

Delaware Department of State

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DELAWARE LIBRARIES TO RECEIVE SUPPORT TO HELP PROVIDE BROADBAND ACCESS FOR MORE AMERICANS

Gates Foundation will support state-level efforts to apply for federal broadband stimulus funds

Earlier this month, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a partnership with Delaware to help public libraries compete for broadband stimulus funds. The foundation's Opportunity Online grant program will provide the Delaware Division of Libraries (DDL) technical and consulting assistance to develop competitive funding proposals for federal broadband stimulus funding from the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration's \(NTIA\) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program \(BTOP\)](#), established through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Delaware will also receive federally required matching funds from the Gates Foundation, contingent on a successful BTOP award, and assistance to help secure additional federal E-rate funding to sustain future broadband connection costs.

Nearly 40 percent of Americans, often those with lower incomes and lower levels of education, still don't have high-speed Internet access at home. In most communities (70 percent), the public library is the only provider of free Internet access available to residents.

These funds would help Delaware's libraries accommodate patron demand for high-speed Internet access, which is growing faster than most libraries' ability to provide increased bandwidth.

BTOP is expected to award federal stimulus grants to private and public sector applicants starting in early 2010 to expand broadband infrastructure to more communities across the country and to help new Internet users benefit from broadband access.

"In order for our libraries to be among the best in the country, we need to adapt to and meet the varied and changing needs of Delawareans," said Lt. Governor Matthew Denn. "We are fortunate to be partnering with the Gates Foundation to produce a solid application for stimulus funds to meet these needs."

The foundation solicited letters of interest for the Opportunity Online broadband grant program from the Delaware Division of Libraries (DDL) and other state library agencies seeking to acquire significant additional broadband access for targeted public libraries in their states. The foundation chose to support 14 states that articulated the most compelling and feasible projects aligned with the objectives of BTOP. The foundation also considered a state's need for assistance in developing a competitive BTOP proposal.

All public libraries in Delaware have broadband connectivity. Funding from this grant will help maximize this access. DDL's project, One Stop Access for Job Information, will involve all public libraries in the state, equipping them with videoconferencing equipment, job centers, training labs, workforce development training, wireless network access, and training for library staff.

"This project is perfectly aligned with our quality initiative," said State Librarian Annie Norman. "It will add power to the library infrastructure by helping individuals and communities achieve their full potential."

This initiative builds on and extends DDL's participation in the Public Library Association's Advocacy Training program, also funded by the Gates foundation. Following this training, DDL developed the Delaware Library Community Resources

Exchange (CRE), a collaborative of over 100 agencies and non-profits who provide services to people in need. DDL will work with CRE partners, in particular the Delaware Workforce Investment Board, in implementing the training and job seeking aspects of the project. The Delaware Department of Technology and Information will partner with DDL on technology implementation.

The 14 other partner states include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.

A recent [American Library Association study](#) reports that 60 percent of all libraries say their current Internet speed is insufficient.

“Federal, state, and local government investments in connecting libraries to broadband are important steps toward realizing the vision of universal broadband access,” said Jill Nishi, deputy director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. Libraries program. “When libraries have access to broadband, they can effectively deliver critical educational, employment, and government services for residents that lack Internet access elsewhere. As community anchor institutions, libraries can also help drive local broadband adoption.”

The foundation has invested \$350 million in grants and support to install and sustain computers in libraries and train thousands of library staff in all 50 states and U.S. territories. The foundation continues to support libraries through investments in programs, research, advocacy training, and public awareness efforts that will help libraries sustain high-quality online access for patrons in partnership with their communities. For more information, visit: www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries.

For downloadable high-resolution photos, please visit: www.gatesfoundation.org/press-room/Pages/news-market.aspx.

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About the Delaware Division of Libraries

The mission of the Delaware Division of Libraries is to provide leadership and support for the timely development of Delaware's libraries, to ensure convenient access to, and encourage use of current information resources and reading material by all Delawareans. The members of the Delaware library community are unified in the values of service, access, and excellence, and are committed to the vision of progressive libraries and the transformational impact they have on the people who use them. Visit the Delaware Division of Libraries website at state.lib.de.us.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. Learn more at www.gatesfoundation.org or join the conversation at [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).