

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority

**Project Title:** Computer Connection

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

---

### **Executive Summary**

---

AMHA houses over 18,000 Summit County residents through public housing, the housing choice voucher, tax credit and site based programs. This includes 17 family developments; 13 high rise buildings housing older adults and people with disabilities and over 500 single family homes throughout the county. The head of our family households are most often a woman between the ages of 18 and 26, having two or more children, and a maximum of a high school diploma. There are also multigenerational families headed by a mother with a teenage daughter who is also a mother; or a grandmother who is raising the children of her absent child. Many residents have little or no job skills; about one in four families have reportable earned income. More than half (59%) or 1,124 of the 1,892 public housing families with dependent children, incomes fall below 50% of federal poverty guidelines (FPG); only 25 families have incomes that are 200% or more of FPG. To become economically self-sufficient, AMHA residents need services that will: provide computer education; improve their literacy and educational skills; assist in obtaining a GED and job seeking ability. Transportation issues compound the problem of accessibility to learning programs and services: few residents have valid driver's license and own a car; public transportation is not always readily available and many cannot afford it.

The Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority's The Computer Connection will offer top-quality, network-based interactive and distance instruction, capable of providing each student a self-paced, hands-on approach to education skills, computer education, literacy education, GED, improved job seeking skills and English as the Second or Other Language (ESOL).

Through HUD-funded Neighborhood Network grants, AMHA has three computer labs sites: Edgewood Homes in Akron, Van Buren Homes in Barberton and Keys Towers in Stow. In addition, we operate the Computer Connection, a 12 computer mobile lab operating in AMHA developments throughout Summit County. A BTOP grant award would allow AMHA to open new sites at Valley View Apartments and Joy Park Homes in Akron, Pinewood Gardens in Twinsburg, sustain current program sites and assure that a qualified instructor remains employed at these sites. Anyone living in AMHA housing (public housing, local housing authority or a participant in the Housing Choice Voucher Program) or within two miles of the computer labs will be able to participate in the programs offered through the Computer Connection.

The BTOP funding will make it possible to develop and conduct classes according to need at any AMHA development and surrounding neighborhood.

AMHA will provide the Project Coordinator, a full-time, State of Ohio certified teacher, who is employed through the Summit County Educational Service Center and works in concert with Project Learn, an adult basic education and distance learning program, jointly providing services at libraries and educational facilities throughout Summit County that are accessible to all. The collaborative programming provides participants the opportunity to benefit from curriculum including: Aztec (Language Arts and Math), Skills Tutor (Reading, Writing Math and Social Studies), GED Connection, Key Train (vocational education) English for All, Rosetta Stone (English language skill development). AMHA residents or others meeting HUD's Section 3 criteria will be hired as computer lab assistants. The lab assistants will gain work experience and confidence as well as providing a bridge between student and instructor. It is believed that other housing authorities can model Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority's leadership role in developing similar collaborations.

AMHA's Computer Connection Program advances the BTOP purpose of providing broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment and support to community anchor institutions, job-creating facilities and vulnerable populations.

The Computer Connection will assist participants to become self-sufficient through literacy education and computer education. Adult participants will become better acquainted with computers; obtain GED diplomas; become better informed consumers; perform job searches and apply for jobs. Youth will achieve better grades in school and improve school attendance, which is hoped will lead to academic success and post secondary education. The numerous program sites and the mobility of the program allows the classroom to go where it is needed and desired. AMHA's total resident population may take advantage of its wide variety of educational and office software programs and benefit from a 12 to 1 student ratio with an instructor who is a certified teacher and have internet access.

The lab will offer residents accessibility to educational and office software, internet access, and a certified teacher. There will be 20 stationary computers housed in six AMHA developments. In addition, twenty-eight of the developments have learning space to accommodate the 12 station lab. Computer classes will also be available in conjunction with Project Learn at their locations in the Akron and Twinsburg Public Libraries and other sites including the Job Center (WIA agency) and the Akron Institute. These sites offer access to potentially thousands of AMHA residents and their neighbors to participate in the lab and improve their literacy education, computer education, educational skills, job seeking and internet skills.

AMHA has an excellent record of serving low income people and administering federal, state and local private and public grants by fulfilling goals and expending the funds. AMHA has a long history of working and partnering with other public entities, community agencies and educational institutions that serve our adult and child population. We are requesting funding in the amount of \$297,088.00 to operate this program for a period of two years.