



EmpowerNet California Final Report November 2010

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Name of Project: EmpowerNet California
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I. Financial Summary

- Total Project Budget Spent: (Attachment B contains the detail.) \$353,790
- CETF Grant Amount: \$250,887
- Additional Grant: (if applicable) N/A
- Percentage of Match Funds Raised against Goal (\$750,000): 0%
- Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: (Total Outcomes/Total Budget) n/a

II. Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

EmpowerNet California (ENC), a collaborative initially comprised of five successful social enterprises, capacity building, and community technology organizations, proposes to create a comprehensive Toolkit for statewide distribution that provides non-profit organizations in underserved communities with the capacity to create workforce development programs and dynamic IT training systems that are strengthened and sustained through IT social enterprises. A sixth member, serving a rural community will join EmpowerNet shortly after the project began. The collaborative members include: Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties, The Stride Center, Mission Language and Vocational School, CD Tech, the City of Firebaugh, and OCCUR.

In addition to the founding Collaborative members, subject matter and technical experts will assist ENC with identifying best practices for inclusion in, and production of, the Toolkit. As a web application, the ENC Toolkit will be readily customized to address the needs present in the many diverse, underserved communities in California; it will also be readily modified in response to rapidly changing technology conditions.

Going beyond standard print-based how-to kits and tools, the ENC Toolkit will address the steps needed for community organizations throughout the state to launch locally relevant training programs and social enterprises that provide sustainable technology education, assistance, service, and low-cost hardware and software dissemination. Building on their own successful experience assisting underserved communities with accessing broadband and other technologies, ENC members will develop a Toolkit that assists other communities in replicating the successful elements of their experiences while creating programs that respond to and leverage local conditions, cultures, assets and resources. The Toolkit will be modular and web-based (with major components disseminated in hard copy format as well).

EmpowerNet California conservatively estimates, however, that in the first 24 months of Toolkit introduction 1,500 individuals will be impacted. Given the web-based nature of Toolkit distribution, EmpowerNet projects that the number of adopting organizations and individuals impacted will grow at strong rates during subsequent years. A key element of the Toolkit's design will be the incorporation of metrics that will enable EmpowerNet and adopting organizations to reliably project program outcomes based on the utilization of research-based best practices.

Goals and Objectives Summary

All of the goals and objectives have been completed. The goal to develop a high functioning collaborative was successful. The collaborative brought in a rural partner, Firebaugh, and replaced the managing partner (CTOC) with a project manager, Luke Kreinberg, and another organization, CD Tech. The objective to develop an advisory board was completed but the board was not utilized throughout the toolkit development. The goal to develop a Toolkit was successfully completed. The goal and objectives related to developing a marketing plan for the rollout of the Toolkit was completed but rollout of the marketing plan was only partially completed. The rollout was not fully executed as plans for Phase 2 was solidified and funding was confirmed. The goal to obtain funding for the future was achieved but the funding took significantly longer than expected. The goal and objectives related to the measuring of the impact and evaluation tools was not completed.

Project Outcomes Summary

Outcome Description	Actual	Goal	Percent Completed
Development of a strong collaborative	1	1	100%
Production of an interactive, web-based toolkit	1	1	100%
(Phase 2) Introduction of the toolkit to 1500 individuals	Phase 2	1500	n/a

IV. Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

- The organizations involved developed a strong, high functioning collaborative. Each of the organizations appointed one individual as a representative, all of whom were dedicated and committed to developing a great Toolkit. The collaborative hired a very effective project manager who facilitated regular meetings and coordinated work between the collaborative members and the consultants.
- The collaborative developed a web-based toolkit which represents the best and promising practices of the organizations involved. The website includes “Program Toolkits” in the following areas: Workforce Development, Labor Market Studies, Community Technology Centers, Social Ventures, and Dynamic Partnerships. Under each of these topics, users find “Program Snapshots” which provide best and promising practices on this topic as well as downloadable tools. The website also includes a “Profile of Success” for each of the 6 organizations in the collaborative.

Delineation of Deliverables and Outcomes Not Achieved and Explanation

The collaborative fell short on a few deliverables.

