Applicant Name: COOK, COUNTY OF

Project Title: Centers for the Advancement of Neighborhood Networks (CANN)

Project Type: Public Computer Center

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

Cook County, in conjunction with its project partners, President's Office of Employment Training (POET), Robert Morris University, Triton Community College, Lumity and Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center & Healthcare Network (Aunt Martha's), has created an exciting project to provide digital literacy services and public access to underserved and unserved families and individuals in the south and west suburban Cook County, Illinois entitled the 'Centers for the Advancement of Neighborhood Network. (CANN)' A major objective of this program is to enhance broadband services for the education of underserved children in Suburban Cook County by establishing a series of neighborhood based Public Computer Centers (PCC). Partners and Services Provided The proposed project augments five existing POET sites to expand services to include upgraded technologies to meet the needs of the communities and three existing Aunt Martha's brick and mortar facilities which will utilize Lumity's proven experience in creating, improving, and expanding the services of the PCCs. The partnership will also include Robert Morris University (RMU) who will provide Student Trainers and Triton Community College will expand its Testing and Assessment Center. These partners will assist the County in serving the needs of the communities by providing digital literacy programs, student skill-based development opportunities and community outreach resources. The project service area is chronically underserved where families struggle with few learning options, historic and recently expanding unemployment reaching as high as 25% and chronic underemployment; as well as many other challenges faced in economically challenged areas. Lumity will provide development and delivery of direct training, curriculum design, and service integration. Lumity also supports operational development and metric reporting through best practice assessments and deployment of best practices. The proposed curriculum offers several entrance levels based on initial skill level and culminates in IC3 certification which is well recognized and highly valued by employers. Residents that do not achieve IC3 certification may exit the curriculum at several levels, each of which provides excellent skill advancement that is designed to promote employability and success in numerous job roles. Aunt Martha's provides a wealth of accompanying services that are essential for area residents to utilize the investment in broadband service and training. For example, offering and connecting residents with child care services during training is critical for single head of household mothers to access training and work opportunities. However, skill obtainment is only one key element in helping area residents improve their lives. Lumity and Aunt Martha's project leaders will integrate the CTC training activities with existing workforce development programming, resulting in a more holistic set of services that leverage skill and credential obtainment to obtain life changing employment. The project will include providing digital literacy training oriented toward employment, support services, and complementary training on using online tools to seek and secure employment and
on basic financial literacy skills. In this integration of services residents are supported through the skill development training as well as through the challenging task of locating and securing employment. Supplemental services will also stimulate interest in wider use of broadband as participants learn to take advantage of online tools. Proposed Service Area The proposed service areas include the south, southwest and west suburban Cook County. These areas suffer from high unemployment, poverty, and violence. The US Census shows between 28% and 33% of people are living in poverty compared to a statewide poverty rate of 12%. In the target service areas in the south, nearly 83% are Latino. This demographic has been specifically challenged with nearly three out of four individuals living in poverty and nearly 40% being children. A third of Latino families in poverty are single-parent households, with 80% headed by females. The proposed program and integrated services are designed to engage this population effectively and overcome language, cultural and logistical barriers unique to these situations and this population. According to the Census data, there are approximately 97,555 low income households within suburban Cook County service areas with a population size of 200,004. Many of these areas have no access to after school programs; the literacy rate of these children continues to decline. The County and its partners will provide computerized literacy training programs through the use of 1085 computers at 10 PCCs. The project goal is to enhance the education and provide training of at least 145K children and adults over the next two ' three years of a total population of 556,027. As the unemployment rates remain high, the demand for adult training and the opportunity to provide job enrichment skills is also increasing. Project Team Experience Lumity and Aunt Martha's each have multiple years' experience in delivering training and services that qualify them to carry out the proposed project. Since 2002 Lumity has supported the creation and improvement of 19 Chicago-area CTCs operating in underserved communities. As a nonprofit experienced in helping organizations use technology to develop and deliver programs, Lumity has the capacity to bring technology training, certification resources, and community facilities together for maximum community impact. The experienced team of leaders and service staff brought together for this project have many years of experience developing and delivering this type of project into these communities. Aunt Martha's currently operates 16 Federally Qualified Health Centers throughout Illinois, and is preparing to open its 17th, the South Holland site, in September, 2009. Aunt Martha’s Park Forest facility, one of the proposed sites, is where most of the Family, Education & Development Services (FEDS) are offered. The FEDS Division Manager oversees Youth Development and Prevention, Employment and Education, and other programs including many federal programs such as Head Start and Workforce Investment Act. This project is anticipated to generate 31 total direct, indirect and induced jobs. Summary Cook County requests a grant of $3,167,919.25 to support the development of the proposed PCCs and implementation of digital literacy training and provide for public access to the Internet. The overall project budget for the 'CAAN' project is $4,555,391.50.