Applicant Name: BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF PHILADELPHIA, THE

Project Title: Boys & Girls Clubs of Philadelphia's Public Computer Center and Technology Education Program

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The mission of Boys & Girls Clubs of Philadelphia (BGCP) is to inspire and enable all young people to reach their full potential as productive, caring and responsible citizens. This work is carried out daily in 12 clubs throughout Philadelphia that serve more than 15,000 children annually from ages eight months to 18 years. In a world that seems threatening and devoid of promise for many of America's children, BGCP provides a tangible measure of hope. Clubs offer young people what they need and want most: adults who respect and listen to them, a safe environment where they can have fun and be themselves, and interesting, constructive activities that channel youthful energy into challenging pursuits. All BGCP programs are designed to help build self-confidence and foster a sense of belonging, competence and self-confidence among children. BGCP provides services in some of the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the city. Many of the children we serve do not have access to computers or the internet within their own homes and have limited access in their schools. This only increases the 'technology divide' that exists between those schools and communities with extensive resources, and those that have little or no ability to provide these services. Meanwhile, the importance of technology skills in the workplace continues to grow. As if to complicate the issue, a staggering number of Philadelphia children do not remain in school long enough to develop basic skills, let alone technology know-how. The graduation rate of students in the Philadelphia school district was 31.9% in 2006 according to the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. The only city with a higher number of dropouts was Detroit. Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide are giving children the chance to develop technology and life skills that will help them succeed in the workplace and remain in school.

According to a 2009 study conducted by the Center for Information & Society at the University of Washington, 'clubs represent important access points for underserved youth who need information and communication technologies as much as they need libraries and books.' The study found that Boys & Girls Clubs technology programs promote positive youth development, creativity and expression and enhance skills that are relevant to the modern workplace. While all BGCP sites currently offer broadband access to children, many computers are ten-plus years old, and software programs are two or three generations older than what is currently available. Consequently, children are forced to make do with what we have, or do without. Despite repeated efforts to secure funding to improve technology offerings at BGCP locations, we have not been able to make many necessary improvements. The goal, therefore, of the public computer center program is to provide up-to-date broadband equipment through the purchase of computer and networking hardware, curriculum-specific hardware and software at seven clubs located in economically disadvantaged Philadelphia neighborhoods. BGCP would
offer technology education and provide the support that 13,000 at-risk children, ages six to 18 years, need to help them succeed. As an added benefit, BGCP would open these computer centers to the general public and offer regularly scheduled GED courses. Technology education for children would come in the form of Club Tech, a family of technology programs created by Boys & Girls Clubs of America. The Club Tech program provides youth, ages six to 18 years, with daily access to computer technology, helps youth develop an understanding of how computers work and develop interests, skills and motivation to explore careers in science and technology. The Club Tech program has three components: 1. Orientation and introduction to computers: Children participate in a basic orientation to the computer that enables them to use the center and understand how the computer works. 2. Integration and use of the computer center for all club programs: The Club Tech program coincides with youth development in other areas. For example, the education program uses technology for computer-based tutorials, preparing research papers and career and college exploration. The art program uses digital photography, graphic design, video production and computer-generated art. 3. Technology programs for youth with an interest in technology: This family of technology curricula and resources teaches children cutting edge technology skills through fun and interactive projects and activities. The Skill Tech Programs teach software and hardware skills in age-appropriate online lessons and staff-led activities. The Digital Arts Suite allows members to learn web and graphic design, photo illustration, music composition and movie making. Many of the children BGCP serves come from single-parent families and in particular, families headed by single-mothers. A large number of these parents didn’t graduate from high school and for most, college was not an option. To support parents, and their children in turn, BGCP would offer GED instruction at no cost. Adult members of the general population would also have the chance to complete GED courses. Classes would be offered on a rotating basis at five clubs. Each class would require 150 hours of instruction; 75 hours of reading and English skills and 75 hours of math and science skills. Each computer center would be housed in an established club. The population and demographics of each of these locations follows: 'Nicetown Unit and Wayne Avenue Units(19140): Population'57,125, Percent of families living below poverty'35.7%, African American population'60.7%, White population ' 13%, Hispanic or Latino population(of any race)'34.5% 'Northeast Frankford Unit and Lauretha Vaird Units(19124): Population'63,131, Percent of families living below poverty'21.1%, African American population'26%, White population'54.8%, Hispanic or Latino population(of any race)'18.8% 'Germantown Unit and Wissahickon Units (19144): Population'46,794, Percent of families living below poverty'20.2%, African American population'80.8%, White population'14.5%, Hispanic or Latino population (of any race)'1.8% 'Bridesburg Unit(19137): Population'8,069, Percent of families living below poverty'8.2%, African American population'1.1%, White population'95%, Hispanic or Latino population (of any race)'2.9%. BGCP has been serving at-risk children for more than 100 years. We have twelve clubs located in some of the most economically challenged neighborhoods in the city. Two sites are located in Philadelphia Housing Authority developments. Seven sites are in Boys & Girls Clubs of Philadelphia facilities and three others are housed in elementary schools. The array of programs offered to children range from basic day-care for six-week old babies in federally licensed sites, to gang prevention and counseling programs for older youth. In virtually every phase of a child’s development through the BGCP experience ' and many children start as pre-schoolers and stay with the club through high school ' the use of technology is present, if not predominant. BGCP has a staff of approximately 170 dedicated individuals who have been carefully
trained and screened. Staff members are hired based on their educational background and innate interest in serving Philadelphia youth. Support of this project would allow BGCP to hire one staff person at each of seven clubs to oversee operation of the computer center. Duties would include managing the equipment, monitoring members of the general public and children who use the facility, and teaching technology-related courses. This staff person would be paid $40,000 annually. The addition of taxes and benefits increases the total to $50,000, or $350,000 annually for all seven clubs. We are seeking funding to cover expenses incurred over two years. This will give us the opportunity to solicit funds to support continuation of the program after the grant period has ended. In addition to a full-time staff person at each club, BGCP would hire five GED instructors. Each GED class would offer 150 hours of instruction over ten weeks, and it's estimated that personnel and course materials would cost $10,000 per class, for a total of $50,000 over two years. In total, this project would create at least 12 new full and part-time positions and would also support AWE Inc, who handles technical assistance and repairs in each BGCP computer center. The investment in high quality broadband equipment is $330,443. This would cover costs associated with 55 workstations, 8 servers, 7 routes, 7 switch replacements and 7 early literacy stations. Personnel would total $710,000 over two years. These expenses combined with the cost of supplies, travel and contractual obligations would total $1,087,707. A 20% cash match, of $217,543, from BGCP would offset a portion of the total. The total amount requested is, $870,164.