Executive Summary

There is a strong correlation between broadband adoption and household income. Over 26% of the Carroll County population (22,737 individuals) lives in poverty compared to 13.2% nationally. The unemployment rate for Carroll County is one of the highest in the state, at 11.7%, with the state at 10.4% currently. There is also a correlating disparity found in student achievement when standardized test scores are disaggregated by economic status, causing a 'Digital Divide'. Roughly 75% of middle class students have computers in their home, while only 15% of economically disadvantaged children have them. This growing trend creates a huge need for access to broadband and expanded services for employment, educational and job training. The local Department of Labor is currently overwhelmed with individuals seeking help with employment services and access to computers. The proposed ICON Public Computer Centers (PCCs) would be able to work closely with the Department of Labor to assist in providing employment services, training, and access to computers and technology. Furthermore, there are currently no free computer classes available to the general public throughout the county. The Carrollton Housing Authority (CHA) Internet Connection and Opportunity Network (ICON) Program proposes to expand and create five PCCs in Carroll County, providing broadband services, accessibility, outreach, equipment, and support services for vulnerable populations. The ICON Program will place an emphasis on serving low income families, Hispanics, African Americans, disabled individuals, the unemployed, youth, and senior citizens that reside in public housing and the surrounding neighborhoods. The CHA ICON PCCs Project proposes to (1) Provide school-to-home network access for Public Housing (PH) residents at three sites, who attend the city schools, (2) Provide state of the art PCCs in five sites for Carroll County residents, (3) Provide technology and computer training for Carroll County residents, and (4) Provide employment and career development services for Carroll County residents.

Our ability to bridge the gap in services is vital to our community. Technology is advancing and leading the way in how our nation and communities operate and individuals lacking skills are continually experiencing employment instability. In PH Developments and surrounding Carroll County low-income neighborhoods, the ICON Program will provide outreach, access, equipment, and support services to facilitate a greater use and knowledge of broadband services, thereby stimulating greater demand for broadband, improving economic growth and job creation. Training programs will improve their odds of achieving economic self-sufficiency. Installation and maintenance of in-home computers for PH residents and access to PCCs will ensure that disadvantaged individuals will receive the same opportunity as most middle-class Americans. ICON will provide access to computers and technology, but it will provide employment services and educational training. Through its collaboration with the Carrollton City School System, it will enable students to access their work files through the EmpowerLink
network, thereby improving academics. These advancements will improve education for community residents and create at-home learning environment for youth and enabled clients to achieve success. Economically disadvantaged families have far fewer options in accessing broadband services and technology. ICON will bridge the gap in services by providing transportation, resource assistance to purchase a PC, employment opportunities, online training education and career services. The proposed project will address four of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) statutory purposes, by providing broadband access to underserved areas, improving broadband access, increase demand broadband, providing broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions, job creating strategic facilities, and vulnerable populations. The ICON Project service area includes all of Carroll County, a total population of 113,688 individuals. The ICON Program will be available with a level of support for vulnerable populations. ICON will place an emphasis on serving low income families, Hispanics, African Americans, disabled, unemployed, youth, and senior citizens that reside in public housing and the surrounding neighborhoods. The CHA ICON PCCs are fully prepared to implement, operate and sustain our public computer centers project using the funds from the BTOP. With the BTOP funding, the already flourishing programs provided by the ICON PCCs will extend and expand into other parts of the community. The CHA Neighborhood Networks Program has been in existence since 2003. The program has been successfully managing projects similar to the proposed BTOP project, providing job readiness and opportunities to community residents, facilitating technology-based and computer skills enhancement training and access to public computers for CHA residents and students. Past influential projects stand as firm testimonies to the abilities and successes of the public computer centers program to create and continue in this BTOP endeavor. Key partners affiliated with the PCC projects are the CCSS, Virtucom Inc., the University of West Georgia (UWG), and West Georgia Technical College (WGTC). The CCSS is a vital partner in administering the school-to-home EMPOWERLINK network accessibility to public housing residents and students attending CCSS. Through the partnership with Virtucom Inc., a full service technology solutions company, the CHA will be provided technical support for all computer operating systems in the ICON PCCs. Also, the UWG and WGTC will provide the use of interns to contribute time and training to the public computer centers. The CHA has the organizational resources and personnel necessary to successfully implement the project within the grant period. The CHA Executive Director is highly qualified to administer the ICON PCCs Program and demonstrates a proven track record of accurate fiscal controls and concrete accounting procedures. The Assistant Executive Director and Social Services Coordinator have past experience in successfully administering a variety of local, state, and federal grant programs, ensuring proper bookkeeping and accounting methods are maintained. The ICON Program Coordinator and the Technology Support Specialist are extremely knowledgeable in implementing and managing projects similar to that of the BTOP Program. All are vital components to ICON’s success. The CHA has also been rated as a High Performer Housing Authority by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The CHA proposes to create a total of ten direct job years, six indirect jobs, and four jobs from this project. The methodology used to estimate these jobs are as follows: According to the Executive Office of the President, Council of Economic Advisers, the general rules for the Estimates of Job Creation from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, uses the simple rule that $92,000 creates one job-year. Sixty-four percent of the job-years represent direct and indirect effects and thirty-six percent of the job-years are induced effects. Therefore, the CHA’s funding request is for $900,000 grant funds,
creating ten direct job years. Sixty four percent of the job years total 6.4 indirect jobs and thirty-six percent of the job years are induced effects totaling 3.6 jobs. The Carrollton Housing Authority ICON PCC project is necessary to carry out the intended services. Budget estimates are based on previous expenditures through already existent programs, as well as, personnel and programmatic costs. In addition, all repairs, computer builds, and upgrades will be conducted in house by the Information Technology Specialist. All proposed costs are not only eligible, but necessary to carry out the proposed activities and functions. All purchases with grant funds will be conducted using the Carrollton Housing Authority Procurement Policy and researched for the most competitive and most adequate cost. In order to expand existing service areas and programs, the proposed personnel, equipment, supplies and other associated costs are both reasonable and necessary for the success of the program. In association with the anticipated number of people to receive services from the proposed program and public computer centers, all costs are reasonable and cost effective for the intended goals and objectives of the project. It is proposed that the all components of the ICON program, will provide services to approximately 10,533 clients, thus, creating a cost per user at $84.45. The cost per user is relatively low considering the impact of services being provided.