



2010 Final Report for the California Emerging Technology Fund

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Name of Project: *Get Connected!* – Los Angeles County Hotline
Grant Number: 3398380
Start Date: November 2009 **End Date:** June 2010

I. Financial Summary

- Total Project Budget Spent: \$288,608
- CETF Grant Amount: \$100,000
- Percentage of Match Funds Raised against Goal (\$192,683): 118%
- Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: (Total Outcomes/Total Budget) \$ 11

II. Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

The purpose of this grant was to provide resources to the Information and Referral Federation of Los Angeles County also known as 211 LA County, to support the *Get Connected!* program by providing 211 services 24 hours – 7 days a week for the duration of the grant. *Get Connected!* is a public awareness program of the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF). The grant enabled 211 staff to provide information and referral services to assist callers adopt broadband and provide technology related referrals to close the Digital Divide. This process includes referrals to both CETF and non-CETF funded programs. 211 LA County performed this task by actively screening callers to gauge their interests in adopting broadband at home and referring them to digital literacy programs in Los Angeles County.

Goals and Objectives Summary

All goals and objectives have been completed. In all cases 211 LA exceeded the targeted outcome levels for the measurable objectives. 211 LA exceeded the number of callers screened for interest by 16%, CETF referrals provided to screened callers by 257%, and attempted follow-up was exceeded by 56%.

Project Outcomes Summary

211 LA County exceeded the performance expectation for each measurable goal. The expectation was to screen 25,000 callers for interest, provide *Get Connected!* related referrals to callers who expressed interest and conduct follow-up to determine referral outcomes.

| Outcome Description | Actual | Goal | Percent Completed |
|--|--------|--------|-------------------|
| Screen 25,000 callers averaging 3,125 calls per month. | 28,929 | 25,000 | 116% |
| Provide CETF related referrals on a minimum of 10% of screened calls. A total of 9,240 callers received CETF related referrals | 3,296 | 9,240 | 357% |
| Conduct 250 follow-up calls. | 389 | 250 | 156% |

III. Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

- 211 LA County had 3 outcomes and exceeded the goal in each of the outcome areas.

Delineation of Deliverables and Outcomes Not Achieved and Explanation

- All deliverables and outcomes 211 LA were achieved.

Discussion of Other Positive Results from Project

A major success of this project has been the ability to connect low-income individuals and families of Los Angeles County to reduced-cost refurbished computers. 211 LA was able to achieve this through managed partnerships with a limited number of existing agencies. In addition, underprivileged residents were connected to varying free and low-cost Internet services. Many of those who benefited from this would not otherwise have been able to remain connected to the Internet, and therefore to the economy and job market in general. Here are two success stories:

- *One client called 211 LA County seeking assistance with a wheelchair ramp for his home. He lives alone and receives Social Security and SSI. After providing Mr. Gantz with referrals to meet his immediate need, 211 staff screened for interest in Get Connected! and discovered that he could no longer afford to keep his Internet service. Low-cost Internet service referrals were provided and upon conducting a follow-up call 211 LA was informed that he was successful in obtaining low-cost Internet service. His statement was, "It's even faster than what I had before and with an affordable price tag."*
- *One client called 211 seeking counseling services for her daughter. Counseling referrals were provided and while screening for interest in Get Connected! and discovered that they did not have a computer because they could not afford one. As a secondary service Get Connected! referrals were provided and through a follow-up call 211 LA learned that Ms. Alcuka was able to obtain a low-cost computer for \$165.00 through Computers 4 R Kids. The client was pleased with the outcome of what was initially a call to 211 for counseling.*

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

Identify Major Challenges to Successful Implementation

211 LA County faced three major challenges during the grant period concerning the following: introducing *Get Connected!* to the callers, locating computer distribution programs within Los Angeles County, and establishing a relationship with Internet Service Providers.

