Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: CHICAGO, CITY OF

Project Title: SmartChicago Public Computer Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Statement of the Problem

Internet access and digital skills are now necessary for individuals to fully participate in society whether they are seeking a job, e-government information and services, healthcare information, or to communicate with loved ones. While the City of Chicago (City) envisions a day when all Chicagoans have high-speed Internet at home and the digital skills needed to complete these essential tasks, that day is not here. 40% of Chicagoans do not have broadband access at home, according to the July 2009 study, Digital Excellence in Chicago. The study, commissioned by the City, found particularly low levels of Internet usage among older, Latino, African-American, and low-income or less-educated residents. For those without home access, libraries and other 'third spaces' provide not only Internet access away from home or work, but also play a 'broader support roles in their communities, from skills development for new users to facilitating access to Internet-mediated social services, employment markets, and educational opportunities,' according to the Federal Communications Commission report 'Broadband Adoption in Low Income Communities.' However, these third spaces report insufficient availability of workstations some or all of the time due to high demand. Put simply, there are not enough public computers available to serve those that need them, and declining revenues and shrinking budgets cannot support the purchase of additional equipment, even at a time when it is most needed. Furthermore, 43% of Chicagoans without broadband access at home do not have the digital skills they need to compete in the 21st century. The FCC report cites that 'low-proficiency users, especially, come to third spaces because they can find help when they need it and add to their skills.' With hundreds of thousands unemployed and more and more employers requiring job-seekers to apply online and have at least some basic computer skills, the unemployed have greater need for these public computing centers. Overall Approach to Addressing Need

The City proposes to address these challenges by adding and expanding 156 SmartChicago PCCs to serve unemployed and vulnerable Chicagoans. The centers are strategically-located at libraries, community colleges, public housing sites, workforce centers, senior centers, and youth and community service centers. 110 centers are located in census tracts where 50% of the households are at low or moderate income levels. SmartChicago PCCs will: Increase access to broadband, improve accessibility - Serve 869,853 individuals and families across at 156 centers by deploying 3,495 new computers, including 2,829 workstations and 666 laptops. - Provide public computer and Internet access for the first time at 19 new centers, including 8 public housing locations, 6 human service centers, and 5 new libraries. - Improve access to broadband for the approximately 600,000 people with disabilities in Chicago by deploying assistive technologies at all 156 sites. Deliver nearly 200,000 new hours of rigorous and customized technology training - Launch citywide Digital Skills Initiative to increase the digital literacy of
Chicagoans by creating a central capacity to develop cutting-edge curricula, share best practices, evaluate performance, or provide resources across providers to maximize investments and impact. - Help approximately 20,000 job-seekers retool through a core suite of technology training courses covering online job searching, resume creation, and other workforce-readiness skills. - Assist 20,000 youth, seniors, and families with digital skills development through customized one-on-one or class-based training courses. - Support the needs of non-English speakers by offering technology training courses in Spanish, Polish, and Chinese. Create jobs at all skill and experience levels - Employ 1 Program Director to oversee the SmartChicago PCCs project, including the Digital Skills Initiative, complete quarterly project reports, chair the project Steering Committee, and manage 6 master teachers. - Hire 6 master teachers to develop technology training curricula; train and mentor agency staff and Chicago Career Tech (CCT) program participants; and deliver training. - Employ 1 Program Assistant to support the program director and master teachers with their duties. - Create 64 transitional information technology jobs at public housing labs. - Help approximately 20,000 find employment through expanded technology training opportunities. Areas and Users Served The SmartChicago PCCs service area includes the entire city of Chicago, which is comprised of over 225 square miles and has a population of 2,896,016 residents (Census 2000). 42.0% of the population are Caucasian, 36.8% are African American, 26.0% are Hispanic or Latino, 4.3% are Asian, 0.4 are American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.1 are Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Census 2000). Low-income and unemployed individuals and families About 20% (556,791 individuals and 105,752 families) of the population lives at or below the federal poverty level compared to 12.4% nationally (Census 2000). The Illinois Department of Employment Security reports that the Unemployment Rate for Chicago for December 2009 was 11.4% (149,742 unemployed individuals). For the same month, the Unemployment rate for the nation was 9.7%. Non-English Speakers 952,076 speak a language other than English at home (approximately 35.5% of the City's population in comparison to 17.9% nationally), and 628,903 people are foreign-born (Census 2000). People with Disabilities 604,676 people with disabilities reside in Chicago (approximately 22.8% of the City's population in comparison to 19.2% nationally) (Census 2000). Public Housing Residents The Chicago Housing Authority provides almost 9,500 units of senior housing, more than 7,000 units of family housing, and oversees the administration of 35,000 Housing Choice Vouchers that allow low-income families to rent in the private market. The median income of public housing residents is $11,854. 30.93% of public housing residents are 62 years of age or older; 36.99% of residents are 20 years of age or younger. 79% of residents are African American, 16% are Caucasian, 11% are Hispanic, and 4% are Asian. Seniors 298,803 are 65 years of age or older (Census 2000). Youth and Students 461,037 are 17 years of age or younger (Census 2000). In fiscal year 2008, 113,277 students were enrolled at Chicago's community colleges in over 240 programs of study. Students had a median household income of $24,052. 28% of students were under 22 years of age, 22% 22-30 years of age, 19% 30-41 years of age, and 18% were 41 and up. 34% of enrolled students were African American, 39% Hispanic, 17% Caucasian, and 7% Asian. Qualifications City and sister agencies: established community service delivery channels The City of Chicago has brought together several of its departments and sister agencies to plan and manage the SmartChicago PCC project: the Department of Innovation and Technology, the Department of Family and Support Services, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, the Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Housing Authority, and the City Colleges of Chicago. Collectively, the departments and agencies deliver essential services, including free access to technology, to all Chicago's
residents and visitors at hundreds of facilities citywide. Smart Chicago Trust Fund: long-term sustainability
The Chicago Community Trust, the MacArthur Foundation, and the City of Chicago partnered to create the Smart Chicago Trust Fund, an innovative public-private partnership, unique to this project, which supports the local sustainability of ARRA investments, BTOP opportunities, ensures transparency, expedites program execution, and promotes private investment. TEC Services: award-winning workforce/technology training programs TEC Services' workforce training program models have been recognized nationally and internationally as innovative and industry-leading in their approach to preparing workforce for occupations in high demand. TEC Services successfully managed adult and youth programs from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the SBC Foundation, Northeastern Illinois University, the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago, the US Department of Labor and various corporate entities, such as Microsoft. Jobs Created or Saved SmartChicago PCCs will create 320 direct jobs and will help approximately 20,000 find employment through expanded technology training opportunities. Overall Cost The total cost of two-year SmartChicago PCC project is $13,090,937, of which the City seeks $9,142,997 from the Federal government. The City and its partners are providing $3,947,940 in local matching funds, 30% of the total project cost.