Radio Bilingüe Final Report for the
California Emerging Technology Fund
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Name of Project: Get Connected!
Grant Number: 8010309RBGC
Start Date: June 2013   **End Date:** June 2017

I.   Financial Summary

- Total Project Budget Spent: $1,194,175
- CETF Grant Amount: $300,000
- Number of First-Time Adoptions Achieved: 964
- Percentage of Cash Match Funds Raised against Goal: $426,175*   101%
- Percentage of In-Kind Funds Raised against Goal: $468,000   200%
- Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: (Total Outcomes/Total Budget) $1,553

   * RB donated an additional $468,000 of in-kind support.

II.   Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

Radio Bilingüe (RB) collaborated with 211 CA (211) and later with the Office of Community Economic Development at California State University Fresno (OCED), and the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC), on the *Get Connected!* project. The overall goals of the project were to increase Latinos' access to broadband at home through low-cost service programs offered by ISP's and to improve their ability to access low-cost computers, broadband and digital literacy resources. RB's role was to produce and broadcast a comprehensive on-air radio campaign on its FM network stations in areas where 211 also operates service centers. RB's campaign reached a total of 12 counties -- including 8 in Central California, 2 in the Central Coast, and Imperial and Mendocino counties. Additionally, audiences in Sacramento, San Francisco and Alameda County were reached through some of our CETF project programs and spots that aired through a partnership with commercial network stations KIQI/KADT. The radio campaign consisted of: one-minute educational messages, testimonials, live talk shows, and on-air 12-hour day marathons to refer listeners to call 211 for information on available low-cost broadband service options in their area. RB also participated in outreach events at health fairs and community festivals in the San Joaquin Valley and Salinas Valley and engaged in outreach using postcards with the goal of encouraging people to call 211. The postcards were also distributed in the waiting rooms of Clínica Sierra Vista, a community clinic network in Fresno County. NHMC's role was to work with commercial Spanish-language radio and TV stations to get them to donate airtime for public service announcements on the importance of having access to broadband at home and directing people to call 211 for more information. NHMC's effort focused mostly in the Los Angeles area.

Initially the grant period was from June 1, 2013 to March 30, 2015, however, the end date was extended twice to June 15, 2017 once it was determined that it was going to be much more difficult to get people to subscribe to broadband usage at home. The project goals were modified accordingly as data collected by 211 showed that our initial estimates of how many calls and broadband subscriptions could be achieved were unrealistic. Additional work in the area of outreach and policy related to expansion of broadband infrastructure in California was added to RB's project.

Goals and Objectives Summary

All goals and objectives, per the modified agreement, were completed.

Completed goals and objectives included:

(1) Planned project with partners and established regular meetings.
(2) Produced radio campaign messages and programs repurposing content from the Broadband Awareness and Adoption (BAA) program when possible, and applied lessons learned during the BAA project (2010-2012).
(3) Broadcast on RB Network project productions and offered on-air platform to other CETF grantees trainings or services in RB's coverage area.
(4) Reached out at community and arts events such as: Health Fairs, concerts, trainings, etc.
(5) Reached out to targeted Title 1 Schools to promote broadband adoption including Comcast's Internet Essentials program in Fresno and Tulare counties.
(6) Participated in all CETF's Grantee meetings.

Completed Radio Productions included:

- 14 Línea Abierta news commentary Talk Shows.
- 14 Línea Abierta Shows Rebroadcast (9pm and 2am).
- 48 Network Public Affairs Programs (i.e. Comunidad Alerta, Placita Bilingüe, Rockin da House).
- 1800 Sixty-second radio spot broadcast (airings) in Spanish
- 700 Sixty-second radio spots broadcast (airings) in English
- 2 "Marathon Days"- 12 hours of live on-air campaign to promote broadband subscriptions and referrals to 211
- 6 La Hora Mixteca Shows (bilingual in Spanish and Mixteco)
- 4 educational Podcasts were changed to doing additional broadcast (airings) of short informational messages as well as the production and broadcast of 4 testimonials (short vignettes featuring personal experiences).

Project Outcomes Summary

Outcome Description	Actual	Goal	Percent Completed
Number of Adoptions for First-Time Subscribers (modified goal)	964	800	102%
Number of Adoptions for Reconnecting Subscribers	n/a	n/a	

III.   Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

RB completed all of its goals for the production and broadcast of the short messages and talk shows; disseminating information to our Latino listeners in English, Spanish and Mixteco on the benefits of having a broadband connection at home and on different low-cost broadband options available to them.

