

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: City of Boston

Project Title: Boston's Sustainable Broadband Initiative

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

Boston's three grants work together to provide the components for digital inclusion for Boston's most vulnerable citizens: broadband access, training, and adoption. Boston's network will deliver free in-home connectivity in Boston's most distressed neighborhoods, the proposed funded service area (PFSA). Boston will expand public computing center equipment and training for residents in the PFSA who largely lack home computers. This grant will fund two programs to deepen broadband adoption training and equip graduates with in-home computers for anywhere/anytime access to 21st century on-line resources.

TGH: a.Problem/Need: Access to technology in the PFSA is an issue of affordability, availability, and acquisition. Lack of reliable access to the hardware, to Internet connections and to the skills to maximize the use of technology are disadvantages tantamount to having been left back in time. Lack of access impacts education, job opportunities, health prospects -- the very means by which people improve their lives. Broadband adoption among Boston's most vulnerable cannot occur until these issues are effectively addressed. Technology Goes Home (TGH), a ten-year old school-based program, focused on 21st century skills, provides the knowledge and hardware needed for sustainable broadband adoption and digital equal opportunity.

b.Innovative Approach: TGH works because it provides mobile netbook hardware, trains in how to use integrated hardware and web applications and structures skill development and broadband access in a clear, easy-to-use framework we call "live, learn, earn, work and play online". TGH 1.0 focussed on technology skills development in teachers, students, and family members. TGH 2.0, piloted at the Frederick school for the past 36 months, focuses on broadband empowerment skills, mobile netbooks, and Internet-based applications. NTIA funding will enable all TGH 1.0 users to upgrade to version 2.0, and extend TGH 2.0 to thousands of additional users. TGH will train Public Computing Center staffs in the TGH curriculum, expanding the reach of this broadband adoption program and embedding computers in the homes of many more. TGH innovates by: 1) Training Content & Format: TGH curriculum, training, and netbooks are built around single-sign on access to "best in class" broadband content and applications. From accessing city services (food, fuel, housing) to GED prep courses and online bill payment, TGH students and families come to value the unique potential of anywhere/anytime

broadband access. 2) Structural Design: By building according to technology sector's most advanced thinking, TGH is prepared for evolutionary changes over the next five years and has already reduced per seat costs by 50% in the last two years, enabling expanded access and sustainability. 3) Access & Support: Mobile, connected hardware coupled with powerful, remote location-based services and rich media (eg the proposed WGBH "network now"), assuring that participants get key real-time information, tools and resources wherever they are. 4) Collaboration: Established agency relationships and new models for technology procurement, participant recruitment, training and support increase the value and experience for participants and a codified approach for replication.

TSN: Online Learning Readiness

a. Problem: In 2009, Microsoft VP Pamela Passman stated "...Technological fluency is essential to develop careers and achieve success in virtually every sector of the economy, from health care and construction to agriculture and manufacturing." Many companies rely on e-communications and train employees through e-learning.. Many of Boston's most vulnerable citizens desire to pursue careers in IT fields but lack technical skills, are ignorant of career options and how to prepare for them. Many have never tried or succeeded in e-learning environments. With high unemployment and so many jobs requiring on line capabilities, this new TSN program responds.

b. Innovative approach: TSN will implement Online Learning Readiness (OLR) to meet a critical need: training for out of work adults in technical/workforce skills through e-learning materials. Skills needed to be successful at online learning overlap those many employers are seeking: basic technical competencies, self-directedness, problem solving, individual/team work skills, effective online communication, time management, reading for comprehension. This structured yet learner-focused, 12-week program builds on the existing capacity of the TSN Centers to provide effective computer and workforce development training. Graduate receive a netbook for at-home use of this training, opening new job opportunities.

cc. Area served/demographics/estimated number of broadband subscribers:

TGH and TSN will serve the lowest income areas, the PFSA in Boston's Infrastructure Grant, Q. 8b. TGH will train 2200/3600 school-based individuals in each grant year. 400/700 will be trained at the PCCs for a total of 6900 served in the grant period, sustainable and ongoing thereafter. At least 800 individuals will participate in the OLLR program in the two grant years and at least 50% will complete the program and go for advanced level technology training or career-focused jobs. All will take home netbooks and have free broadband at home if Boston's infrastructure grant is funded, insuring 7300 broadband subscribers.

d. Qualifications: TGH has operated for 10 years, winning the 2008 Verizon Tech Savvy national award, "best in the nation" for innovative use of technology in education. TGH was singled out by MA Governor in Broadband message to Obama's Transition Team. For over 11 years the 34 social service agencies comprising the TSN have provided providing effective technology related training and access to residents in the PFSA.

e. Jobs Created/cost: Experienced, out-of-work work educators will be sought for this technology training. Cost is \$7,227,678.