



FOUNDATION FOR
RURAL SERVICE

FRS Grant Recipients 2016

We are proud to announce the 2016 recipients of the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) grants. The Foundation received close to 100 applications this year and the scope and quality of the projects all embodied the mission of the Foundation: to enhance the quality and sustainability of life in America by advancing an understanding of rural issues.

Broadband plays an incredibly powerful role in today's society, enabling telemedicine, distance education and economic development opportunities. This year's winners vary in focus but all encompass the far-reaching impacts of community engagement and highlight the importance of technology in strengthening rural America.

The winners of these grants demonstrate both the need for their program and the measurable impact it will have on their community. Congratulations to our 2016 winners!

Thank you to Ericsson Inc., Bennet & Bennet, PLLC and Mapcom Systems for their generous sponsorship. Additionally, thanks to Blooston, Mordkofsky, Dickens, Duffy & Prendergast, LLP and Palmetto Engineering & Consulting LLC for their support.

Choteau County Library Foundation

Fort Benton, Montana

Endorsed by Triangle Communications

Awarded \$2,500 for two Public-use computers to help enable community and economic development.

The Choteau County Free Library offers its community children's activities, a summer reading program, musical performances, classes on computer subjects, public computers for use during the day (for job applications, research, etc.), and WiFi is available at all locations and meeting rooms: "We understand the significant role public libraries and the positive impacts they have in overall community development... a well-stocked library adds significantly to the overall quality of life in a community.... With no other public access computers in Big Sandy, patrons use our WiFi and computer center for job applications, financial (online banking, loans, etc.), social media, news, and research."

Gervais High School

Gervais, Oregon

Endorsed by Gervais Telephone Company

Awarded \$5,000 for Chromebooks that will teach students (the majority of whom qualify as “economically disadvantaged” and are English Language Learners) work skills and comfort with technology to prepare them for the workforce.

The goal is to provide Chromebooks and a secure charging cart for several classrooms that provide technology training and business skill development. Gervais High School has a very diverse student body with 51% of the students being English Language Learners and with 82% of the student population classified as “economically disadvantaged.” Despite being a 100% Title 1 School, Gervais has had a graduation and completion rate of 98% for the past seven years. Unfortunately, standardized test scores have been below average due to second language barriers.

Gervais High School will use the FRS Grant to fund 23 Chromebooks and a locking charging cart to help students stay current with technology, to learn soft skills such as meeting deadlines and being responsible for their own computer, as well as teaching them essential use of Google documents, Excel, keyboarding, research and PowerPoint. This project will help the school develop their career and technical field.

Horton Public Library

Horton, Kansas

Endorsed by Rainbow Communications

Awarded \$2,500 for two computers in a library serving an extremely low-income area.

The computers will be added to a full service library that Rainbow Communications will be upgrading to fiber in 2017. There are high levels of low income individuals in the area (80% of school children receive free or reduced lunch rates). Students use the computers for homework, games, and adults use them for job searching, social interaction, and government forms.

Putnam County Kids Count

Coatesville, Indiana

Endorsed by Endeavor Communications

Awarded \$495 for registering students in a 4-H Lego Robotics Program.

Registration for 33 Putnam County Kids Count Character Day Camp children will increase their knowledge and interest in STEM- fields through participation in the 4-H Lego Robotics Program. Each camper would join a 4-H robotic trio team and assemble a Lego Mindstorm EV3 robot and learn programming and computing skills needed to operate their robot.

School District of Florence County

Florence, Wisconsin

Endorsed by Nsight Telservices

Awarded \$5,000 for tech products to improve a "Fab Lab" that will enable the job creation and skill development for students and community members.

The School District of Florence County created Fab Lab, drawing community members into their school and providing them with help to learn skills that are in demand by area employers; providing small businesses with help on creating marketing materials; and introducing an industry advisory council to help students prepare for the future workforce. The goal is to grow the Fab Lab with new tools and technologies. The grant monies will secure a computer to provide code for the new CNC Router and a DIWire Bender that will help students with their studies.

Sierra Oaks Community & Senior Center

Tollhouse, California

Endorsed by Ponderosa Telephone Company

Awarded \$2,500 for acquiring two new computers, software and a printer for the community center, enabling access for senior citizens and local residents, many of whom live at the poverty level.

The Center's goal is to provide safe, nourishing and encouraging place for our seniors and residents of their community. Ponderosa Telephone has provided two years of DSL, upgraded broadband services and is the designated free Wi-Fi hot spot for all the community, but the computer lab is now 12 years old. Many residents in the rural community live in low income or at poverty level.

The FRS grant will allow Sierra Oaks to be able to purchase two new computers, software and a new printer. With an updated lab, folks can take online courses and Sierra High School students can come in to complete homework or do research.

Stafford County Economic Development

St. John, Kansas

Endorsed by Golden Belt Telephone

Awarded \$5,000 for tech enhancements to enable a Launch Pad Business Incubator.

Launch Pad Business Incubator seeks to build business and the young adult population by providing a protected environment to launch businesses. The business incubator will provide young adults with a place to live and work, coaching, business mentoring and access to funding sources. The grant will fund the technological enhancements needed for the Launch Pad Business Incubator (including a webcam for videoconferencing, laptop, Smart TV, Projector, etc.).

White County Public Library

Cleveland, Georgia

Endorsed by Ellijay Telephone Company/ETC Communications

Awarded \$3,000 for a handicap-accessible computer work station for a public library.

The grant will provide a new accessible computer work station that uses assistive technologies to help children and adults with disabilities. Broadband is not available to all of the communities served by the library so the library's fiber connection is key for its neighbors. The accessible computer work station would include a work table that could be adjusted for an individual patron's height, the computer would have the current version of JAWS (a screen reader software program for the visually impaired), the monitor would be 24", allowing for easy viewing. There is currently no other library in the Northeast Georgia area that offers this service. 29.6% of Georgia's residents who are classified as having a disability live below the poverty level, making it more challenging to obtain affordable access to computers.