

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Uplift, Inc.

Project Title: TECHknow Computer Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Detroit has been ravaged by the recession and high unemployment. Corporations are moving their facilities to places where there is a skilled technology workforce they desire, bringing jobs, business opportunities and an increased standard of living. Detroit residents lack access to computers, and the internet. If access becomes available during the after-school and after-work hours, residents would develop business technology skills. Corporations and jobs would flow to Detroit to employ the skilled technology labor causing an intense vibrant economy to erupt and expand throughout the Detroit Metropolitan region.

In fact, Michigan Future reported during Michigan's high automotive job loss, Michigan failed to compete for the 225,000 jobs created in the Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) Industry. Jobs in the business processing industry, includes: customer service agents, human resources recruiters, data entry agents/clerks, financial clerks, tax preparers, bill collection and a host of other clerical/ paraprofessional type functions. These jobs pay an hourly wage in the range of 10 to 20 dollars an hour. As the automotive industry is scaling back to its core competence, it provides an opportunity to develop jobs to service the business functions they will outsource.

TECHknow Computer Centers will provide computers, internet access, business technology classes and proctored assistance during after-school/ after-work hours to serve 500 individuals daily or 180,000 individuals annually to become skilled in business technology software. Currently, the mass majority of public computer centers are open until 5 pm. or have limited availability within the neighborhoods. TECHknow Computer Centers will also provide a facility for individuals to develop a home shoring virtual call center practice. TECHknow Computer Centers will facilitate the creation of approximate 300 jobs annually.

Detroit is suffering with the highest unemployment rate in the country and the highest underemployment in the nation. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Detroit's unemployment rate as of January 2009 hit 22.2%, a 26 year high compared to the Michigan average of 11.6% and the National average of 7.2%

Poverty stifles an individual's ability to see potential opportunities. Often, people gravitate to what they can see as prosperous. With no hope for a job, a stable life nor prosperous finances, many Detroiters have resorted to employment in the underworld even if that means they risk possible arrest and imprisonment. While the crime rate has progressed downward for many years, the FBI 2007 UCR data property crimes – burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson are up 6771.6 crimes per every 100,000 people.

Poverty and hence crime reduction is dependent upon job creation. Uplift, Inc. is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit Idea Incubator Utilizing Property (Intellectual, Real Estate and Technological) to Lift Individuals From Tragedy.

In September 2006, Uplift, Inc. piloted the concept of Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School, a cyber school as a last chance alternative school for Detroit Public School dropouts and juvenile delinquents. Cyber schools are schools with an all-virtual curriculum in a brick-and mortar building. Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School provided 1 computer per student in an attempt to discover if urban students possess the ability to master business technology skills. They were taught the entire Microsoft Office Suite - Word, Excel, Power point and Access. They mastered Microsoft Office Suite as well as the Adobe Creative Suite. They were able to compile letters, spreadsheets, presentations, invitations and eventually websites. Here are the documented successes of Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School:

1. Created Strong Reader to move reading grade levels from 4.2 to 7.8
2. Sent three quarter finalists to the National Vocabulary Championship
3. 80% graduation rate, 100% postsecondary matriculation
4. Won the Automation Alley Educational Program of the Year 2007

Prior to the creation of Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School, Uplift, Inc. assisted Detroit Public Schools turnaround of two schools, Hanstein Elementary and Duke Ellington Conservatory of Music and Arts. Here are their results:

Duke Ellington Conservatory of Music and Art

2005- 2006

Increased Middle School MEAP scores to 84% in Reading from 44%

Hanstein Elementary

2002-2004

Increased MEAP scores to 69.1% in Math from 39.1% in Math 2001-2002

Orchestrated increase in MEAP scores to 78% in Reading 2002-2003 From 20% in Reading

Currently, Uplift, Inc. provides Academic Parent Workshops for low income parents attending Detroit Public Schools.

Uplift, Inc. with this project, TECHknow Computer Centers, will provide computers, internet access, business technology classes and proctored assistance during after-school/ after-work hours to serve 500 individuals daily or 180,000 individuals annually to become skilled in business technology. TECHknow Computer Centers will also provide a facility for individuals to develop a home shoring virtual call center practice. TECHknow Computer Centers will facilitate the creation of approximate 200 jobs in the first two years at a cost of \$992,000 laying the foundation for the creation of another 250 jobs long term.