Applicant Name: MOUNT HOPE HOUSING COMPANY, INC, THE

Project Title: Mount Hope PCC

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _________________________

The Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. (MH)'s application is for a Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant to update 2 Public Computer Centers (PCCs) and create 4 additional PCCs in the Bronx. Community District 5, in which MH operates, has 128,313 residents. 56% of these people are living at or below poverty levels and receiving some form of Public Assistance. Furthermore, only 26% of the residents have a high school or a high school equivalency diploma. Access to broadband is way below the national average for this vulnerable population because of lack of affordability and lack of computer education. It is these two issues, affordability and computer education, that the Mount Hope PCC project is aiming to overcome. MH is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit community development organization (www.mounthopehousing.org) uniquely suited to solve the poor broadband access problem in its area. For 21 years, MH has been a major catalytic force and innovator in community development, working to transform the Bronx into a revitalized and stabilized community, creating affordable housing, stimulating commercial revitalization and enhancing job creation. The organization's forward-thinking mission is to revitalize the communities served by providing safe, decent, affordable housing, economic development, youth, human and educational services. MH has an approach and a track record that differentiates it from many other organizations seeking this grant funding. MH's theory of change is based on a holistic approach to meeting a broad set of needs in which multiple interrelated requirements of the community are cared for, from housing to financial literacy to family health to digital literacy. Historically MH focused on providing safe and affordable housing. As MH expanded its community development stewardship throughout the 80's and 90's it began to address social issues that were manifesting in the local neighborhood, such as workforce development, dropout rates in the public schools, and increasing growth of new immigrants from the Caribbean, South America, and Africa. MH's theory of change grew to encompass effective interventions to expand and enrich opportunities by providing programs for youth and families and through community development initiatives. MH chose to approach the challenges presented by the concept of "geography of opportunity" by creating a community of choice. By focusing on housing development (housing stock), community development (services for youth and community engagement) and finally community economic development (wealth creation) interventions, MH has become 'Place Focused, People Focused, and Business Focused'. While there is still much progress to be made in the district, this deep holistic approach has produced many successes and improvements, demonstrating that MH has a winning formula for driving economic and educational development. For example, MH's recent Wealth Creation-Asset Building program resulted in 464 community members opening new savings accounts, 27 participants obtaining matching funds to pay for college, 38 new homes purchased, and 93 small businesses obtaining grants or loans for their...
businesses. The proposed PCC will continue to build upon these proven successes by teaching people how real digital literacy applications can help improve their livelihoods and their lives. This 'geography of opportunity' model can and should be replicated by other community centers in vulnerable areas around the nation. In 2009 MH put together the first phase of a broadband access proposal with the goal of eradicating poverty and improving job opportunities. MH's plan and past track record were held in such high regard by the State of New York that in 4Q 2009 the state awarded it $509K to implement the plan, as one of only two award winners in downstate NY. Now MH is proposing to expand its broadband program. For this Federal BTOP program, MH is collaborating with community, education, and not-for-profit organizations including Bronx Community College, CUNY’s Baruch College, The Institute for Family Health, The Older Adults Technology Services, the Hispanic Information and Telecommunications Network, and the Learning About Multimedia Project. MH's plan calls for a PCC with 6 labs in this underserved area of the Bronx. For the first two years the centers and their services will be free of charge to residential users. After that the centers will be self-sustaining based upon low membership fees, service fees, telework center fees, and if needed, private grants. The PCC will consist of 2 upgraded general purpose labs and 4 new computer labs: (1) a multimedia center targeted for school age children, (2) a small business incubator lab tailored to the needs of growing businesses in the community, (3) an older adults lab, geared towards the needs of baby boomers and the elderly, and (4) an eGovernment self-help learning lab, which will help people access career building sites, government sites, and family health related sites. In addition, the PCC will be a Bronx-wide magnet center for visually impaired people. Through a special partnership with Baruch College's Computer Center for Visually Impaired People, this PCC will have outreach, training and equipment for the special needs of visually impaired people, a population which has a 70% unemployment rate. For the first time, the Computer Center for Visually Impaired People at Baruch college, (CCVIP,) intends to replicate its training and demonstration center activities in the Bronx in collaboration with Mount Hope and the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped. In cooperation with Bronx Community College and Monroe College, the project will train young people to train and assist students at the center, giving these college students meaningful job experience. The labs will have 134 computers and ancillary equipment, and will be open for the community 7 days a week. The project is expected to create or save at least 40 full-time equivalent jobs in the community. It is expected to cost $3,761,141 over two years, and MH is asking for $2,662,221 from BTOP. As FCC Chairman Genachowski stated in his recent blog comments titled America’s 2020 Broadband Vision (2/17/2010), 'These are real benefits for real people - - like the unemployed forty-seven-year-old I met in the Bronx who got job training over the Internet to become a telecom technician.' It would be ironic and a shame if the example the Chairman cited was in one of the few locations that does not win a PCC grant, and as of now the Bronx has not yet won such a grant. Approval of this BTOP funding request will create jobs, help stabilize the local economy, better train the residents for the modern commercial world, assist the local residents in navigating commercial and government programs, and stabilize the greater Bronx community. Anyone who tours MH's facilities and sees it's programs in action would be convinced that this is an organization capable of executing a successful PCC plan.