

California State Library to Participate in Program to Improve Library Internet Connections



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California State Library invited to participate in Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation program designed to help improve and sustain Internet connections in local public libraries

Sacramento, CA - The California State Library will host a state summit this December in Sacramento for library directors, community supporters and state stakeholders to examine the current state of connectivity in California public libraries and to determine how best to improve and sustain free, quality Internet connectivity in the state's public libraries. California residents rely on high-speed Internet connectivity in public libraries to find jobs, take online courses, or get important government forms, yet some libraries do not offer Internet connections fast enough to meet the needs of their communities.

The California Opportunity Online Broadband Summit is being held as part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's pilot Opportunity Online broadband grant program in which the California State Library is participating. The program is designed to support improved and sustained connectivity for public libraries in seven states including California.

"Everyday, our libraries see the direct impact of connectivity on the life of their patrons," said Stacy Aldrich, Acting State Librarian of California. "The California State Library looks forward to working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and libraries across the state to improve connectivity in our public libraries. The connectivity needs of our communities continue to grow, and it is essential that California's public libraries keep up with their needs."

Thirty-one (31) library systems in California have one or more library branches with connectivity that does not meet the demands of library patrons taking an interactive, online educational course with streaming video or audio, reading a basic website for instructive content, or downloading lengthy government applications in seconds. For these users, speed is important.

"Public libraries have played an important role in closing the digital divide. Unfortunately the speed of connectivity in libraries is often too slow to ensure that people can use computers effectively," said Jill Nishi, Deputy Director of U.S. Libraries at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "If libraries are to remain engines of opportunity, local governments, communities, and library supporters must all work together to ensure that public libraries provide free, sustainable, high-speed Internet access."

States that participate in the pilot Opportunity Online broadband grant program will also be required to develop a state-wide broadband sustainability strategy to ensure that all libraries are able to continue to

provide high-quality broadband connections for their communities. The California State Library is committed to playing an ongoing role in helping all California public libraries achieve and sustain this quality Internet access.

The California State Library will host the Opportunity Online broadband summit in Sacramento on December 14 -15. Connected Nation, a national non-profit technology advocacy organization, will produce the summit with the California State Library. The American Library Association's Office for Information Technology Policy will support the California State Library's development of a sustainability strategy. For more information about the California Opportunity Online Broadband Summit, please go to www.opportunityonline.org or contact us at casummit@opportunityonline.org or 1-866-882-3081.

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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.

About the California State Library

Founded in 1850, the California State Library is the central reference and research library for the governor's office, state legislature, statewide elected and appointed officials, state employees, and the general public. It also advises, consults with, and provides technical assistance to California's public libraries. The State Library administers federal and state grants that support statewide programs and services including civil liberties education, historical preservation, library construction, connectivity, literacy and volunteer programs.

About Connected Nation

Connected Nation is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that expands access to and use of broadband Internet and the related technologies that are enabled when individuals and communities have the opportunity and desire to connect. Connected Nation effectively raises the awareness of the value of broadband and related technologies by developing coalitions of influencers and enablers for improving technology availability and use. Connected Nation works with consumers, community leaders, states, technology providers, and foundations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to develop and implement technology expansion programs with core competencies centered around a mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked. Connected Nation is also working with technology leaders to implement Every Citizen OnlineSM, a public-private partnership program to enable computer ownership and broadband use in low-income and unconnected homes. For more information about Connected Nation, visit www.connectednation.org.