- Introducing CETF to callers was initially a challenge for staff. Callers contact 211 seeking assistance with health and human service related needs and introducing *Get Connected!* at first seemed unrelated and random. The majority of callers to 211 are economically disadvantaged and typically are seeking referrals to meet their immediate needs and may not recognize the long term benefits of digital access. As a result some callers consider technology as a luxury rather than a necessity.
- Locating agencies that provide free/low cost computers to residents in Los Angeles County is challenging for the Resource Department. Technology related resources have always been a part of the database however; programs that provide free/low cost computers are limited and have not historically been a targeted area of need within the health and human service field.
- It was necessary to add Internet service providers to the Resource Database for this project. It was challenging to establish contact with the appropriate company representative in order to accurately reflect

detailed information on services provided, fees, contact information, etc. Many low-cost Internet service providers do not offer direct customer service.

Discuss Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

- To address the challenges with introducing *Get Connected!* to callers seeking other services a protocol was developed and staff received training on ways to introduce *Get Connected!* to callers who were not seeking technology related services. The training was very interactive and included role-playing and listening to recorded calls where staff were successful in introducing *Get Connected!*. After the initial training a follow-up meeting was held where staff shared with each other their experiences with the callers and the various methods that they used to engage the caller in *Get Connected!* services. In addition, staff was given daily and weekly goals, immediate feedback on their progress and regular coaching. Practice and suggested language enabled staff to perfect the transition to the *Get Connected!* screening and they found as a result, that callers were actually interested and willing to participate and learn more.
- To address the challenges of locating agencies that provide free/low cost computers, CETF provided some leads on potential resources and as a result 211 LA was able to add three agencies to its database. The Resource Department continually tries to expand this area in the database by networking with known agencies and conducting online research.
- To address the challenges presented with establishing contact with Internet service providers, 211 LA County is in the process of reviewing and revising its internal database inclusion process. The inclusion process outlines the steps that the resource department staff follows when they are attempting to add a new agency or program to the database. The current process includes steps which could be difficult if an Internet service provider did not have an available contact person or address. The Resource Department had to employ phone based contacts rather than sending a standard profile form used to gather information on potential agencies.

V. Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson #1: Without regular training, consistent feedback and follow-up, adherence to new protocols tends to decrease after a period of time. For example, as calls are received it is easy for staff to focus on the caller's stated need and forget to explore the caller's interest in *Get Connected!* related services. The *Get Connected!* team benefited from more focused leadership support. A Team Coach was assigned to the team and provided regular "one-on-one" individual coaching and training to team members to ensure the retention of protocol knowledge and adherence to performance standards.

Lesson #2: Staff training on how to introduce *Get Connected!* services tailored and customized to the caller's situation was key. The Team Coach worked with staff individually on effectively identifying when to interject and introduce the benefits of *Get Connected!*.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Expanding the Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

Based on the successes that 211 LA County has experienced, 211 LA recommended utilizing the 211 provider network throughout the state of California to assist CETF in its effort to alleviate the disparity of the Digital Divide among the target populations. 2-1-1s regularly serve low-income, aging, disabled, and minority populations and therefore would be an ideal vehicle for promoting *Get Connected!* services within the community.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Maintaining close communication with the CETF Program Officer as it relates to resources is important. 211 LA County was able to develop new resources from leads that were provided by the CETF Program Officer. As the

Get Connected! screening project is expanded throughout the state, this level of communication will be essential in ensuring the overall success of the project.

VI. Grant Agreement Requirements

Purchased Equipment

The project purchased 10 telephone headsets at a total cost of \$1,534.49. These headsets were necessary for the telephone operators assigned to the CETF project to use when answering phone calls.

| Date | Description | Purpose | Amount | How it will be used. |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------|---|
| 11/20/2009 | 10 Telephone Headsets | Hands free call handling | \$1,534.49 | Headsets will continue to be used by 211 operators handling CETF related calls. |

CETF of Grant Funds

All of the CETF grants funds received to date have been expended. After final payment of \$5,000 (5% retained by CETF) there will be a balance of \$4,075.42. The agreement with CETF is that the Grantee (211 LA County) will keep these funds and any interest earned on the account. These funds will be used to continue supporting activities related to the CETF grant.