



California[™] Connects

Increasing digital access for a better future

Fact Sheet

Program Background:

In December 2009, the Executive Office of the President of the United States, National Economic Council, released a report titled, Recovery Act Investments in Broadband: Leveraging Federal Dollars to Create Jobs and Connect. The report says that “broadband touches nearly every aspect of the U.S. economy, providing Americans with unprecedented opportunities in employment, education and health care, entrepreneurship, and civic participation. For millions of Americans without adequate access to broadband, however, the possibility of falling behind in the knowledge-based economy is real.” In response to this concern, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act committed \$4.7 billion for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program.

In August 2010, the Foundation for the California Community Colleges was awarded a \$10.9 million grant from the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The award was used to establish the California Connects program with the intent to increase digital literacy among and expand broadband Internet access to underserved populations in California.

Program Description:

California Connects, a three-year program launched March 2011, aims to increase digital literacy and Internet usage and adoption in California through training, access, and resources, with an emphasis on the Central Valley, where there is a high concentration of disconnected residents. Widespread broadband adoption in the Central Valley is hindered by physical/location, lack of access, financial hardship, inadequate exposure to technical education, and cultural barriers.

California Connects breaks down these barriers by increasing the awareness of public computing centers, educating new users about affordable broadband options, providing training in multiple languages, and educating users about how the internet affects their lives. Broadband adoption will increase residents’ access to services and resources in areas such as personal finance, health care, and social services, as well as provide an avenue for maintaining family and community ties online. This initiative aims to gain 61,120 new broadband users trained in digital literacy with 9,168 Californians becoming new broadband adopters.

Program Partnerships:

California Connects works in collaboration with the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, community colleges with established Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) programs, American River College, and the Great Valley Center.

Community Trainers:

Participating community college MESA students are majoring in calculus-based fields with an intent to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. These majors are aligned with careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and are consistent with the national STEM effort. In partnership with the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, California Connects has equipped 4,400 MESA students with a laptop computer, broadband access, Microsoft training and certification, and digital literacy training to serve as Community Trainers for their families and other community members. This fall 2012, an additional 1,400 MESA students will receive access to equipment, training, and resources through California Connects. In partnership with the Great Valley Center, a cadre of Community Trainers is actively conducting outreach and digital literacy training for Central Valley residents across 18 counties who currently do not have access to broadband technology.

Developing Digital Literacy Tools:

California Connects has partnered with American River College to develop open-access, online digital literacy tools that can be used at anytime in libraries, public computing centers, homes, schools, colleges, and places of business. Community Trainers use these tools to teach new broadband users how to use the Internet for essential tasks such as securing gainful employment, exploring higher education opportunities, accessing health and finance resources, utilizing social networks, and positively affecting their general quality of life.

Participating California Community Colleges – MESA Programs:

The 34 community college MESA programs include: Allan Hancock College, American River College, Bakersfield College, Butte College, Cabrillo College, Cañada College, City College of San Francisco, College of the Canyons, College of the Desert, College of the Sequoias, College of the Siskiyous, Cosumnes River College, East Los Angeles College, El Camino College, Gavilan College, Hartnell College, Los Medanos College, Mendocino College, Mission College, Napa Valley College, Pasadena City College, Rio Hondo College, Sacramento City College, San Diego City College, San Joaquin Delta College, Santa Ana College, Santa Barbara City College, Santa Rosa Junior College, Skyline College, Solano Community College, Southwestern College, Ventura College, Woodland Community College, and Yuba Community College.

Central Valley - Counties Served:

The 18 counties served in partnership with the Great Valley Center include: Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Kings, Kern, Mariposa, Merced, Madera, Nevada, Placer, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tuolumne, Tulare, and Yuba.

Business and Industry Collaboration:

No one entity can unilaterally address the needs of a community. California Connects brings together higher education colleagues, regional and Central Valley collaborators, and business and industry partners to address the needs of the constituency to be served. Widespread broadband access will increase usage of online tools and services, open up new opportunities for local and online businesses, and save businesses money on in-person and brick-and-mortar availability. California Connects is supported by business and industry representatives from: Adobe, AT&T, Certiport, ColledgeBuys, Hewlett Packard, Insight, and Microsoft Corporation.

California Impact:

A great state economy will require an educated citizenry. Where a robust economy was once defined in terms of labor-intensive businesses and services, much of our workforce and service industry is now dependent upon digital literacy and the ability to adopt and embrace new technologies. California Connects promotes the use of broadband for educational advancement, employment opportunities, and health care resources, and will provide a direct, tangible, and long lasting benefit to California.

Leveraging Opportunities:

The support of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, community college MESA programs, and the Great Valley Center collectively contributed to leveraging this \$10.9 million grant opportunity for Californians. The state's annual investment in community college MESA programs stands at \$1.5 million. To date, this program has created new jobs in California; purchased products from California and USA businesses; began the process of developing digital literacy modules for all Californians to access; and forged new relationships with government agencies, educational entities and business and industry leaders.

Program and Related Websites:

For more information and program updates, please visit these websites:

Broadband Technology Opportunities Program	www2.ntia.doc.gov
Foundation for California Community Colleges	www.foundationccc.org
California Connects	www.CAconnects.org
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office	www.cccco.edu
Great Valley Center	www.greatvalley.org

Program Performance Period:

August 2010 – June 2013.

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