational resources, and community outreach programs, individuals can have access to education and resources that will enable them to obtain better job/life skills." The authority has attracted additional users to its new computer center by advertising in Sante Fe Community College's registration flyers. SFCHA has made it a priority to get children and teenagers access to the public computer center and the Internet through summer and afterschool programs. SFCHA is also establishing computer classes for children and teenagers at the facility.

★ Telling the BTOP Story

Join us in telling the public about your project's accomplishments. You can help by doing one or more of the following:

- ▶ Please continue telling us about your project's milestones and results for use in articles for the BTOP website. Remember to send photos and video when available. Refer to submission guidelines at www2.ntia.doc.gov/ManagementResources#resources.
- ▶ Contact the NTIA Office of Public Affairs if you would like to submit a blog post to appear on the home page of the BTOP website, www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandusa. A number of projects have already submitted guest posts, reporting on project progress, special events, and general observations. Contact Public Affairs at press@ntia.doc.gov or 202-482-0147.
- ▶ Stay connected and continue the conversation with NTIA social media. Check out our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ntiagov. Follow us on Twitter at @NTIAgov: <https://twitter.com/NTIAgov>.

★ Tips and Tools

New to BTOPdiscuss

BTOPdiscuss, an online bulletin board where BTOP recipients can share information and best practices, has seen a healthy number of user interactions since it launched on May 18, 2011. Grant recipients may find the following recently posted conversations helpful as their projects advance:

- ▶ **Program Eval: Determining an Accurate Baseline:** Recipients have started a discussion thread to provide suggestions on how to determine an accurate baseline of current broadband users. Many SBA recipients have created phone surveys and Google forms to gather more accurate data. Suggestions on collecting and analyzing subscriber data should be posted to <https://forum.citizen.apps.gov/btopdiscuss/viewtopic.php?f=47&p=131#p131>.
- ▶ **General BTOP Fact Sheet and Slides:** As BTOP recipients continue to lay the foundation for a digital nation, there has been a steady increase in public interest and media requests to understand the magnitude of each BTOP project. To meet these needs, NTIA created two documents to help recipients communicate how their projects are making a difference in improving broadband access and adoption across the United States. The BTOP Fact Sheet provides information about BTOP and the Recovery Act, the type of grants funded, and the program's overall goals and objectives. The BTOP Introduction Slides reiterate this same information in a PowerPoint presentation format. Please feel free to use these documents as a reference when discussing the program or creating your own outreach materials. <https://forum.citizen.apps.gov/btopdiscuss/viewtopic.php?f=53&t=165>



New Online Resources

The following materials and information were recently posted to the BTOP website. Hyperlinks that go directly to the materials are listed below:

- ▶ **Federal Interest Requirements Fact Sheet – Version 2:** An updated overview of Federal Interest requirements applicable to all BTOP recipients. The document provides general guidance on the Federal Interest documentation requirements as they pertain to Federal financial assistance awards under BTOP. http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/fact_sheet_federal_interest_082510_v2_1.pdf
- ▶ **FY11 Monitoring and Assessment Plan – Version 1.1:** An updated overview of NTIA's monitoring and site visit plan. The document defines the programmatic monitoring activities, describes the assessment criteria, and outlines procedures for documenting correction activities. http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/btop_fy11_monitoring_and_assessment_plan.pdf
- ▶ **Guidance for Protection of Human Subjects:** An overview of the procedures and requirements for protection of human subjects participating in federally funded research. The Department of Commerce must certify that the research elements of a project adequately protect human services. http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/btop_hsr_guidance.pdf
- ▶ **Guidance for Protection of Human Subjects FAQs:** A frequently asked questions document about the protection of human subjects participating in federally funded research. http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/btop_hsr_faqs.pdf
- ▶ **Guidance Webinar for Protection of Human Subjects:** A webinar presentation given by Laura Breeden, NTIA Program Director for Public Computing and Broadband Adoption, outlining the regulations, exemptions, and requirements for protecting human subjects in federally funded research. http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/btop_human_subjects_webinar_060111.pdf

★ Frequently Asked Questions: Audit Thresholds

As part of subrecipient monitoring, recipients need to ensure that their subrecipients are compliant with audit requirements. Subrecipients who receive funds in amounts above the audit thresholds (*i.e.*, \$100K for for-profits, \$500k+ in fiscal year for all others) are also required to submit audits. Recipients should also review all findings of subrecipient audits.

What are the audit thresholds for Federal funds for recipients?

- ▶ **For-Profits:** Received an award worth \$100,000 or more—see BTOP For-Profit Audit Special Award Condition and BTOP Program-Specific Audit Guidelines: http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/btop_program_specific_audit_guidelines_042711.pdf
- ▶ **All Others:** Expended over \$500,000 in a fiscal year—see OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/a133/a133_revised_2007.pdf

Are for-profit subrecipients subject to the same audit thresholds as the primary recipient?

Yes. Subrecipients are subject to contract flow-down requirements from BTOP recipients. As a result, for-profit subrecipients of for-profit recipients are subject to the \$100,000 threshold of the for-profit audit Special Award Condition. For-profit subrecipients of non-profits or governmental entities are subject to the \$500,000 threshold in DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions § D.01.b (March 2008).

Which audit threshold applies to states, local governments, and non-profit organizations?

States, local governments, and non-profit organizations receiving BTOP awards either as a recipient or subrecipients are subject to the \$500,000 Federal funds threshold established under OMB Circular A-133 and not the \$100,000 threshold in these Program-Specific Audit Guidelines.

What if the for-profit recipient has not expended any Federal funds during the audit period?

It is possible, in this instance, that the Schedule of Funds Sources will contain zeros for the audit period. However, because an important aspect of each audit is related to compliance and internal controls, it serves as a valuable monitoring tool for NTIA. As a result, the recipient must have the required audit submitted by its due date.

For additional guidance, please review the Audit section on our website: <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/compliance#audit>

If you have any comments, suggestions, or ideas for the next issue of the *BTOP Update*, please submit them to your FPO. We look forward to hearing from you!

