

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Asian Media Access, Inc.

Project Title: Asian Pacific American Community Network (APA ComMNet) Public Computer Center

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Asian Pacific American Community Network (APA ComMNet) Public Computer Center will be a technology access and training facility with 30 computers, a mobile lab of 15 computers, and media production equipment to mitigate the ever-growing digital divide. APA ComMNet will provide computer access and computer/IT/media training to under-served immigrants and refugee residents of the Twin Cities.

Arguably the greatest achievement of the 20th century was the development of information and communications technology, particularly the Internet. Internet users can now send and receive material, on virtually any topic, to and from anywhere in the world. Advances in communications and technology bring more information to more individuals faster than ever before. Technology has revolutionized the way in which information is handled in almost every practical area, including education, health care and business. The U.S. Department of Commerce through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) delivered a series of three reports highlighting the digital/information divide between those with access to new technologies and those without. The final report determined that not only did the gap exist, but also in many cases it was widening over time for minorities, low-income parents, the less educated, and children of single-parent households, particularly when they reside in rural areas or central cities.

Despite this significant growth in computer ownership and usage overall, the growth has occurred to a greater extent within some income levels, demographic groups, and geographic areas, than in others. In fact, the "digital divide" between certain groups of Americans has increased between 1994 and 1997 so that there is now an even greater disparity in penetration levels among some groups. There is a widening gap, for example, between those at upper and lower income levels. Additionally, even though all racial groups now own more computers than they did in 1994, Blacks and Hispanics now lag even further behind Whites in their levels of PC-ownership and on-line access. The following represent some of the more significant findings.

Other non-Hispanic" households, including Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Eskimos, are least likely to have telephone service in rural areas (82.8%), particularly at low incomes (64.3%). Black and Hispanic households also have low telephone rates in rural areas (83.2% and 85%), especially at low incomes (73.6% and 72.2%). As in 1994, Blacks have the lowest PC-ownership rates in rural areas (14.9%), followed by Blacks and Hispanics in central cities (17.1% and 16.2%, respectively). On-line access is also the lowest for Black households in rural areas (5.5%) and central cities (5.8%), followed by Hispanic households in central cities (7.0%) and rural areas (7.3%).

The demographics in Minnesota have been changing significantly for the past two decades. For example, the Asian & Pacific Islander (API) community has seen a drastic population increase, reaching approximately 152,000 people, of which the Hmong people are the largest ethnic group. From 1990 to 2000, the API population grew from 3% to 13% relatively, compared to a state average increase of 3%. Additionally, a considerable number of these APIs, many of whom are newly arrived refugees and immigrants, are settling in the city of Minneapolis.

Not only is the API population on the rise in Minneapolis, but also the poverty rate is increasing at an alarming rate. For instance, the Near North neighborhood in Minneapolis had a severe poverty rate of 34% in the 90s, with the brunt of the hardship borne by people of color. Over half of all blacks, APIs, and American Indians were considered poor in the 90s, compared to about one-fourth of whites and one-third of Hispanics. To compound this problem, Minneapolis is comprised of the most linguistically isolated households in Hennepin County according to the Institute of Race and Poverty (linguistically isolated households are those in which all household members aged fourteen or older have limited English proficiency - LEP). The increase in API population in MN, the new refugees and immigrants who have mostly settled in North Minneapolis, and the high rates of poverty among communities of color have all contributed to create a unique challenge for Minneapolis, resulting in a need for support services tailored to APIs living in the area.

The goals of the APA ComMNet Public Computer Center are to close the gap in the digital divide and to increase employment readiness and pay for immigrants and refugee. These goals will be facilitated by the following objectives by providing broadband computer access and computer/IT/media training.

Asian Media Access will be the lead agency, in overseeing the Initiative. If funded, the Initiative will hire a new staff as Coordinator of Media Technology in assisting the sub-grant projects.

Briefly, the APA ComMNet Public Computer Center overall cost is:

Total Project Cost = \$602,140

Federal Resources = \$481,290

Match = \$120,850 (UMN \$96,600 + Program Income \$22,000 + QED \$1,250 + Applicant \$1,000)

Please refer to the Budget Narrative and Budget Worksheet for a complete detailed description of the use of funds.