Guilford County lies within the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina. Home to 465,931 residents, the county encompasses 649 square miles. 11. % of the county’s population was unemployed at the end of June, 2009. Economic hardship is rampant in this area. Under this grant application, Guilford County seeks to implement community computer centers in existing departments which provide a broad range of services. The citizens who frequent the County’s service providers are among the vulnerable targeted population as indicated in the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program.

The comprehensive problem noted in this application is Guilford County’s most vulnerable population’s access to broadband services. A variety of issues plague clients of the health and human service departments, as well as public safety and other departments. Transportation to locations such as libraries, knowledge of the use of computer equipment and general apprehension of technology prohibit these vulnerable clients from utilizing broadband technology. By bringing the centers to the very locations where citizens already frequent, this proposed project is an efficient, economically feasible way to provide broadband access, education, awareness, training, equipment and support in these anchor institutions which serve citizens who need these services the most. Guilford County has a comprehensive Information Services Department fully trained, experienced and capable of completing this project.

Without this Recovery Act funding initiative, Guilford County would not be able to fund this endeavor. For example, the 2009/2010 adopted budget demonstrated a massive 17 million dollar reduction in the Human Services departments from the prior fiscal year. Further, Guilford County eliminated 86 positions. There was also a 13.3 million dollar reduction in sales tax revenue from the previous fiscal year. It would be prohibitive for Guilford County to provide these types of services to citizens under the current economic climate.

The Broadband All Access: Guilford County Community Computer Centers program proposes to provide broadband access to the general public in 20 existing service locations throughout Guilford County. An estimated 100,000 citizens will be provided broadband accessibility with this project. For example, clients
to the Guilford County Health Department’s two locations (in the city of Greensboro and High Point) can multi-task while waiting for specific services at this location or utilize the broadband access before or after the receive services at these centers. By offering the clients who are considered ‘vulnerable’-low income, unemployed, aged, children, minorities and those with disabilities, access to education, employment and enhanced service for health-care delivery through the program this project, in essence, brings the centers to the locations where the people are rather than creating a single location where the citizens must travel to. This is an innovative concept that puts this technology in the very locations the citizens must frequent.

Guilford County further certifies that all non discrimination and interconnection obligations as required in the NOFA will be adhered to. Guilford County commits to provide an ‘in kind’ match in the amount of, $165,895. Total project costs are $995,373. Guilford County will receive no other federal support for non-recurring costs in the proposed funded service area. By providing this service and enhancing wireless capabilities in both Law Enforcement buildings and Emergency Services, public safety uses of broadband and wireless services will be enhanced.

Guilford County certifies that the grant application meets all eligibility factors as well as commitment to substantial completion of the project with two years and project completion within three years of the award date. Further, this grant application commits providing a 20% in-kind match. The Broadband All Access: Guilford County Community Computer Centers program matches two of the core BTOP objectives under the following points contained in the five core purpose areas:

To provide broadband access, education, awareness, training, equipment and support to community anchor institutions (e.g. medical facilities), organizations and agencies serving vulnerable populations (e.g. low-income, unemployed, aged).

To improve access to, and use of, broadband service by public safety agencies
The concept of bringing these services to locations that serve vulnerable populations is easily replicated by other organizations. Instead of building a few computer centers which serve in a stagnant location, this concept is not only cost effective, it essentially breaks the misconception of “if you build it they will come.” This program actually brings this technology, training, health care components, etc. to the locations that citizens must already visit. This proposal offers these concepts to vulnerable citizens without effort or expense (related to public transportation) on their part.

No direct jobs will be created, however with a project of this magnitude collateral economic stimulus will result from vendors chosen to perform the scope of work associated with bringing the program to fruition.