Ultimately, RB directed thousands of listeners to call partner 211 for broadband adoption (an average of 500 calls per quarter were reported during the first 2 years of the project). During the last quarter of the grant (Q17), listeners were directed to call our new partner, OCED. Combined, RB's referral and outreach efforts contributed to exceeding the goal for a total of 964 new broadband subscriptions with 211 and OCED.

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

- RB completed 100% of its deliverables for radio production and broadcast across its network stations.

- RB exceeded its goal for broadband subscriptions by 2% more than the required 800 subscriptions under the modified agreement.

Delineation of Deliverables and Outcomes Not Achieved and Explanation

- Due to the barriers described below, we found that the initial number of calls directed to 211 and subscriptions that RB was required to reach were unrealistic.

- Overall, many barriers for people to qualify for low-cost broadband services offered by ISPs remains. The main barriers being:
  * Many do not qualify under the strict eligibility requirements of low-cost broadband programs offered by ISP's. For example, if someone applies from a home address where an outstanding bill was previously registered, they are denied service, even though they are not the person responsible for the past debt.
  * Some rural areas still do not have a broadband infrastructure available in RB's coverage area.
  * Throughout most of the project only one low-cost service was available to listeners-- Comcast's Internet Essentials (IE). During the final phase of the project, AT&T and Frontier added low-cost service but their eligibility requirements were even more stringent than IE's.
  * People who called Comcast's regular phone line were not provided any information about IE or referred to the dedicated toll-free number for the program.

- RB did not have the means to directly monitor the number of calls that were being directed to 211 or to track the number of subscriptions. RB relied on 211 for data reports. Due to staffing changes at 211, reports on calls and subscriptions were delayed. Another issue was navigating the sampling system used by 211.

- Coincidentally, this project was implemented during a time when low-income Latinos struggled to make ends meet partially due to what turned out to be a 5-year drought affecting RB's main coverage areas. All of the counties in the San Joaquin Valley and several other counties served by RB, including Monterey County, were declared a drought-emergency by California's Governor Brown.

Discussion of Other Positive Results from Project

1. One of the main positive outcomes of the project is that RB was able to share with our many listeners the wonderful benefits of having access to broadband at home. During our live talk shows, we heard that many listeners were very interested in having access to broadband but that they needed information on how to get a better deal with the ISP's, so we made sure to provide his information in our public affairs talk shows.

2. Listeners shared positive feedback on-air about the usefulness of having broadband service at home. (Some comments are provided in the section below.)

3. The broadband adoption and surveys commissioned by CETF from 2009 to 2015 showed consistent growth in the number of people using broadband at home, including Spanish-speaking Latinos who are among the hard to reach.

4. RB staff was able to effectively support CETF in sharing with non-profit organizations, school districts and other institutions the importance of supporting the expansion of a broadband infrastructure into rural areas and of low-cost broadband service.

5. During the last quarter, RB developed a good working collaboration with Fresno State's OCED. RB plans on continuing this collaboration by providing OCED with free airtime to promote their computer training services and broadband subscription efforts. We are also interested in supporting OCED's small business development project.

Impacts of the Project

Although RB was not in direct contact with broadband subscribers, we did consistently get feedback from our radio listeners during talk shows. The following are a few comments that we received:

"I am glad that there is computer help for us. I have been trying to learn how to use the Internet but the connection in this rural area is very unstable." — Antonio from Fresno:

"The Internet is important for my grandkids and I know that supporting them is basic for their education." — Clara from Madera

"I now have Internet Essentials and it is fast Internet!" — Carlos from Salinas

"Having Internet is almost as important as being able to read. Thank you for having this show to share the importance of the Internet and for helping our community get access." — José from Napa

"I am happy that my son had the patience to teach me how to use the computer. Now I use it to receive my unemployment benefits and pay bills, among other things. It was not difficult, I just needed to practice." — Elia from Tulare

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

Identify Major Challenges to Successful Implementation

Besides the subscription barriers to low-cost broadband delineated above, including stringent qualifying requirements, we learned that people required direct and personal assistance to complete the subscription process. Although 211 provided after hours and weekend live operator assistance, they only provided a referral number to an ISP when many people needed additional help completing the paperwork required by the ISP's.

