Executive Summary

a. A statement of the problem or need your project addresses with regard to improving broadband service adoption rates. Technology skills have become increasingly essential for ensuring success in school and in the workplace. Computer hardware and networking knowledge helps youth be productive responsible users of technology and prepares them for future careers. Research indicates that computers are powerful tools that can effectively support and enhance success in school. The U.S. Department of Education summarizes the effectiveness of using computers in youth and adult education programs as follows: 'Computers provide the learner with control, individualization and immediate feedback resulting in positive reinforcement and increased motivation.' Computers enable youth to take charge of their own learning, increasing their sense of empowerment and self-direction. 'Computers individualize instruction allowing learners to concentrate on areas of greatest need and work at their own pace. Other research on the effectiveness of using computers for educational purposes has shown that computers reduce learning time, increase retention, increase the volume of learning and increase students' interest in learning. Seventy-five percent of the youth served by our organization are at or below poverty level, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau of Thresholds. The Mississippi Department of Education reported 35% of students in the Canton Public School District; 36% of students in the Jackson Public School District, and 25.3% of students in the Hinds County School District did not graduate high school during the 2008-2009 school year. The way people work has changed dramatically. Those without computer skills and technological literacy are increasingly unable to compete in the workforce. Individuals without technology skills will increasingly find themselves remaining or becoming at a distinct disadvantage. Not only will our technology program help our youth to acquire necessary skills for their future in the work force, but will also be important to their overall development. According to the Mississippi Department of Education, the K-12 student to Internet-capable computer ratio was 3.4:1, based on the Mississippi Online Technology Evaluation (MOTE) for the 2008-2009 school year. It is important to the mission of our organization to offer technology to our Club members both for skill development and for overall youth development goals. The family is a child's first source of information and is the primary model for how she or he forms relationships and functions in the world. Unfortunately, many economic and social factors weaken family bonds and make children vulnerable to unhealthy emotional and physical development. Low-income families face particular challenges: They do not have cars to get to work, phones to communicate outside the home or computers that allow them to acquire knowledge and skills that will help them in the workplace. These are only small measures of a larger epidemic of isolation, which leaves inner-city families disconnected from economic opportunity, distant from meaningful social support networks and separated from the services and institutions that
help families succeed. 75% of the youth served by our organization live in households that are at or below poverty level, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau of Thresholds. According to the 2008 Data Profile (www.city.data.com), the average median household income for all of our service areas is $27,347 and as of December 2009 the unemployment rates for Hinds and Madison Counties are 9.0% and 7.6% respectively. While some of our families have made tremendous strides in transitioning from welfare to work, low-income families must manage new dilemmas such as holding down two or more jobs to make ends meet. Most often they end up paying too much for many of life necessities: food, shelter, transportation, health care and financial service. Our organization charge $25 per child per year for our after-school and summer literacy and enrichment programs. Parents depend on us for our services because they can not afford the services provided by our competitors. With our Public Computer Center program we plan to solve both sides of the disadvantage equation by providing computer equipment, software, and computer literacy programs to our members and their families. We will install 210 new computer systems with software and increase our broadband connection speed from 1.5/3 MBps to 3/15 MBps. b. Your overall approach to addressing the need, and [for Sustainable Adoption projects] how your approach is innovative Through the BTOP Public Computer Center Program, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Mississippi are able to acquire the latest computer hardware and software to furnish computer labs throughout our organization for the use of our members and their families. Through daily access to technology, Club members will: ' Understand how computers work, the types of opportunities they provide and their role in modern society; ' Use technology to support and advance intellectual development; ' Use the internet safely to access information and communicate; ' Use basic productivity applications and multi-media applications to create projects and communicate complex ideas; ' Use technology ethically; ' Explore technology-related careers and understand that mastering technology is integral to their economic success. The above mentioned outcomes also apply to the family members of our members in addition to empowering them to build their computer skills for finding and keeping jobs with increased earnings. c. Area(s) to be served; population of the target area(s), including demographic information; and [for Public Computer Centers] the estimated number of potential users of your public computer center(s) or [for Sustainable Adoption projects] the estimated number of potential broadband subscribers your project will reach We will have six Public Computer Centers throughout our organization within the Jackson Metropolitan Area (Hinds and Madison Counties). 99% of our population served is African-American and 75% live in households at or below the Federal Poverty Level according to the U.S. Census Bureau Thresholds. We estimate over 1,000 potential users per week. d. Qualifications of the applicant that demonstrate the ability to implement the project and achieve its intended results The Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Mississippi (BGCCM) have provided after-school and summer programming since. Our youth spend nearly 750,000 hours at our facilities each year learning new life skills and values that will serve them for a lifetime. Our primary mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to realize their full potential. We operate six Club Units throughout the Jackson Metropolitan Area (Hinds and Madison Counties) and a camp facility (Camp John I. Hay) in Hazlehurst, MS. In 2009, we averaged over 3,200 at-risk youth in our Clubs and off the streets. Most of our Club members are young people from disadvantaged circumstances and report that their Boys & Girls Club is the best or only place they have to go after-school. Our five core program areas are: Character & Leadership, Education & Career Development, Health & Life Skills, the Arts, and Sports, Fitness & Recreation. We provide our youth
access to literacy remediation, academic enrichment, technology, leadership opportunities, computer labs, arts & crafts, ceramic centers, swimming, Camp John I. Hay, organized sports, programs on substance abuse, money management, job readiness & career preparation, teenage pregnancy, conflict resolution and much more. We are developing young people into positive, self-sufficient citizens and our Clubs are the fertile grounds that cultivate tomorrow’s successful, responsible adults. e. Jobs to be saved or created Eight jobs will be created with the BGCCM Public Computer Center Program. f. Overall cost of the proposed project The overall cost of our project is $885,132.