ACCESS TO LEARNING AWARD

2010

Honoring innovation. Opening a world of opportunity.

BILL & MELINDA GATES *foundation*

We invite you to apply for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's annual **Access to Learning Award,** which recognizes the innovative efforts of public libraries and similar institutions outside the United States to connect people to information and opportunities through free access to computers and the Internet. The award is given by Global Libraries, a special initiative of the foundation's Global Development Program.

Computers and the Internet are powerful tools that provide opportunities for people to improve their social and economic well-being. Worldwide, just one person in six has access to the Internet. This means that more than five billion people miss out on chances to pursue education and employment, access government services, learn about valuable health information, conduct business online, and exchange information and ideas. The Access to Learning Award encourages new, innovative ways to provide computer and Internet services to people without access, and promotes greater development of public access technology programs around the world.

The recipient of the Access to Learning Award will receive US$1 million.

THE APPLICATION DEADLINE FOR THE 2010 AWARD IS

OCTOBER 31, 2009

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

WHAT KINDS OF INSTITUTIONS MAY APPLY?

The foundation invites public libraries and similar institutions outside the United States to apply. Applicants must provide free public access to information through the use of computers and the Internet. We particularly encourage applications from institutions in developing countries or those working with disadvantaged communities. We will give preference to organizations that actively reach out to underserved groups, such as patrons who are poor, disabled, or from minority communities.

HOW IS "FREE PUBLIC ACCESS" DEFINED?

A library or similar institution offers free public access to computers and the Internet if it allows all members of the public—without exception—to use its facilities, computers, and Internet at no cost. Eligible organizations charge no membership or access fees, make technology services available to the public in a community space, and offer technology training to the public and their staff. Organizations that restrict public access to their services—for example, on the basis of age or membership status—are not eligible for the award.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED INNOVATIVE?

Innovative programs provide access to information through technology and services that were previously not available to the community. We consider programs of any size or scope, and expect the application to address how a program impacts the community. We look for creative approaches to reaching underserved communities, with a demonstrated ability to be self-sustained (through current or identified sources of funding).

IS THIS AWARD INTENDED TO FUND A PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

No. The award is a one-time prize for organizations that are currently working to provide free access to computers and the Internet. The award may be used to support future activities, but is given based on past achievement and not future projects.

PROCESS FOR SELECTION

An international advisory committee made up of librarians, information technology experts, and foundation staff evaluates applications based on candidates' innovative efforts to:

- **make computer and Internet access free to the public;**
- **train the public in using technology and accessing information;**
- **educate staff on technology use; and**
- **reach out to underserved communities.**

The committee further reviews the ability of the candidate to serve as a model of innovation for other communities.

The committee selects a list of final candidates for consideration by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Following an independent financial and organizational review of the finalists, the foundation selects the award recipient.

HOW TO APPLY

DEADLINE
Completed applications must be submitted by October 31, 2009.

OBTAINING APPLICATION FORMS
The Access to Learning Award application form is available for download at **www.gatesfoundation.org/ATLA**

The form is only available in English and must be completed in English in order to be eligible for review by the advisory committee.

Applications may also be requested by email at **ATLA@gatesfoundation.org**

PREVIOUS AWARD RECIPIENTS

2008: Vasconcelos is a mobile technology program that provides computer access and training for underserved communities in Veracruz, Mexico, using all-terrain vehicles equipped with state-of-the-art classrooms.

2007: Australia's Northern Territory Library (NTL) provides indigenous people living in impoverished communities with technology tools and training. Through NTL's Our Story program, residents build digital literacy skills while creating digital archives of Aboriginal stories and songs.

2006: Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal works with local villages to build and equip self-supporting libraries—funded through income-generating community projects—that provide free access to computers and the Internet, Nepali books and other reading materials, community meeting spaces, and local news content.

2005: Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha converts indigenous boats into mobile libraries that provide free computer and Internet stations and training to rural communities throughout a Northern Bangladesh watershed.

2004: Aarhus Public Libraries in Denmark has built a creative library system with a broad array of Internet and information technology services for use by a growing refugee and immigrant community.

2004: Evergreen Rural Library Service Center works with public high schools in remote regions in China to develop and computerize library collections, create computer labs for the entire community, and offer training.

2003: Smart Cape Access Project installed computers and Internet access in several public libraries to serve residents of disadvantaged areas of Cape Town—the first free access program in South Africa.

2002: BibloRed is a network of 19 public libraries in Bogotá, Colombia, that offers free access to computers and the Internet in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

2001: Proyecto Bibliotecas (Probigua) supports libraries and technology centers in rural communities in Guatemala. These centers include computer training labs that teach new skills to underserved populations.

2001: Biblioteca del Congreso is one of the few libraries in Argentina that provides services to the public free of charge, including a mobile library and multimedia computer center that is open 24 hours a day.

2000: Helsinki City Library in Finland was among the first public libraries in the world to offer Internet access to the public, including poor residents and refugees. It established the Information Gas Station, a portable unit providing immediate information by phone, fax, or text messages.

ABOUT THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

A special initiative of the foundation's Global Development Program, **Global Libraries** works to open a world of knowledge, information, and opportunity for communities around the world. The initiative forms partnerships with select countries to help public libraries provide access to computers and the Internet, and to train library users on how to take advantage of these tools. With our partners, we aim to transform public libraries into vital centers that connect millions of people to information technology, and the economic and educational benefits that access enables. For more information on Global Libraries' work, please visit **www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries**

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