Acceptance of Interlocal Agreement: Digital Opportunities Grant

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Libraries

Request

- Connect Buncombe Online, through the Digital Opportunities Initiative, has awarded Buncombe County Public Libraries an additional $40,000 to support digital access in Buncombe County

- This is the second allocation of funds to the libraries under this program. In the first round of funding, $20,000 was used to increase the hotspot lending program

- Funds for this grant will be used to fund a mobile laptop lab and charging trolley carts

The Digital Opportunities Initiative

Background Information

- Digital Opportunities is an initiative from Dogwood Health Trust that has brought together 10 collaboratives representing more than 50 organizations across Western North Carolina with the goal of making high-speed internet and the tools people need to use it available, affordable, and useful for everybody.
- As a grant recipient, Buncombe County Public Libraries joined a collaborative of 14 other organizations across the county called Connect Buncombe Online, with Land of Sky acting as the fiscal agent.
- The top three priorities identified by the Connect Buncombe Online collaborative are:
  - Affordable broadband
  - Access to devices
  - Digital Literacy and Technology Instruction

Program Details

Objective

- The laptops will be used for programming and technology instruction by librarians across the county

- Using laptops allows us to transform our programming and meeting spaces into computer labs on an as needed basis. The charging carts also serve as transportable trolleys, allowing these devices to be shared among all 12 library locations, as well as at off-site programs.

Programs

- A series of computer classes, taught by librarians, at the Veterans Restoration Quarters using the Northstar Digital Literacy curriculum, is currently in development.

- Collaborations with organizations in the Connect Buncombe Online Initiative to support their Pass 2 Earn events, with library-led computer instruction offered immediately before or after these events.

Strategic Plan Connection and Next Steps

Next Steps

- While waiting for devices to be purchased and prepared for public use, continue offering 1:1 technology instruction at libraries and off-site community partner locations

- Programming with the laptop lab is expected to start by spring

Strategic Plan Connection

- Economic Development
  - Increase workforce development opportunities
- Education
  - Enhance early and adult learning

The Request

Approve the Interlocal Memorandum of Agreement between Buncombe County and Land of Sky Regional Council.