

## **The Florida Rural Broadband Education Campaign**

### Florida Learning Alliance

Like ubiquitous electricity, water, and phone utility service, broadband is essential for living and working in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Having broadband connectivity does not just mean being connected to the Internet; it means being connected to the economy, to society, and to the benefits of the digital age. Educating citizens about the benefits of broadband will provide a means for individuals to learn to access and manage essential information by utilizing technology in their daily lives. Without broadband education and awareness, enhanced broadband infrastructure will not be fully utilized and integrated into the lives of Florida citizens.

The Florida Rural Broadband Education Campaign (the Campaign), a collaboration among the Florida Learning Alliance, the State Library of Florida, and the Agency for Health Care Administration, will develop and deliver outreach programs and training activities through online, television, and in-person instruction. This project's work will coordinate with other BTOP projects to educate the vulnerable residents of Florida's most adversely affected areas about services and economic opportunities available to them via Broadband access achieved by infrastructure enhancements. The project will work closely with State of Florida statewide and regional mapping projects to identify the most underserved areas and coordinate with the State Library's Public Computing Center grant to provide training venues and Broadband access.

The strength of the Campaign lies in the partnership between the three agencies – and their currently existing commitment to serve the rural areas of the state. The Florida Learning Alliance was founded in 1998 with the primary purpose of removing disparity in educational opportunities in the 33 rural school districts/counties it encompasses. The Agency for Health Care Administration – with a mission of Better Health Care for all Floridians – provides consumer information on important health issues and costs. And the State Library coordinates and helps to fund activities of public libraries throughout the state, and provides many rural citizens with broadband connectivity through their computing centers.

The Campaign will begin with the development of curriculum for broadband educational modules. Each agency (the Florida Learning Alliance, the State Libraries, and the Agency for Health Care Administration) will contribute content to meet the needs of its given area and audience. For example, health care addresses practitioners and customers and therefore requires two different approaches and technical components. Education content will need to meet the needs of students, parents, teachers, school librarians, and administrators. Public library content will need to serve librarians and patrons. The Campaign collaboration guarantees that each participating agency will contribute so that a integrated, comprehensive broadband education and training program is designed and delivered online, face-to-face, and via broadband-independent means like paper brochures, DVD tutorials and instructional television.

This training will begin with a "train-the-trainer" (TTT) model that allows staff (teacher-trainers) and stakeholders from the three agencies to be educated to become trainers about broadband. Once they

have completed their training, they will then facilitate the training of the primary beneficiaries (teacher-implementers) of this project, who, in turn will educate the citizens of the target regions. The TTT model is self-sustaining since it allows not just for the learning of content, it allows for the acquisition of skills and information which will allow the beneficiaries to, in turn, teach others about broadband.

The Campaign continues with an emphasis on building awareness in the general public with statewide public service announcements, television programming, web-based and written material distributed in schools and libraries, website links through hospitals, clinics, and state agencies, health IT Regional Extension Centers, and presentations to key stakeholders in schools, libraries, health care facilities, and venues. This outreach will also provide needs assessment data on public knowledge about broadband, the services it facilitates, subscribership, and their major areas of interest about broadband.

The design and execution of the project will provide a broad, yet comprehensive, ongoing educational program utilizing the expertise of instructional designers, content specialists, educators, and trainers. The program will initially employ 8 teacher-trainers on a full-time basis. As the Campaign progresses, it is anticipated that up to 4,000 individuals will receive compensation for training others – providing a stream of revenue into the rural areas.

The Campaign will also produce tangible products that can sustain the Campaign for broadband awareness and training after the grant funds end. All Campaign printed materials, on-line modules and related educational materials will continue to be useful after the life cycle of the grant. In addition, the Campaign website – an extensive repository of broadband information, training and on-line modules will remain functional for four years (2 years during the grant cycle, and 2 years beyond the end of the grant).

The Campaign, with its combination of trainers, materials, on-line modules, television, and public outreach is expected to reach over 2 million Floridians over the grant life cycle, resulting in increased awareness, utilization and adoption of broadband technology throughout the rural underserved areas of Florida.