Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: INDIANAPOLIS HOUSING AGENCY

Project Title: Centers of Opportunity

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

As Marion County's public housing agency, the Indianapolis Housing Agency (IHA) is committed to enhancing the character and quality of affordable housing communities in Indianapolis, diversifying financial investments made in the development and operation of these communities, and improving human capital investments made in the residents of these communities through expanded services and opportunities. In 2009, IHA was awarded over $16 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in competitive Capital Funds which, in addition to $5 million of Capital Funds allocated to IHA earlier in 2009, are one tool in a mixed financing package that allows IHA to carry out progressive plans to preserve, improve, and expand affordable housing in Marion County. This impressive project, called Welcome Home, involves the substantial rehabilitation of 11 of IHA's 13 public and affordable housing communities over the next two years. All of the units as well as the common spaces, including computer labs, in these housing communities are the subject of complete renovation, addressing capital needs that have not been addressed for nearly 50 years. Through a partnership with a premier urban university, Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis, the Centers of Opportunity project proposed in this BTOP application offers a salient and unique opportunity for IHA to leverage its investment of Capital Funds, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, energy efficiency financing, and other sources of mixed finance to renovate and develop public and affordable housing at this scale, a scale necessary to meet the significant undersupply of affordable housing in Indianapolis which has been estimated at 14,000 units. Specifically, IHA's Centers of Opportunity project invests in broadband capacity and the provision of employment-focused training and education at 13 housing communities in order to meet specific needs of five vulnerable population groups who are public housing or Section 8 residents. IHA has a network of computer labs in its communities that precisely fit the definition of Public Computer Centers. While IHA currently offers broadband access in all but two of these, the computers systems are badly out of date and are technically incapable of properly supporting the web-based and business productivity applications public housing residents and Section 8 residents need to participate in the modern job market: performance is unreliable and slow. The existing client PCs at these sites are underpowered, most with Windows and Office 2000 and only 12MB of ram outdated, broken, missing parts, or any combination of these. The two servers include a propped-up relic and a repurposed PC. There is no centralized e-mail, and because of budget, IHA has been able to do little maintenance or administration. These once-vital classrooms, literally surrounded by hundreds of needy students, have all but gone dark. The 13 PCCs described in this proposal will serve all 3,206 current public housing residents and all 20,107 Section 8 residents in Marion County as well as approximately 475 new residents in the new Caravelle community. This represents 23,788 potential
users. The first phase of this Centers of Opportunity project will target working-age adults (18-65 years) which includes 1,490 current public housing residents, a projected 218 working age residents in the newly constructed Caravelle, and 9,315 Section 8 residents - a total of 11,023 working age adults who will be eligible for job training in the four high growth occupations identified. Importantly, as Marion County's public housing agency and Section 8 administrator, IHA is also uniquely positioned to serve five vulnerable population groups through this expansion of broadband service made possible through BTOP: LOW INCOME: Public Housing - 86% of households earn 30% or less of AMI, 12% of households earn 31-50% of AMI. Section 8 - 78% of households earn 30% or less of AMI, 18% of households earn 31-50% AMI. AFRICAN AM: Public Housing - 90% of residents are African Am. (2,879). Section 8 - 92% of residents are African Am. (82,460). UNEMPLOYED: Public Housing - 75% of households are unemployed. Section 8 - 64% of households are unemployed DISABLED: Public Housing - 23% of residents in 13 properties have disabilities, 71% in Lugar Tower are disabled, 74% in Barton Tower are disabled. Section 8 - 16% of residents have disabilities. SENIORS: Public Housing - 32% of residents in 13 properties are 62+ years, 96% in Indiana Avenue are 62 years or older. Section 8 - 4% of residents are over 62 years. IHA's approach to addressing these needs is threefold and addresses three statutory purposes of the Recovery Act: (1) make a capital investment to increase broadband capacity in 13 PCCs in public housing communities; (2) establish strategic and sustainable job training and educational opportunities for unemployed, working age, public housing and Section 8 residents - explicitly connecting the job training offered to identified high growth occupations in high growth industries that are key to local economic development; (3) enhance the work of IHA's public safety entity - the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) and the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department by connecting security cameras to the PCCs wireless network and allowing wireless access to the cameras to officers of these two public safety entities. IHA will complete this BTOP project in 24 months. By coupling its substantial Capital Funds awards and Low Income Housing Tax Credit allocations with BTOP funds, IHA has a unique opportunity to make a one-time investment in the technological infrastructure necessary to create truly meaningful Public Computer Centers (PCCs) in 13 of its public housing communities. IHA is taking a strategic and focused approach to the delivery of education and training using the web-based resources that will now be available in its 13 Public Computer Centers. This approach is sustainable, replicable, and straightforward and has two levels of training. First, identify high growth occupations in Marion County, and provide education, job training, and certificate programs designed specifically for employment in those high growth occupations. Second, meet the needs of lower skilled residents by offering three basic computer classes that will improve their access to the range of educational and other web-based resources. IHA continues to expand its use of cameras for security purposes, having just received $100,000 to add more cameras in four communities. Through BTOP and the creation of wireless 'hot spots,' on 13 of its properties, IHA will provide both its internal public safety agency, OSI, as well as to the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department mobile access to these security cameras. Upon entering the 'hot spots' on these properties, officers of these public safety agencies - who will be granted wireless access to linked security cameras through their in-car laptops - can instantly secure visual information that improves residents' and their own safety. IHA has the technical expertise, experience as a project manager and developer, and commitment to resident services that ensure this project's success. Top IT staff have 45 years of experience in technical support, PC and server building and software installation, network design, database administration, web site hosting, maintenance and
design, enterprise software, server and network upgrades and complete platform conversions with no unscheduled business interruptions and virtually uninterrupted success. IHA also has an established reputation in terms of its capacity as a developer and property manager and in terms of its ability to operate a large portfolio of public and affordable housing properties that offer a full array of supportive services and asset development opportunities. IHA's success in securing mixed-source financing to support the development, rehabilitation, and operation of affordable housing has been outstanding. This project will temporarily employ 37 students from IUPUI's School of Engineering and Technology who will provide 50% of the labor required for installation and set-up of workstations, computer lab teardown and rebuild, laptop configuration and set-up, and wireless installation. While this work is temporary, this model accomplishes two objectives: it results in a significant cost reduction related to installation and set-up; and it provides an important practicum for these students that directly contributes to their own job prospects upon graduation. Based upon the Council of Economic Advisors' guide to job creation estimates, this project creates 17 job years, 11 indirect jobs, and 6 induced jobs. The total cost of IHA's Centers of Opportunities investment is $1,600,461.09.