



What is BRIDGES?

About The BRIDGES Project

The BRIDGES Project will enable five Native American communities: Comanche Nation, Navajo Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation), and Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California - to provide workforce skill training and basic adult education to tribal members residing in rural regions. For many, access to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training and services, and the ability to benefit from prevailing labor market information and employment opportunities, is limited due to long distances to job training centers and limited or non-existent availability of transportation.

With a grant for this project from the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, critical training and services will be brought directly to tribal members using versatile mobile computer technology. This collaborative effort is expected to engender increased employment and economic growth throughout Indian country. Local industries in each of the participating tribal communities - from hospitality and healthcare to construction and information technology - are in need of a higher educated workforce and have assured new hire opportunities for tribal members upon completion of training.



The hardware and software technology provider is EarthWalk Communications, Inc. of Manassas, Virginia. EarthWalk also provides experienced educators who will train staff members of each tribe so they can train their students using the supplied hardware and software.

EarthWalk is uniquely equipped to provide mobile training solutions in support of training. The mobility offered by the EarthWalk hardware is essential to meet the challenges afforded by the dispersed nature of the targeted Native Americans.

Hardware

EarthWalk is distributing its NetWize SmartCarts and eXpress Cases to each participating tribe to use in delivering technology based instruction and workforce skill training. Trademark qualities of this mobile wireless computer lab system includes built-in power management and recharging capabilities that enable the laptops to be used throughout an entire day, without interruption. The NetWize System provides enough power to simultaneously recharge all of the EarthWalk eBuddy ruggedized wireless laptops, additional batteries and peripherals housed in a SmartCart or eXpress Case from just one standard electrical outlet. This efficiency and mobility eliminates the need for additional infrastructure or electrical wiring. For participants in the BRIDGES Project, the flexibility of EarthWalk's mobile system enables them to teach and learn valuable skills in any location and greatly expand accessibility to technology and training.

EarthWalk is providing several 16-Bay NetWize Carts to each of the participating tribes. These carts store and recharge up to 16 EarthWalk eBuddy ruggedized laptops and 16 additional batteries.



EarthWalk is also providing several eXpress Cases to each of the participating tribes. These cases store and recharge up to 8 EarthWalk eBuddy ruggedized laptops and 8 additional batteries.



Each NetWise System delivered to the participating tribes will house EarthWalk's eBuddy ruggedized laptops. The rugged design of these laptops includes a magnesium alloy case, shock resistant hard drive and LCD screen, and spill proof keyboard. With this level of durability, the EarthWalk laptops are highly suitable for use by multiple users in various training environments.



Software



The laptops for the BRIDGES Project are preloaded with software applications to enhance the training sessions taking place in each of the participating tribes.

NetOp School software enables the trainers to manage instructional activities from their laptop screen, and it is particularly useful for sessions with larger numbers of participants. With this software, trainers are able to evaluate and monitor participant progress and provide continual guidance throughout the training sessions.



UltraKey is a typing tutor featuring 3D animated instruction and voice enhanced support providing regular feedback. Keyboarding instruction is fundamental to the basic technology skills and job-readiness training that is taking place through the BRIDGES Project.



TeleWRITER provides the means for distance learning and/or effective local instruction. It contains a whiteboard facility along with features to annotate the teacher's presentation material. It permits the teacher to quiz students to ensure that the subject matter is being received. It enables the instructor to share applications (i.e., Word, Excel, etc.) with students without loading software on the student computers.



Training



In addition, participating tribes provide software for inclusion on the laptops to complement specific content that trainers are utilizing in their instruction.

EarthWalk Trainers are educators who bring to the project knowledge of preparing and

implementing a range of training models for diverse student populations. Using a “train-the-trainer” model, they are providing the Tribal Trainers with training on the use of the hardware and software, as well as tools for the integration of technology into their training.

For each tribe, EarthWalk Trainers are customizing the training to meet the needs of the Tribal Trainers based on their levels of technological expertise and the anticipated needs and goals of those whom they will be training. The EarthWalk Trainers are also available to consult with the Tribal Trainers regularly and provide guidance and feedback on the workforce skill training sessions with the tribal members.

