

## Broadband USA Applications Database

**Applicant Name:** Shaw Community Ministry

**Project Title:** Shaw Community Broadband Initiative

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### Executive Summary

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The Shaw Community Broadband Initiative (SCBI) is a community partnership formed to provide sustainable broadband access to a disadvantaged, underserved community in Washington DC; the predominately black, low-income Shaw neighborhood. SCBI will establish three anchor institution public computer centers and train members of this target population, create a dynamic and mobile workforce, and provide digital educational opportunities for residents of all ages, using the well-regarded Learning Management Platform (LMP). SCBI will:

- Connect – make technology accessible
- Communicate – expand learning opportunities within our community
- Collaborate – partner with other community organizations and build relationships with our target population
- Compete – create a highly trained workforce who can work virtually without being restricted by physical space

Why? For many years, Shaw has been plagued by problems common to the inner city: high unemployment rates, prevalence of crime and destructive behaviors, grinding poverty, lack of opportunity, fractured families which sap low-income Shaw residents of any vestige of hope for better education, productive lives or job and career advancement. DC's unemployment rates are higher than the national average; standing at 10.9%. This figure does not tell the real story, however, the situation is far worse for black, low-income Shaw residents. In a 2007 report, *Two Economies: Many Residents Are Falling Behind Despite the City's Revitalization*, DC Fiscal Policy Institute examines the harsh economic disparities of low-income, black, uneducated DC residents. This report highlights the following trends:

- Despite city-wide job growth, employment among African-American residents and those with no more than a high school diploma has been falling. The employment rate for these groups is at nearly the lowest level in 30 years. Just 51% of this population is working and African Americans are five times more likely to be unemployed than white residents.
- The gap between high-wage and low-wage workers in the District is at an all-time high. Wages have barely changed in 30 years for DC's lowest-wage workers, after adjusting for inflation, while DC's top

earners have seen large earnings gains. African American median income is no higher than in 1980. Many DC workers earn poverty level wages, working for \$10.81 or less.

- Poverty in the District is at the highest level in nearly a decade. Since with the late 1990s, some 27,000 more DC residents have fallen into poverty. One in five DC residents – 110,000- lives in poverty.

The statistics are grim and have become increasingly worse due to the prolonged economic downturn. And while the report's coverage is DC-wide; for the Shaw neighborhood, it is even grimmer. Applicant Shaw Community Ministry, a community mainstay for almost 20 years, provides educational and social services to those in Shaw, particularly the residents of Lincoln Westmoreland Apartments I and II. Since 1968, 230 families have lived in these subsidized section 8 apartments. Of the 190 subsidized households, 79% received less than \$15,000 annually. There are 184 children, more than half under age 12. There are 100 single parent households. 41 households receive disability and social security benefits. Only 54 residents are employed and 73 residents are 62 or older. (Lincoln Westmoreland Housing Fact Sheet dated October 2006).

For children and teens, education and mentoring are key. Yet, A 2008 study by New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy and its Institute for Education and Social Policy revealed that children growing up in that city's public housing complexes do not perform as well on standardized reading and math tests as students who live in other types of housing environments. As a result of the study, the director of IESP suggests that "partnerships with nonprofit organizations to bring new resources and opportunities" might provide solutions for children who live in public housing complexes. Sixty-four percent of DC fourth-graders and 71 percent of eighth-graders scored below basic math levels; national figures were 24 percent and 33 percent respectively. The high school graduation rate in DC has fallen abysmally to below 50%, as reported in the Washington Post, DC Graduation Rates Down, June 9, 2009.

SCBI is a bold new action that brings together community partners who are committed to giving back and extending a hand up to bring Shaw residents successfully across the great digital divide that separates the black and white communities. The historically black Shaw neighborhood is becoming increasingly gentrified and home prices, even during the housing slump, have become unaffordable to undereducated or uneducated black residents, driving them out of their homes.

Because of its familiarity and reputation in Shaw, the Applicant will be able to attract hundreds of the 5000 Shaw residents, living in the neighborhood, to any of three public computer centers and to sustain those centers (thus sustaining broadband adoption) by tailoring digital literacy, equipment and software to the needs of Shaw residents and by charging prorated fees, depending on income. At least 1000 jobs will be saved or created as a result of our efforts.

The overall cost of SCBI is \$ 4,500,000.

SCBI will provide digital media literacy and management resources that complies with successful broadband components including enabling environment, connectivity, transparency and program management. The high unemployment rates will decrease based on new competencies and skills

obtained locally and globally which allow individuals to secure jobs beyond geographical boundaries. SCBI will not only educate and train for employment but create new jobs and economies using the endless power of broadband to allow access to more markets, talent and capital.