To: MSL Network Advisory Council

From: Donci Bardash, BTOP Project Director

Date: November 2, 2012

Re: MSL Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) Public Computing
Center Grant (PCC) Update

A. Edge Initiative

Thirteen organizations are creating the first-ever benchmarks for public access technology in public libraries, a projected referred to as the Edge Initiative. Partners include ALA, PLA, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, TechSoup, OCLC and public libraries. The Edge Benchmarks framework points to practices that will help libraries evaluate and continually improve public technology services in their communities. The benchmarks are divided into three main categories that assess:

- **Community Value:** External practices that connect the library to the community.

- **Engaging the Community & Decision-makers:** Specific programs, services and supports that enable people to get value from their use of technology.

- **Organizational Management:** Internal management and infrastructure.

The benchmarks are currently in beta form. The Edge Initiative publishes surveys for each benchmark to gain input from libraries nationwide in order to improve and finalize the tool. Many small and rural libraries are encouraging the group to modify (scale) the benchmarks, or to provide unique benchmarks based on community size.

The benchmarks will also have an executive tool that will assist with technology strategic planning and management. While the benchmarks alone are comprehensive and valuable tools, funding groups and agencies have also implied that future projects may be evaluated based on the Edge framework.

TechSoup is sponsoring a webinar to discuss Benchmark 11 (Staff Technology Skills) on December 4th.

B. MSU Feasibility Study

MSL commissioned a study and report by Montana State University to identify sustainability strategies for support public computer centers and library technology services. The report, *Understanding Cost-Effective Strategies for Increasing Technology & Internet Access in Montana Public Libraries*, was presented to the Commission on August 8th and can be found online at the MSL website. Dr. Gregory Gilpin and Dr. Anton Bekkerman will present the report and their strategies to the NAC at the November 13th meeting. Suggestions range to MSL providing a centralized technology information portal, to standardized equipment and hardware, to regional consortial approaches for managing IT staff.
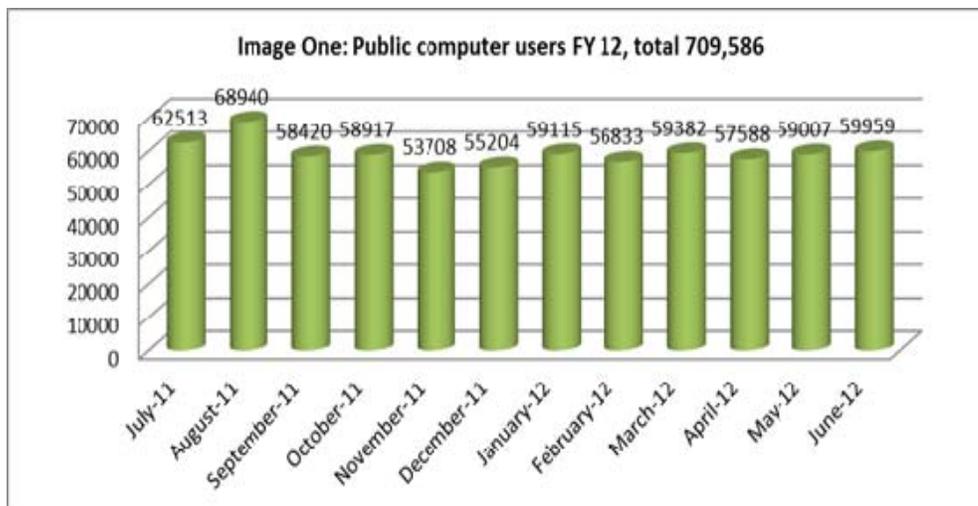
C. Network Health Check-ups

BTOP has contracted with Morrison-Maierle to assess network performance and security risks at 33 BTOP-participating public libraries. Each library will receive a unique report that will include a network map, performance statistics, findings and suggested corrective action. Critical issues will also be corrected under the contract and paid by BTOP. These might include installing virus protection, replacing aging hardware, or installing data drops. Significant remediation projects may require multiple visits. On-site assessments will be completed mid-November. Remediation projects will be completed in December. All libraries will receive their written reports by January 1, 2013.
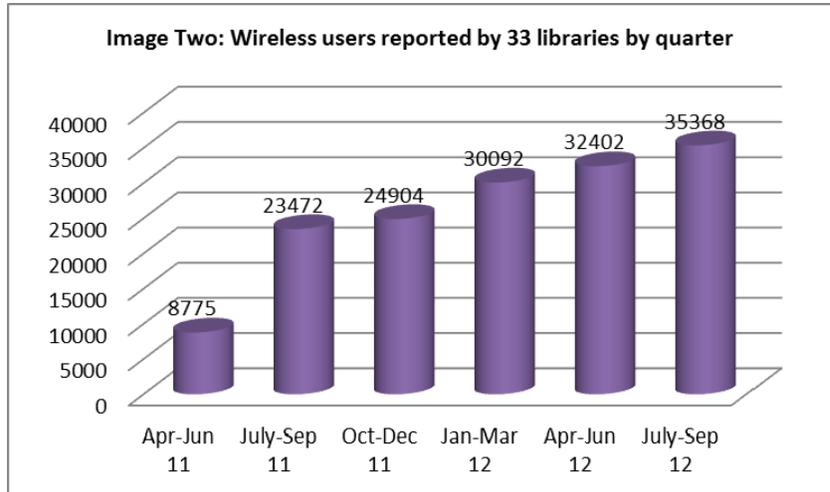
D. Videos on the Impact of Libraries

