Governor Schwarzenegger Applauds Award Of Broadband Grants

Written by Imperial Valley News

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Sacramento, California - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today issued the following statement after the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Agency announced $173.3 million in four broadband related American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) grants to benefit California.

The grantees include the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System Authority (LA-RICS), the California Emerging Technology Fund, the City and County of San Francisco, and the Monterey County Office of Education.

"California stands to benefit a great deal through improvements in infrastructure and job creation thanks to the broadband grants awarded today," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "Given our state's strong commitment to broadband advances, California is helping lead the way in broadband applications for public safety, telemedicine and digital literacy for all Californians. These projects will turn the digital divide into digital opportunities for our students, our workforce, the disadvantaged and our first responders."

The largest award is a $154,640,000 grant to the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System Authority (LA-RICS) to build the LA-SafetyNet project. The LA SafetyNet project will enable a modern 700 MHz public safety interoperable broadband network that will allow multiple public safety agencies in the Los Angeles region to respond to large scale emergencies such as earthquakes and wildfires. This network will connect over 80 public safety agencies, and about 34,000 first responders such as fire, sheriff, and police personnel, encompassing a sprawling terrain of over 4,060 square miles where 10 million people reside. The network will connect almost 300 wireless 700 MHz public safety sites using new and existing infrastructure, fixed microwave backhaul rings, and 100 miles of high capacity fiber backbone. This state-of-the-art Long Term Evolution (LTe) network will enable computer-aided dispatch, rapid law-enforcement inquiries, real time video streaming, medical telemetry and patient tracking, geographic information systems services for first responders and other broadband applications. A similar interoperable wireless public safety project was funded by a Broadband Recovery Act Grant for the BayWEB project in the San Francisco Greater Bay Area on August 18, 2010.

The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) received its second Broadband Recovery Act grant with its "Access to Careers and Technology" project. NTIA gave CETF a grant for $7,108,181 to place unemployed persons in information technology industry jobs by providing outreach, training, and services to at risk youth, persons for whom English is a second language (ESL), public housing residents, the homeless, and people with disabilities. In six regions of California, the project will provide broadband tools to help these groups develop information technology skills, digital literacy and improve job placement. Qualified low income persons will be able to earn a computer by graduating from a broadband training curriculum designed to create community broadband adoption ambassadors (a state digital literacy corps). To measure adoption and workforce development outcomes, the CETF will use a web-based standardized assessment tools to track the progress of the participants. It will train 37,000 residents offering 1.2 million hours of teacher-led training. The project partners include Acme Network, CAMINOS – Pathways Learning Center, California Resources and Training, Chrysalis, The Stride Center, OCCUR, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties, San Diego Futures Foundation, Youth Radio, EmpowerNet California and Southeast Community Development Corporation. CETF was formed by the California PUC to help bridge the Digital Divide, using $60 million in donations by AT&T and Verizon.

The third project awarded is for $7,931,632 to the City and County of San Francisco for its San Francisco Community Broadband Opportunities Program (SF-CBOP). San Francisco's project focuses on seniors and African American/ Latino persons, who were found by a 2009 city study to only subscribe to broadband at rates of 42% and 61% respectively, compared to the city-wide average of 82%. The partners will engage in broadband training to seniors, adults in residential treatment, low income and ESL youth, and other economically and socially disadvantaged groups. SF-CBOP will offer training sessions to reach 8,000 residents with over 300,000 teacher-led training hours in senior centers, group homes, San Francisco's Beacon Centers and at City College. A volunteer "digital literacy corps" will be formed for training and support, and empowering the local community to develop its own digital literacy. Annual surveys will track progress and metrics. Project partners include Community Living Campaign, Community Technology Network, Self Help for the Elderly, National Council on Aging, Conard House Inc., City College of San Francisco, San Francisco Adult Day Services Network, Northern California Presbyterian Homes and Services, San Francisco Housing Authority, Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Bay Area Video Coalition.

The final Broadband award is a $3,631,495 grant to the Monterey County Office of Education for its Central Coast Broadband Consortium Public Computer Alliance. This area has a high degree of non English speaking persons and only 70% of adults hold a high school diploma or equivalent. The Monterey County Office of Education and its partners will expand the Office of Education's Career Technology Education center in Salinas, which provides high school students with 360 hours of training to receive a certificate in digital media production skills and the opportunity to obtain vocational placement or continue their training at Hartnell College, a community college. Hartnell College will expand its access and training programs to its Alisal and King City satellite campuses. The project will also establish three new public computer centers, upgrade about 25 more, and deploy 200 new computer workstations while upgrading more than 300. The project partners include Hartnell College, Monterey County Free Libraries, The National Steinbeck Center, Community Information Center, Community Information Center, California State University Monterey Bay, Boys and Girls Clubs of Monterey

County, and Access Monterey Peninsula.