

Project Proposal – Publicly Posted

Executive Summary

This initiative seeks to significantly enhance digital literacy and access in rural Kansas through the strategic distribution of ASUS iPad equivalent tablets to students in grades K-6 within the K-State Rural Education Center (REC) support network. This network spans over 100 schools, many of which are situated in areas grappling with economic challenges and limited technological resources. The primary objective of this project is to bridge the digital divide, providing essential tools for distressed and underserved rural schools, and fostering greater STEM engagement across rural learning communities.

The main goals of the project include:

- 1) **Enhancing Digital Access:** This proposal empowers over 750 elementary school students across rural schools with higher quality tablets to facilitate their educational journey.
- 2) **Promoting STEM Education:** Tablets selected for this project allow schools to reliably participate in free and affordable STEM learning experiences provided by the K-State Rural Education Center and other learning networks.
- 3) **Long-Term Educational and Economical Benefits:** This proposal ensures sustained use and relevance of technology through durable devices and comprehensive support. This strengthens digital literacy throughout rural Kansas, and provides additional incentives for rural business development.

This project addresses critical needs in the community, including:

- 1) **Lack of Personal Computing Devices:** Many students in the target districts do not have access to personal computers, hindering their ability to engage effectively in educational activities, especially in STEM.
- 2) **Digital Literacy Gap:** There is a growing need to equip students with digital skills essential for future academic and career success. This proposal provides technology and learning opportunities that provide students with career exploration opportunities for in-demand STEM fields.

Proposed Service Area

The project will be implemented across multiple rural school districts within the K-State Rural Education Center network, encompassing over 100 schools in various cities and counties in Kansas. These areas have been identified based on their economic distress and the urgent need for technological resources in education. Equipment will be distributed based on metrics of distressed and underserved status, current age of school technology, current availability of student devices at home, and access to broadband developments. This proposal is prepared to ship equipment directly to underserved schools anywhere within Kansas

Roughly 14 rural school districts serve as focal point for equipment distribution based on underserved metrics and lack of broadband access. Leading advocates for this proposal from the following school districts have written letters of support: USD 114, USD 215, USD 366, USD 384, USD 487, and USD 505.

Estimates for equipment and service packages were provided by Riverside Technologies. Their packages included equipment for students, protective cases, 4-year warranties, and Google Admin Console and Google Enrollment services to provide schools with a worry-free learning solution that will last for 4-5 years. Riverside has also arranged for equipment storage and direct shipping to schools as needed.

Intended Impact

The expected outcomes and impact of the project are:

- 1) Improved Educational Outcomes: Equipment helps enhance learning experiences leading to better academic performance, development of digital skills, and strengthened engagement in STEM subjects.
- 2) Increased Digital Literacy: Students will develop essential digital skills, preparing them for a technology-driven future.
- 3) Community Empowerment: The project will empower not just the students but also the broader community by fostering a culture of technological proficiency and innovation.