

Delaware Department of State / Division of Libraries

# Media Release

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RELEASE

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## **DELAWARE LIBRARIES RECEIVE \$2.8 MILLION TO EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS**

*FUNDS TO BE USED TO CREATE JOB/LEARNING LABS IN LIBRARIES  
STATEWIDE, FOCUSED ON THE NEEDS OF THE UNEMPLOYED*

Governor Markell and Lt. Governor Denn have announced that Delaware will receive \$1.9 million in federal stimulus funds to help bridge the technological divide, boost employment, and improve education in the First State. Delaware was named as one of the recipients of funding from the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), administered by the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Federal funds will be matched by a \$750,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The foundation will also provide \$150,000 to help Delaware secure additional federal E-rate funding to sustain broadband connection costs in the future.

The combined grant award will fund a program to create specialized computer centers in four major libraries to improve workforce skills, assist with job searches, and provide adult education. Those same services will be delivered electronically to all 32 Delaware libraries. The program will bring mobile service to every library in the State, as well as videoconferencing equipment and workforce development training. The approximately half a million people with Delaware library cards will be able to access the new services.

"This grant will make a huge difference in being able to bring much needed mobile technology to our libraries, and offer Delawareans new services that will help them get ready for jobs, find jobs and enhance their education," said Governor Jack Markell. While our libraries do a terrific job with information, these new services will make our libraries an even more valuable resource for people trying to equip themselves for a changing job market."

The Delaware Library Job/Learning Labs project will involve all public libraries in the state and will provide broadband education, access, equipment, and support to vulnerable populations in all three counties. The Delaware Division of Libraries will partner with government agencies, educational institutions, and local businesses to expand these services.

“For our libraries to be the best in the nation, we need to target library services to the changing needs of Delawareans and leverage the best technology available,” said Lt. Governor Matt Denn.

The computer centers at the Dover, Georgetown, Seaford, and Wilmington libraries will become Job/Learning Labs focused specifically on the needs of the unemployed, with specialized training for resume building, job search, and interview skills. Spanish-language training programs will be conducted in Wilmington.

The program will fund instruction to as many as 2,000 residents with approximately 29,000 hours of teacher-led training over a three year period. The training will focus on digital literacy, test preparation, and workforce education.

“Our libraries now offer even greater opportunities for lifelong learning,” said Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock, whose office oversees the Division of Libraries. “They function as a meeting place, a community center, and they give many people access to information and services that they cannot get on their own.”

For the thousands of Delawareans who do not have computers or internet access at home, their public library is an especially important place in a world where employers, schools, and government are relying much more heavily on electronic communication. The grant will be used to upgrade public computer centers at all 32 public libraries statewide, to deploy additional new computers, improve Internet access speeds and reduce waiting periods for library computers.

“We congratulate the Delaware Division of Libraries and its partners on their successful application for this highly competitive grant,” said Sens. Carper and Kaufman. “Now more than ever, out of work Delawareans need access to the valuable job search tools available online. The expansion of broadband internet and upgraded computer facilities in libraries across the state, coupled with training in digital literacy and job searching skills will provide this access, ultimately helping thousands of folks to get back on their feet. We are very pleased that the NTIA recognized the planning and effort that went into designing a program that will have a very positive effect on the lives of so many in the First State.”

“This project perfectly complements our goal of providing quality service to Delawareans,” said State Librarian Annie Norman. “It will dramatically improve our library infrastructure so that we can better help individuals and communities achieve their full potential.”

Last year, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partnered with the Delaware Division of Libraries and library systems in 13 other states to help public libraries compete for federal broadband stimulus funding. States participating in the Gates Foundation’s Opportunity Online broadband grant program received technical and consulting assistance to develop competitive funding proposals for BTOP.

“Federal investments in connecting libraries to high-quality Internet and technology services are critical to realizing the universal broadband access our country needs,” said Jill Nishi, deputy director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. Libraries program. “When libraries provide broadband to communities, they can deliver valuable online opportunities that help people find jobs, further their education, and access important government information. We hope that this BTOP award will encourage other public and private funders to understand the importance of investing in public technology access at Delaware’s libraries.”

Nearly 40 percent of Americans, often those with lower incomes and lower levels of education, still do not have high-speed Internet access at home. In many communities in Delaware, the public library is the only provider of free Internet access available to residents.

The Delaware Division of Libraries will work with the Delaware Workforce Investment Board in implementing the training and job seeking aspects of the project. Other partners include the Delaware Department of Technology and Information, Delaware Technical & Community College, Literacy Volunteers Serving Adults, Christina Adult Education Program, Retired Seniors Volunteer Program, Delaware Center for Distance Adult Learning, the Delaware Economic Development Office, and Delaware’s Departments of Education and Labor.

The Commerce Department’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service are administering a nearly \$7 billion Recovery Act initiative to expand access to and adoption of broadband services. NTIA is utilizing approximately \$4 billion of that funding for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), which provides grants to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure, enhance and expand public computer centers, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service.

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**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](http://www.gatesfoundation.org) or join the conversation at [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).