Applicant Name:  Attleboro Housing Authority

Project Title:  AHA Education and Resource Center

Project Type:  Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Attleboro Housing Authority is planning to establish the Education and Resource Center upon receipt of an award of funding from the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

The AHA Education and Resource Center will help address needs in our resident communities for access to a compendium of resources integral to development of skills, provider networks and community-wide awareness.

The City of Attleboro is about 28 square miles and slightly more than 42,000 people. They are experiencing 8% unemployment. The average annual wage is slightly more than $40,000 per year and 44% of those employed are in manufacturing or trades. Eighty percent of our low-income residents are elderly with the rest families, children and handicapped. Our working family population is on edge with unemployment rising further and no potential for improvement and straining Authority resources.

Due to a large elderly population there is a very active Council on Aging in the area and a need for better dissemination of third-party provider information and other resources. The MA Department of Transitional Assistance plays a key role in providing services to families out of work and in shelters. A key to helping close the loop on the service spectrum is the continual availability of related information and programs.

The City of Attleboro does not now have such a single resource center that could be used as both a repository and a catalyst for residents in our underserved communities. The low-income, unemployed, aged, children and minority residents of the Authority’s resident communities will provide more than six hundred (600) potential users. “Memberships” are expected to be marketed to all support organizations working in the Attleboro area.
The Authority has established a Memorandum of Understanding with Living Waters Church, a faith-based partner, who will bring a significant amount of educational experience to bear. Members of the church are educators, teachers, experienced business men and women who are currently running independent education and counseling sessions. The church has agreed to work to commit the services of these individuals, under a Memorandum of Understanding, to assist with ongoing volunteer staffing, security, programming, scheduling, e-learning and more. We shall be looking to partner with Wheaton College and Dean College through the community service commitments made by their students. Volunteer staffing will be an important element of the ongoing operations of the center.

The Education and Resource Center will afford our low-income residents with a unique opportunity to submerse themselves into a network of communication and learning. This will provide them with the ability to compete effectively in school and work in all areas of endeavor.

The residents at all of the Authority’s properties are vulnerable, low-income families with little capacity to afford luxuries such as broadband access regularly, if at all. Our elderly have no opportunity to address their transportation, medical, social, or nutritional needs unless it is through physical contact with support groups in the community. Many are not as ambulatory as others. Many are capable but cannot afford vehicles and the like. Younger families afford the basic necessities. Many families with children struggle to live with one or two part-time jobs. Almost forty percent (40%) of our younger families have at least one parent who has not completed high school. The average rent is a regulatory computation and, based upon adjusted income, is only $300.00 per month. This means that the average income is around $12,000 per year. Because of their financial difficulties many children in these families struggle with nutritional problems leading to learning disabilities.

This center will provide our residents with a resource and content not otherwise available. We shall strive to provide access to educational programs leading to a degree, computer training, area resource directories for information and supportive services, a literacy center, a career center, local information and faith-based support programs. The faith-based support program is planned to include on-site e-learning, job counseling, credit counseling, budgeting and money skills for our entire low-income population.

The Attleboro Housing Authority has a highly qualified staff of professionals that shall strive for the successful installation and ongoing maintenance of this program. The Executive Director possesses more than thirty-five (35) years management and financial expertise with more than twenty (20) years in housing-related fields of work. The Deputy Director will be responsible for day-to-day oversight. This person possesses more than fifteen (15) years experience in handling all resident socio-economic issues
as they relate to their successful tenancy. The Authority’s Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator is experienced in family case management and will play an integral role in developing learning or educational components of our initiatives. The Operations Coordinator for the Authority will be directly responsible for coordinating all technical components of the center. This person possesses a great deal of experience with computers in general as well as HTML programming and has developed the current website for the Authority. We have a current contract with a management information systems company that is expected to play a key role in the setup and continuing maintenance of the center. We are expecting, at least initially, to staff the ce