

## American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

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As part of the federal stimulus package known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), \$7.2 billion was appropriated for the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) to expand broadband access and adoption in communities across the U.S. The long-term impact is to increase jobs, spur investments in technology and infrastructure, and provide long-term economic benefits.



In January 2010, the State Library of Ohio and OPLIN began working closely with Connect Ohio on complimentary Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) applications. Both organizations submitted applications to NTIA in March 2010.

The State Library, in partnership with OPLIN, submitted a Public Computing Centers (PCC) application. The proposal requested \$2,408,725 in federal dollars to be matched with \$633,873 in local dollars. The intent of the Ohio Public Access through Libraries project (referred to as OPAL I) was to enhance public access computing opportunities by installing 5,071 computers in 89 Ohio public library systems, thus meeting the growing demand in public libraries for public access computers and broadband access. The high rate of unemployment means a high number of users accessing government resources, seeking jobs, and writing resumes.

Connect Ohio submitted a complimentary project, Ohio Public Adoption through Libraries (OPAL II). This project would provide the training, technical support and public awareness to ensure that citizens were able to use workstations received in OPAL I. Users would not only learn how to use broadband technology, but also about its value in their lives. The OPAL II application included 99 library systems and 327 branches with a total program budget of \$9,507,404 (\$6,354,596 federal and \$3,152,808 matching).

In early summer, Connect Ohio began the "due diligence" process. As part of this process, NTIA requested Connect Ohio merge the OPAL I and OPAL II projects while retaining the same federal request. Staff at Connect Ohio and the State Library discussed how best to combine the two applications.

In August, Connect Ohio learned that OPAL II would be funded at \$6.9 million. The State Library received official notification that OPAL I would not be funded in early October.

Connect Ohio has renamed the project Every Community Online. As part of the application consolidation, Every Community Online will encourage broadband adoption in Ohio by conducting training sessions at public libraries, community colleges, and other anchor institutions. Plans call for 80,000 training hours offered at over 300 locations, reaching 200,000 participants throughout the state. It will also place over 2000 computers in libraries, community colleges, and other training centers. Although the State Library was sorry that OPAL I was not funded, it is pleased that the Connect Ohio application was funded, bringing crucial ARRA dollars into the state and into public libraries. State Library and OPLIN staff will continue to collaborate with Connect Ohio staff throughout the project period.