

## Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** City of Atlanta, Dept. of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs

**Project Title:** Connecting with the Community

**Project Type:** Sustainable Adoption

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### Executive Summary

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The Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs, City of Atlanta, Georgia, proudly bears the words, The Heart and Soul of the City, on its emblem. This motto is the driving force behind the Department's work. We provide accessible recreational and educational opportunities for youth, both after school and during the summer, as well for senior populations.

With the economic downturn, the Department was forced to close 12 out of 23 recreational facilities. Not only were heavily utilized centers closed, but 104 employees had to be let go due to Reduction In Force. The City lost revenue because many citizens were no longer financially able to afford to sign up for programs. The Department's biggest concern, however, has been for the youth it had been serving, many of whom are "latch-key" kids, as well as for the seniors who depend on the recreation activities as their chance to get out of their homes to enjoy safe and stimulating social activities.

Not only does the Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs consider itself the heartbeat of the City of Atlanta, but the Commissioner has made it clear to her staff that their work has a direct bearing on public safety. If the children and teens have no activities or programs to occupy their after-school time, many of them will end up in trouble. Research confirms that kids are less likely to get into negative behaviors when a responsible adult is supervising them. In a study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, researchers found that eighth graders who are unsupervised more than 10 hours a week are about 10 percent more likely to try marijuana, and twice as likely to smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol, as eighth-graders who are not unsupervised during the week.

When faced with the realities of this economy and the closing of badly-needed recreation centers, it is clear that innovative approaches have to be identified. For two years, Departmental leadership has been researching an internet-based recreational software program that automates recreation management while streamlining the recreational programs. The possibility of purchasing this program was dismissed due to the cost. Now the Department views this software in a different light; not simply as a streamlining process, but as a way to offer our programs to seniors and youth that will be convenient and at the same time provide an opportunity for the user to understand the resources available on the

Internet and to earn and redeem award points, which will ultimately result in a reduction of the cost of the programs for the community.

Class is a quality software recreation management system that provides citizens with electronic access to viewing, registering and paying for recreational programs, all on-line. With this system, citizens will have a "one-stop shop", rather than having to physically travel to different centers to view each center's programs. The on-line access will save on gas and save on time. Through the Internet, citizens will have the ability to sign up for multiple classes at any of the recreation sites. Services such as on-line registration make participation easier for busy families. This feature alone will make spread awareness of our programs and services.

Currently, it takes approximately 15-20 minutes per person to register at a recreation site (not counting the travel time it takes the individual to get the center). This involves getting the information, determining which classes the persons wants, getting credit card details, then explaining to them the location of the classes, the times, dates and requirements as far as supplies that will be needed. With the reduction in overtime administrative wages for the current signup system at each recreation center, there is every reason to believe that the savings can be used to open a currently closed center on a limited basis to offer additional programs. That also opens the possibility of re-hiring selected staff who were part of the Reduction In Force numbers.

With the recreation management software's ability to create marketing information, it is estimated that a population of 126,817, with 73% African American, 3% Hispanic and 23% Caucasian broadband subscribers will be reached. With at least 76% of Americans either owning a computer or have computer skills, on-line recreation program viewing and signup for programs will stimulate internet usage. The Department is confident that, with this \$420,110 proposed grant, multiple needs will be addressed and the project will be a win-win situation. With the implementation of this software, the Department anticipates a much larger number of citizens signing up for programs on-line. On-line registration will result in less administrative time and therefore fewer wages.

The Director of Recreation, Charlene Braud, has over 20 years experience in the recreation field and would oversee the installation, training and maintenance of the recreation management software at the recreation facilities. In coordination with the Department's Project Team, the City's Department of Information Technology and the vendor, ActiveNetwork, the project will be implemented immediately with the campaign awareness program, installation and training for the software.