

Northeast Washington Fusion Centers: focusing on communities in Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties

A cooperative project of the Libraries of Stevens County, Rural Resources Community Action, Tri-County Economic Development, Northeast Tri-County Health District, WSU Stevens County Extension, and Stevens County Government

Goal: To apply for ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds via the BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunities Program), as administered by the NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) to fund help fund facility construction and renovation, as well as program development in the northeast Washington tri-county area.

Deadline: Grant application is due Friday, August 14, 2009

Project Objective: to rethink rural community development by addressing infrastructure barriers and by building innovative partnerships: improve information access, educational opportunities, business and job creation, health and social services, and ultimately quality of life. Maximize tax payers' money to improve services and to improve economic development.

Background: Rural northeastern Washington community development faces specific challenges:

- Lack of telecommunications infrastructure
- Lack of facilities for development opportunities
- Lack of access to services for economic, social, and health information
- Lack of money for sustaining facilities
- Geographic isolation and distance from business, government, and education centers
- High unemployment

Solutions: Build new, or renovate existing, facilities in rural communities that serve as multi-agency, multi-use facilities. Under one roof, the facility could potentially house:

- Public library
 - Distance learning site (for Running Start, 2 and 4 year degrees)
 - Economic development center (or business "incubator" sites)
 - Social service access
 - Health care access and information
 - Government participation access point
 - Private business
 - Extension learning site and resource point (e.g., gardening, grant writing, non-credit education courses).
 - *All of these pieces will be integrated so that barriers to access are reduced.*
- **Geographic distance.** In rural areas, one of the most powerful barriers to resources is the distance a person needs to travel in order to access the resource. The new resource centers can address the distance barrier by:
 - Maximizing, but not duplicating technology resources: (web or video-conferencing) to facilitate meetings, conferences, etc. (For example, one of the requirements of a federal assistance program is that clients check in

daily at the office in Colville – for many clients that means an 80-100 mile round trip drive every day. The cost of gas makes this problematic, and the wasted time is not constructive.)

- Providing office or meeting space in the community so that when regional (county, state, etc.) agencies visit the rural areas they are able to have office space, meetings, give presentations, etc. (Small communities often have few, if any, meeting space, and certainly few options for agencies to have regular office space. Various groups could, for example, share the same office space on a rotating basis.) This also improves the rural community's ability to participate in government, give input, etc.

The goal is that each building project will include:

- Local designers and local architects
- Utilization of local materials and builders
- Ecologically sustainable building solutions that partner with infrastructure sustainability (e.g., an energy-saving option only makes sense if the community has access to replacement parts, repair skills, etc.) Unfortunately, current LEED certification does not give points to infrastructure sustainability.
- As a resource center, the building itself will become a teaching tool for the community to learn about sustainable construction (e.g. if a builder were building a new family home he could refer the clients to a local resource center building as an example of a type of sustainable building he is suggesting for their home.)
- By using local designers and builders, the knowledge base will integrate local knowledge about climate, materials, etc., with the skills of sustainability.
- The building needs to be maintainable and repairable by communities with limited fiscal resources.

Every community is unique and these agencies recognize that there will not be a “one size fits all” solution for every community in the tri-county area. Nevertheless, the basic concept of removing barriers to access of services and information by collaborating between agencies, does apply consistently. The solution may vary by community, but the problem is universal.

If you are interested in partnering with this project on an ARRA grant, please complete the following survey: (if have trouble clicking on the link, cut and paste the URL into a new browser window):

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=q6AOjCN_2bPP_2bnU03pK49L7w_3d_3d

For more information please contact:

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