- First, the collaborative did not fully utilize the Advisory Board that was established. The Advisory Board was launched during a meeting held simultaneously in Northern and Southern California. After this meeting, the Board was engaged individually and sporadically based on the members’ expertise.
- The collaborative did not achieve its deliverables related to the roll out of the Toolkit. Because funding was pending for longer than expected, the rollout/marketing plan was only partially executed. Now that funding has been secured, the rollout/marketing plan will be modified to match the evolution of the project in Phase 2.
- The collaborative did not achieve its objectives and deliverables related to developing impact metrics for the toolkit. The collaborative members felt the Toolkit alone would not have limited impact, was difficult to measure and it would have the most impact in conjunction with a training academy and learning community. These two elements are included in the funded Phase 2 project.

Discussion of Other Positive Results from Project

- This project brought together 6 organizations to share and discuss best practices and experiences, which would not have occurred without this project. The project made each organization's IT workforce program stronger because of the collaboration and access to new information.
- Phase 2, which includes a training academy and learning community were ideas born out of the designing of the web-based toolkit. We believe the training academy and learning community will significantly enhance the effectiveness of the web-based toolkit and drive the impact to scale much quicker than the toolkit alone.

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

Identify Major Challenges to Successful Implementation

- The collaboration functioned with the purpose of developing the Toolkit with each organization having equal accountability. This worked during the development stage but hindered the longer term vision of the Toolkit and EmpowerNet as an organization. With no organization in charge of ENC's future, the collaborative members had trouble imagining how a collaborative process could drive organization into the future.
- ENC did not fully utilize the Advisory Board as it was originally envisioned. Once the collaborative members got working on the Toolkit content and design, it was difficult to find time for the level of engagement required to bring the Advisory Board members into the fold.
- ENC applied for ARRA funding through CETF but did not apply for other funding. Since the first ARRA application was submitted within a few months of the launch of the Toolkit, the collaborative members felt it was reasonable to wait for a decision about this funding. The funding took much longer than anticipated, which put the project into limbo. Two models were discussed at length, the first model included the large grant applied for under ARRA and the second model was a significantly scaled back, boot strap version of the bigger vision. The collaborative members had difficulty executing the second model without (1) an organization stepping up to oversee ENC in the future (2) knowing that a large proposal was pending.

Discuss Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

- Once the Stride Center volunteered to oversee the Phase 2 implementation of ENC, the longer term vision became clearer and forward momentum began. ENC will now function independently of the collaborative members, while still utilizing the members as experts, consultants and advisors. ENC will be more agile and responsive to the customers' needs as the Phase 2 project rolls out. Also ENC is better poised to seek out additional funding.
- Some of the Advisory Board members were tapped individually for their expertise instead of trying to utilize the Board as a whole. The Advisory Board members were also part of the marketing/outreach plan in order to spread the word about the Toolkit.

V. Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson #1: A dynamic, community driven web-based Toolkit requires an organization and a person to take responsibility for the life of the product. The Toolkit we created is static and not reflective of the ever changing and new discoveries that are exciting in the IT workforce development world. Now that ENC has dedicated staff, the Toolkit will be used as a dynamic accompaniment to the training academy and the learning community that are in ENC's future.

Lesson #2: A collaborative with all members being equal in accountability worked for the duration of the defined project, but this model broke down when the future state of ENC was being discussed and tried to be

implemented. The Stride Center volunteered to take on responsibility of ENC and appointed ENC staff which was necessary for Phase 2 of the project to be implemented.

Lesson #3: Defining the impacts of a static website is difficult. The collaborative could not determine how to measure impacts of the Toolkit without additional engagement with the website users. Therefore, the collaborative designed a consulting model, a training academy model and a learning community model to accompany the Toolkit in order to be able to have real measurable engagement with the customers and therefore impact.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Expanding the Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

Recommendation #1: The Phase 2 plans do include plans for ENC to expand statewide. The staff is considering new organizations to engage with in order to build off of their contacts and connections in the areas where the current ENC collaborative members don't operate. ENC will host training academies in Northern and Southern California and the on-line learning community will have no geographic boundaries.

Recommendation #2: ENC is also considering funders and government organizations to engage with in order to make local contacts. Funders and local government organizations (e.g. Workforce Investment Boards) can point ENC staff to organizations that are potential academy customers.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Recommendation #1: None

VI. Grant Agreement Requirements

Purchased Equipment

N/A

CETF of Grant Funds

Of the original grant award, there is \$5,137 remaining. Goodwill recommends that CETF allow the transfer of these funds to The Stride Center for use in the ENC Phase 2 project.

CETF did authorize the transfer of funds and verify that it occurred.