

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** City of Fort Wayne

**Project Title:** City of Fort Wayne Public Computer Centers Project

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### **Executive Summary**

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#### Project Need

Within the City of Fort Wayne, there is a population of underserved individuals that are in need of broadband education, awareness, and access in order to gain the necessary, basic skills to seek out and obtain employment as well as gain access to health and education information to improve their quality of life.

There are currently a wide range of advanced training programs in Fort Wayne, including programs in such areas as machining, electronics, programming, design engineering, and other similar programs. What is missing, however, is a system that better prepares and connects underskilled and underemployed individuals to these advanced training activities and, eventually, to good paying job opportunities.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this grant request through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) is to set up public computer centers throughout a geographic target area in south/southeast Fort Wayne, Indiana that will serve as first-level employment training access points for a low-income and special need populations. Training programs would be delivered at three of the City of Fort Wayne's existing youth centers: Jennings, Cooper, and Weisser, as well as at the Fort Wayne Urban League facility.

BTOP funding would also support the development and implementation of training programs that offer instruction in such fundamental skills as applied mathematics and measurements, applied technology, teamwork, and other foundational workplace skills. In the end, accessing these foundational training programs will provide underskilled individuals with the opportunity to develop basic and critical

workplace skills, enabling them to successfully complete more advanced credential or degree programs that lead to employment and economic viability.

Building on the results of Mayor Henry's recent Social Service Summit which focused on how social service agencies can better communicate and collaborate within the community, the curriculum will be developed in collaboration with WorkOne Northeast, local social service groups, schools, employers, and government service agencies. The core training curriculum will focus on developing basic workplace preparedness skills. This core curriculum will be modified to address individual cohort needs and perspectives, i.e.; youth, seniors, English as a second language, etc.

The existing centers each have computer facilities, but they are inadequate to provide for the type of training program being proposed. Equipment at each of the centers is 4 years old and older. Many of the computers are not in working condition. For example, at the Jennings Center only 2 out of 12 computers are in working condition. This request will include the purchase of new equipment including computers and peripheral needs, as well as software, and furniture.

#### Target Area

The target area to be served includes a geographic area for residents that are within walking distance to the centers. This area has been determined to be the census tracts that the centers are in or next to (18003001400, 18003001700, 18003001800, 18003002800). According to the 2000 Census, a total population of 7,404 resided in this area and 32.5% were below poverty level as opposed to 12.5% for the entire City of Fort Wayne. The unemployment rate in the target area was at 16% in 2000. The City's rate was 5% in 2000 and is now 11%. Therefore, the rate in the target area has likely also increased since the last decennial census. The median household income for the area in 2000 was \$23,293 compared to \$36,518 for the entire City. In 2000, a total of 74% of the residents in the area were black alone and 17% were white alone compared to a 75% white alone and 17% black alone population for the entire City.

In addition, residents that receive social services from a collaboration of partners will be targeted in the outreach of the program. It is estimated that there will be 380 users that will benefit from the program.

#### Organizational Preparedness

The City of Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne Urban League, WorkOne Northeast and other community partners to be determined have the experience and resources needed to develop and implement an effective public computer center workplace skills development program. The City's IT Department has experience managing the various City IT needs in addition to the operations of the Northeast Indiana Regional Public Safety Academy computer labs. The City of Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department has experience managing instructional programs and facilities and marketing these programs. The Urban League has a well developed training program and existing computer center facilities, and WorkOne has vast experience and resources to bring toward the development and implementation of the curriculum needed. Brilljent, an 8a small disadvantaged business partner, is a company that will provide the planning and facilitation of collaborative efforts as well as the training staff for the project.

#### Jobs Created

Four full time equivalent jobs will be created including one training supervisor and three trainers. These staff will be hired by Brilljent.

#### Cost

The budget in the grant is approximately \$648,456 and covers a two year period.