BTOP amended a contract with PartnersCreative to add an additional video project highlighting Montana-specific stories on how libraries have impacted the lives of our community members. Topics include but are not limited to: technology training, family support and services, job search assistance, small business support, and the library as a community hub. For example, a Polson patron has set-up her own cosmetics business. With help from the technology librarian, she has been using social media to market her product. Filming has taken place in Polson, Helena, and on the Missoula WoW bus. Next month, filming will conclude in Sidney. The firm will create 3-4 videos approximately 4 minutes in length. The videos will premiere at the legislative open house in January.

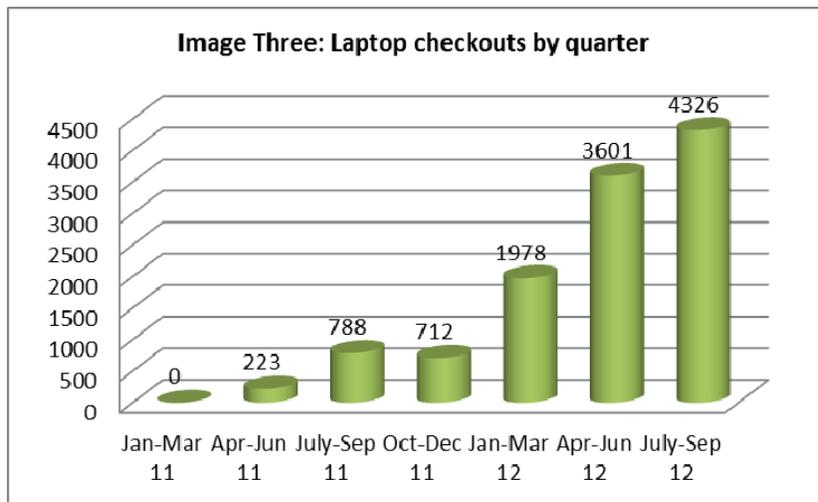**E. Library Computer Users**

As more library-users become self-sufficient and use their own devices from the library or from home, we anticipated seeing a decrease in library statistics. However, the pace of this decrease has been much faster than we predicted. The public library statistics for 2011 showed approximately 1,030,000 users for that year for BTOP libraries. Our project report shows only 710,000 users from July 2011 to June 2012. This is an approximately 30% annual decrease.

Image One: Public computer users FY 12, total 709,586

Though many libraries are unable to track wireless users with their own laptops, 33 BTOP libraries have consistently tracked and reported these users to our office.

Image Two: Wireless users reported by 33 libraries by quarter

Quarter	Users
Apr-Jun 11	8775
July-Sep 11	23472
Oct-Dec 11	24904
Jan-Mar 12	30092
Apr-Jun 12	32402
July-Sep 12	35368

Additionally, the number of patrons checking out library laptops has increased.

Image Three: Laptop checkouts by quarter

Quarter	Checkouts
Jan-Mar 11	0
Apr-Jun 11	223
July-Sep 11	788
Oct-Dec 11	712
Jan-Mar 12	1978
Apr-Jun 12	3601
July-Sep 12	4326

F. Technology Training

The BTOP technology trainer continues to provide webinars and in-person workshops on topics ranging from personal devices to Envisionware. Future training will include cloud-based products, Windows 8, and online community resources. Our training series with the Workforce Services Division was highlighted in WebJunction and has been our strongest co-training partnership. She is also focusing attention on transferring resources to the new learning portal.

G. Sustainability

The BTOP project director has begun a webinar series on sustainability, including grant-writing, major donor fundraising, and community service projects (VISTA, SeniorCorps) co-presented with partners. In January, each BTOP library will receive individualized fact sheets with statistics and trend data. Computer and network standards, as well as information on cooperative purchasing programs will be added to the learning portal.