

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Project Title: Calvert Computer Learning Center and Young Terrace Computer Learning Center

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

a) In June 2008, NRHA completed a research project that revealed that the two main barriers facing residents in public housing included unemployment or underemployment, and undereducated over-aged youths. The definition of over-aged youth are those individuals who are two or more grades levels behind the average student or whose test scores are two or more grades below the average student. The over-aged youth is at risk of falling behind and losing the desire to succeed, which results in higher school dropouts rates. The study also concluded that both groups were at risk of continuing the endless cycle of poverty and criminal activities. High speed Internet access is tantamount to economic opportunities for these at-risk individuals and the successful implementation of our programs in our communities. According to AFL-CIO, the national trade union center, the nation's commitment to open the paths of economic opportunity and educational advancement will only be successful if every American has access to the essential communication networks of today's electronic age.

b) NRHA's over-arching approach identifies and addresses the barriers to success of our public housing communities. To guide our residents down the path of economic growth and educational advancement, NRHA must increase their communication ability through the vehicle of electronic communication. Electronic communication increases the success of our residents to become employed and relief of welfare-dependency. Advanced employment allows our resident to become independent from entitlement programs and a sense of internal pride of self-sustainment. To obtain this goal, NRHA established a Learning Center that is currently managed by a certified computer instructor. The center is supported by the partnerships of various institutions such as, Norfolk Public Schools for academic programs; Opplnc for workforce development support (employment training); Virginia Tidewater Consortium for post secondary support; and Internal Revenue Services for tax preparation services. The Virginia Tidewater Consortium is an assemblage of higher educational institutions dedicated towards higher levels of academic achievement.

c) With grant approval from the BTOP, NRHA will have the funding to open a new Learning Center that will complement our existing center and increase the geographic accessibility to our residents of Norfolk's public housing communities. The existing NRHA Learning Center is called the Calvert Neighborhood Network Center. The new Learning Center will be called Young Terrace Community Learning Center. Currently, the population of the City of Norfolk is approximately 241,000, and 3,629 families are currently residing in NRHA public housing. NRHA houses 2,708 single, female head of households, of which 56% have never been married and their average income is below 60% of AMI.

Approximately 750 NRHA residents are elderly and/or disabled. NRHA's target audience include 1,063 non-elderly/non-disabled households that report no wages, of which 317 are between the ages of 20-25. NRHA residents include 449 males between the ages of 18-55, of which 23% are head of households. Currently, we report that 138 male head-of-households are seasonally employed with an average annual income \$5,180. These individuals are living at below poverty level and have little to no financial resources to contribute to their families. Approximately, 69% or 311 working age males living in NRHA communities and are unemployed. The above numbers confirmed to NRHA that a family is devastated and is broken apart when men/husbands/fathers are not able to financially support his family. Thus, the family becomes another statistic or one of the female, head-of-households and the vicious cycle of poverty continues. There are currently 279 young males living in NRHA communities who will reach the age of majority between the years of 2010-2012. A recent report by the Norfolk Public School System reported that than 50% of the males living in Norfolk's public housing communities do not complete high school. A recent NRHA assessment report indicated that approximately 80% of the head-of-households had less than a high school education, and that their average grade level was eighth grade or less. The estimated number of potential community users of new and current NRHA Learning Centers will be between 500 to 600 individuals within the next year. NRHA has already out grown our capacity at the current computer center and have a waiting list for new users.

d) NRHA was established in 1941 and our Housing Choice Voucher program is recognized as high performing. NRHA has a well-defined management structure and is be able to implement rapid start-up upon grant award. NRHA has worked extensively with all the partnerships listed in paragraph b above to assist NRHA residents in achieving self-sufficiency. NRHA received several grants during the past decade, which include, a 2004 & 2006 RSDM Family grant in the amount of \$500,000 each to implement self sufficiency programs. NRHA has received the ROSS Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency grants for the past five years. All funds were committed and expended within grant timelines, and all grant goals were met or exceeded. NRHA has completed several grants and is knowledgeable in grant closeout procedures. The financial management of NRHA is the responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Ms. Clara Graves a member of the NRHA Executive Team, reports directly to the Executive Director, Mr. Shurl Montgomery. The CFO administers the Department of Finance who is responsible for the fiscal management of NRHA. NRHA is not delinquent on any federal debt.

e) Funding through the BTOP will allow NRHA to save three positions (computer centers coordinator and two program assistants). Funding will also allow NRHA to contract out for services providing employment opportunities for others.