RB made efforts to work with the Dinuba School District in Tulare County, but learned soon after that broadband service was only available in a limited area within their downtown. We found that most of the residents live in the surrounding areas where no service is available. We also tried to work with the Central Unified School District. Although an MOU was negotiated, the district later dropped its commitment citing that they did not want to collect the paperwork required to prove broadband adoption and after they experienced initial software problems with the tablets that were going to be distributed to the students.

As mentioned above, throughout most of the project the only major low-cost broadband provider was Comcast. Other smaller ISP's like Basic Internet offered the service but had a low cap that limited use or exposed people to higher bills due to overuse.

Discuss Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

In an effort to refer more listeners to 211 and increase the rate of subscriptions:

- RB significantly increased the number of radio spots offered as in-kind support at no-extra cost to CETF.
- RB adjusted the message to listeners, producing up to 37 different messages.
- RB pursued a partnership with Central Unified School District – although it proved unsuccessful.
- RB sought a partnership with OCED to continue the intake of calls and to personally assist listeners with the low-cost broadband subscription process. OCED was able to establish a good system to receive and log calls and to promptly share the information with RB staff.
- RB requested an alternative toll-free number for listeners in counties where 211 does not have service. The number provided to listeners in Madera and Merced counties were rerouted to 211's Fresno office.
- RB supported CETF's policy efforts to expand low-cost broadband service in rural areas and to offer digital literacy programs.

IV.   Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Because low-cost broadband programs are designed by ISP's to serve the smallest number of clients possible, any future attempts to increase subscriptions needs to be more aggressive than just sharing with prospective subscriber the ISP's phone number.

Lesson 2: On call center operation: Our perception is that Latinos don't like to respond to long questionnaires over the phone and prefer to talk to a live person rather then leave a voice message. We believe there is also a need to have call center staff available to take questions after hours and during weekends.

Lesson 3: We shouldn't rely on project results that we cannot directly monitor or measure. Direct information is needed in order to tweak media campaigns in a timely fashion and as needed.

Lesson 4: Raising awareness about the benefits of broadband adoption should not be confused with promoting the services of certain companies. Our messages and talk shows aimed on the broader focus instead of on the ISPs.

Lesson 5: RB's coverage areas, mainly in California's agricultural regions, still have spotty broadband service due to lack of infrastructure. This should be taken into account when setting up subscription goals. Another thing to consider is the fact that many low-income Latinos frequently move, which makes it difficult for them to obtain and keep broadband service and for us to follow up with them. For instance, we have noticed that migrant workers change their phone numbers frequently and there have been time when we call them back a week later only to find that their number has been disconnected.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for Expanding the Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

Recommendation 1: Keep pressure on FCC so that broadband continues being treated as a utility.

Recommendation 2: Continue to pressure ISP providers on the need to expand the broadband infrastructure in rural areas, as well as curtail eligibility requirements for low-cost service.

Recommendation 3: Continue to work with school districts, public libraries, businesses and municipalities so that there are more places for people to access free broadband service.

Recommendation 4: Convince more funders (i.e. foundations, government, etc.) to support digital literacy through accessible computer trainings.

Recommendation 5: Encourage and support non-profit organizations in the Central Valley or in other areas that can provide refurbished computers.

Recommendations to Close The Digital Divide Based On Your Experience

Recommendation 1: Use a call center that provides Spanish/English bilingual operators who are available to personally help listeners through the subscription process.

Recommendation 2: Use a call center provide live operators who can take calls after hours and during weekends, which is when most people have the time to call in.

Recommendation 3: Provide information on alternative programs or resources for those who do not qualify for a low-cost broadband program, such as provide information on how to be an informed ISP customer, comparisons on plan pricing, and how to negotiate for better rates with their local ISP.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Recommendation 1: Streamline reporting requirements. Quarterly narrative and financial reports were difficult to complete. Other private foundations ask for annual progress reports.

Recommendation 2: Schedule regular update meetings with grantees, either in person or by phone.

Recommendation 3: Periodically convene grantees in a central location.

Recommendation 4: Our grant manager was always cordial and helpful. So just keep on having good staff!

V.   Grant Agreement Requirements

Purchased Equipment:

RB did not purchase any equipment using CETF funds.

Unspent CETF Grant Funds

All CETF grants funds were fully expended.