Executive Summary

A. Only 42% of African Americans and Hispanics regularly use the Internet. In a survey conducted by Brilliant Corners Research (date'), they found that members in two of the country's largest minority communities believe that Internet access is essential for many critical daily activities, including staying in touch with family, online education and research, job search, networking, and accessing critical information about health care, weather and traffic. However, meeting this need is hampered. According to a recent survey conducted by the Federal Communications Commission, more than 90 million Americans don't use broadband for several reasons, which include the need to be taught how to use the internet, affordability, digital literacy and relevance. Currently, only 42% of American households making under $30K have broadband access in their homes compared to that of 82% of households making more than $75K (Source: Pew Internet and American Life Project 2008). B. The CoNNect Metro St Louis project will help close the digital divide that exists within low income families - especially those who are African American and Hispanic adults and youth, seniors and the physically challenged - by expanding broadband access and increased adoptability rates throughout 7 zip codes and 8 municipalities in St. Louis City and County. Our project will accomplish this by increasing public access to broadband at 28 different sites (of this total, 7 will be operated by Computer Village and 2 operated by BFL) through the sponsorship of 10 different project partners (including Computer Village) located throughout this region. The project will also address these needs by providing services, training, and education in computer literacy, job search/job readiness, certified training in green technology industries (specifically entry-level certifications in the areas of Biofuels Collection and Solar PV System Designers and Installers), after school technology programs for youth, and workshops and training for small disadvantaged businesses. The project will facilitate mobile lab training sessions in all of the proposed computing sites. C. The targeted communities have poverty rates of greater than 16%, unemployment rates greater than 23%, and people age 65+ who comprise 10% or more of the population (Hillsdale and Normandy aged rate is at 8%). The zip codes in Table I are in the City of St. Louis. The municipalities are in St. Louis County. We estimate a total # of 75,000 ' 100,000 users/year. See Table I Attachment labeled "Population Statistics for Target Areas" One of the largest of the PCCs will be the Better Family Life Cultural, Educational and Business Center (CEBC), which is wholly owned by the Applicant to raise $6.4 million to renovate this 60,000 sq. ft. former school building that is on the National Registry of Historic Landmarks. This new facility will become the Applicant's headquarters. The CEBC is in the 63112 zip code on Page Boulevard, one of the longest continuously running streets connecting St. Louis City to St. Louis County. D. BFL has successfully completed more than $70 million of contracted services since 1989 from a combination of federal, regional, state and local government
funding agencies for our Youth Services, Workforce Development, Housing and Asset Development, Wellness and Clinical Services, Arts and Cultural Programming, Teen Pregnancy and Healthy Marriage activities in St. Louis City and County, and East St. Louis, IL. The applicant has successfully completed numerous community partnership projects, such as developing Your Health is Your Wealth for the St. Louis County Department of Health, a three-year health awareness and education project targeted to adult African American males and teenagers living throughout St. Louis County. Another example is serving as the managing partner of the Metropolitan Education and Training Center (MET). The MET offers educational and training services in Adult Basic Education, Construction Prep Center Pre-apprentice Training, Career Pathways/Life Science Training, Manufacturing Training Alliance Industry Certification Program, Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning Service Technician Program, Energy Efficiency Training Program-Residential Energy Efficiency Technician & Home Energy Auditor, and Licensed Practical Nurse Program. Your Health is Your Wealth has reached more than 20,000 people with both direct and indirect services since 2007, and the MET now serves over 5000 St. Louis metropolitan area job seekers annually. BFL serves 35,000+ people annually with all their programs and services. BFL utilizes a fully automated accounting system, which is a standard accrual system and has an annual budget of $10 million. This system meets generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) requirements. The accounting system is designed to track different program funding sources by contract and by general ledger account number. Expenses are charged to each program and cost allocated depending on which program is affected by the expense. All transactions are entered into the accounting system by BFL's Fiscal Department to ensure that funds are properly cost allocated and accounted for by program. The review of expenditures rests with the CEO, Malik Ahmed; COO, Carolyn Seward, and; the Director of Finance, Darryl Commings. Better Family Life will serve as the lead applicant, partnership convener, administrative agency and fiscal agent for this BTOP grant. BFL will oversee a total federal request of $ 4,872,509 for the project, and will provide executive and administrative oversight, participate in the recruitment, assessment, and case management of 24 new hires, provide the appropriate work readiness (non-technology) training for all technology personnel, work with the project evaluator providing access to all documents, information and personnel necessary to evaluate the project, and insure that all project outcomes are met during the 24-month project period. BFL will further provide the following direct services for the project: participant outreach and recruitment; assessment of software related to employment and employment related services, economic development, housing related services and financial literacy, (enhanced) healthcare delivery services, healthcare education; job readiness programs, referral to vocational skills training, job development, job placement, job retention and supportive services. BFL assures to provide all services as described in this proposal. Our primary and technology partner, Computer Village, has designed the project's curriculum. They will be responsible for the technological design, implementation and oversight of CoNNect Metro St. Louis; participate in and ultimately be responsible for the selection, technology training and placement of technology staff at the PCCs. BFL reserves the right, with NTIA approval, to reallocate planned sub-contract awards based on performance. Dr. Malaika Horne will provide independent process evaluation services and development of outcome performance measurement systems, designed to document performance outcomes as described in the proposal. Dr. Horne will review and evaluate all services. In this capacity, she will design the evaluation plan, oversee the development of data collection protocol, provide input into and participate in training programs,
and oversee all written performance assessment and funder-required reports. Dr. Horne will work with BFL and CV Technology to coordinate all training programs; develop policies and procedures and related forms; monitor for program fidelity, and; participate in funder required meetings. BFL reserves the right with NTIA approval to reallocate planned sub-contract awards based on performance. E. Jobs Created: 24 F. Overall Project Cost: $7,036,191