

7. Executive Summary of Overall Proposal:

New Bedford Housing Authority, NorthStar Learning Centers (an “SDA”), & SHARE (Society for Human Advancement Through Rehabilitation Engineering) propose to develop a free access Computer Center to service needs of residents of the City of New Bedford, particularly targeted to the residents of 2 public housing developments: Dottin Place & Satellite Village, both located in the north end, 2.56 miles from closest Library (Wilks) where computer access is provided.

a) **Need:** The low and very low income residents of Dottin Place & Satellite Village are socially & economically disadvantaged, largely minority families, largely without convenient daily access to computer technology. 89% of the families within these developments have annual household incomes of less than \$50,000, & 73% have household incomes below \$35,000. These developments have 17% unemployment: 7% at Dottin Place & 25% at Satellite Village. This population is largely cut off from the advantages that internet access provides due to inability to afford computers & high speed internet access. As a matter of fact, 22.6% of all N.B. residents exist at or below the poverty level, and 24.7% of city residents are minority. The combined populations of Dottin Place and Satellite Village are 65% minority.

b) **Addressing the need:** We propose to address this need by developing & operating a Computer Center equipped with 20 computers within the existing Community Building at the highly accessible Dottin Place Housing Development located off Church Street in the north end of New Bedford, within walking distance from Satellite Village. SHARE will specify, install & maintain the computer equipment & provide computer literacy classes. NorthStar Learning Center will recruit, train and supervise the computer center manager. The center will operate 6 days per week and will provide both group & individual educational assistance & classes. Disabled users will benefit greatly by SHARE’s unique & longstanding expertise in providing hardware & software technology solutions custom designed for specific disabilities. We have identified 42 residents with disabilities within Dottin Place & Satellite Village. SHARE will evaluate all residents with disabilities who are desirous of computer use and design custom solutions unique to their disabilities.

c) **Service Area:** This project targets the total potential population of the City of New Bedford of approximately 100,000 people.

d) **Qualifications:**

New Bedford Housing Authority owns & manages 2,551 public housing units plus an additional 1,800 Section 8 Vouchers spread throughout New Bedford. NBHA is recognized as a “High Performer” by HUD, a prestigious designation reserved for only the top performing PHA’s in the country. NBHA's extensive record of developing and managing thousands of affordable rental units, creating scattered replacement housing, successful participation in the first time buyer housing program & its HOPE VI success all provide more than reasonable assurance that these funds will be obligated & expended in a timely manner consistent with all federal ARRA, BTOP, RUS & NTIA guidelines & requirements.

NorthStar Learning Centers, Inc., an SDA, grew out of the United Front Child Development Program. In the early 1970s, civil rights activists responded to development of United Front Homes – critically needed affordable housing for low-income minority families – & established a neighborhood preschool center, United Front Child Development Programs (UFCDP). In response to community needs, UFCDP, an independent nonprofit, grew into a minority business enterprise with programs serving New Bedford area children from infancy to adulthood. As surplus child care capacity has emerged in the community, this organization, now called NorthStar is decreasing its focus on early childhood & increasing services in the underserved area of support for at-risk youth & their families. Adopted in 2002, its more representative, inclusive name derives from a powerful symbol of freedom in its national & local heritage; the staunchly abolitionist New Bedford area served as an important northern terminal of the Underground Railroad.

The SHARE Foundation is a non-profit organization that is the fundraising arm of the Center for Rehabilitation Engineering at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. At the Center, engineers & technicians develop, build & provide adaptive computer equipment for children & adults who are severely disabled. The mission of the SHARE Foundation is to empower physically challenged non-speaking people to express their basic wants & needs, communicate with others, control their immediate environments & achieve the greatest possible level of independence. SHARE succeeds in its mission by directing resources that enable the design, adaptation & fabrication of high technology equipment tailored specifically to the unique needs of every individual who seeks help. Since its inception in 1981, SHARE has helped nearly 3,000 children & adults with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), multiple sclerosis, blindness, spinal cord injuries, muscular dystrophy, strokes & a host of other conditions. Although the majority of SHARE's clients live in Massachusetts & Rhode Island, the organization has also served people in 38 additional states as well as eight foreign countries.

e) SHARE's involvement lends a particularly unique opportunity to this Computer Center to not only serve the needs of economically & socially disadvantaged residents of public housing, but also to lend its expertise in addressing computer accessibility needs of a segment of the population that far too often is totally without broadband access.

f) Jobs: A full time Computer Center Manager job will be created as a direct result of this grant.

g) Total Project Cost is \$565,463 and proposed grant is \$452,169.73.