Applicant Name: MARTIN HOUSING AUTHORITY INC

Project Title: Crossroads Computer Center

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The Crossroads Computer Center grant is written to address the need in our very small, rural community located in the northwest corner of Tennessee, about two hours northeast of Memphis and two and a half hours northwest of Nashville. We intend to expand the access to broadband services for the elderly, low income families, disadvantaged children/youth and the unemployed in and around the Martin Housing Authority (MHA) area. It is consistent with our mission to provide support services that elevate the opportunity for these vulnerable populations to rise above the challenges of poverty and unemployment and achieve a better quality of life and become more self-sufficient. While 75% of citizens in our county subscribe to internet services only 9% of our public housing residents can afford it. This significantly impairs their ability to research job opportunities, fill out online applications, or take online courses to further their education. Additionally, our local public safety officials, the senior adult center and the local library find themselves in need for upgraded and expanded access to computer technology. In the area of public safety, technology has become a standard in effective public safety management. Limitations to technology reduce effectiveness and efficiencies within those departments. The senior adult center and local library often have to limit the times of access for computers because the demand is greater than the resources. Our solution is unique, but simple: consolidate programs that share similar features and move them to a facility where they can share those commonalities along with a state of the art computer lab and distance learning classroom. The solution allows this small town to enjoy 'big city' amenities at a fraction of the cost. The acquisition and renovation of an old school building located less than a block from MHA and near other low income housing would allow two after school programs for low income families, the MHA Neighborhood Network Center, and the Senior Adult Center to share common expenses and maximize the utilization of the computer center. Our program also provides general public hours to improve overall access to the community. Classes on basic computing, keyboarding, job readiness, home buyer education and more will offer diverse opportunities for participants to expand their personal and professional knowledge base in a comfortable setting close to home. The distance learning classroom will not only serve the vulnerable populations, but also allow public safety officers to receive training at home saving money on travel. We also propose to provide additional computers to the two public safety departments in Martin and the local library. These new units will help improve public safety services and expand accessibility to broadband users at the library. With the addition of 59 replacement and new computers and 42 additional hours of availability we estimate that the number of individuals served will increase from 460 to 1,104 people per week. That's a 34% increase in the library users and 178% increase in use by our targeted vulnerable populations. Martin Housing Authority has demonstrated its capacity to administer significant grants and social
service programming like this proposal. In the past 10 years alone we have successfully secured over $10 million in grant funding to support our community. In 2006 MHA was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to open a Neighborhood Network Center. This small center provided public housing residents with computer classes, keyboarding, personal finance and budget counseling and other programs to promote upward mobility. MHA was recently awarded Recovery Act funds to make improvements to its public housing portfolio. MHA was able to expend 100% of the funds in full compliance with regulations within 9 months of the grant award; over two years before the deadline. MHA Executive staff now manages a small construction team of its own to complete most of its capital improvement projects. This provides evidence that MHA management staff has the skills to effectively and efficiently implement and complete grant related programs. This is important considering the fact that a majority of the requested funds in this application relate to construction activities. Past experience and the expertise of existing staff and experienced partner agencies provide a highly qualified and dedicated team to execute the proposed plan. This proposal will have a significant impact on our local economy too. With a 12.3% unemployment rate and few hopes for new industry in our area, a grant proposal that includes a $535,000 construction project will provide an immediate boost and put many people back to work right away. It has been estimated that our project will create 11 direct job years, 4 indirect job years and 5 induced job years. A final actual tally of jobs created will be calculated at the end of the grant term. The total grant program will cost $985,109. That includes renovation costs along with equipping the public computer center, public safety departments, and the local library with new equipment. It also includes standard operating costs along with training costs associated with the program. Of the total cost 24.7% or $243,215 comes in the form of both cash and in-kind contributions from partner agencies/entities. The remaining balance of $741,894 is the actual Federal grant request.