Executive Summary

a. Oklahoma City University (OCU) is located in the heart of a vulnerable population characterized by low-income, high unemployment, low educational achievement, limited English proficiency, and a high dropout rate. Many residents in this part of the city do not have access to a computer or the internet. The majority of under-educated and long-term unemployed residents also lack basic skills, including computer and internet capabilities, essential to meeting the minimum requirements for employment or developing a small business. The potential for economic growth and full employment for area residents can't be realized without computer and broadband access combined with targeted instruction and support. Indeed, a significant number of social and/or religious agencies in the area (like the United Way) have told OCU that they desperately need assistance providing internet and computer skills training to those they serve. Also, the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OCPS) system is currently working to improve its reading and math test scores, increase its graduation rate and better prepare its students for life after high school. They are doing this with limited broadband technology and want to partner with OCU to help address these problems.

b. OCU plans to establish an Intergenerational Center that will provide community residents of all ages with a variety of services designed to address personal and professional needs from childhood through senior years including computer, healthcare, daycare, and educational needs. The computer center portion of this effort, the Intergenerational Computer Center (ICC), intends to address many of the above problems by providing a means to the internet through open access to publicly available computers as well as through structured educational programs. These programs will directly address issues such as basic computer use, searching the internet, employment searches and applications, educational deficiencies, tutoring for success, health and welfare, and language instruction. This will take place under the guidance of OCU faculty and OCU students with expertise in these areas. OCU has established partnerships with various organizations in the Oklahoma City area. Two key partnerships in the ICC effort are with the OCPS and the United Way of Central Oklahoma (UW). OCPS has 99 schools and the UW oversees 60 agencies in the Oklahoma City area. The students, teachers, staff, and clients of these organizations have real and specific needs for gaining access to the internet and receiving training. OCU faculty and staff have already been working with these and other agencies to ensure that the ICC offers relevant training and that the ICC design meets their needs. The ICC will have 3 computer labs in a flexible configuration to optimize the needs of the users there at any given time. During all of its business hours, there will be computers open and available to the public, even if training sessions are taking place in other labs. An additional computer center in OCU’s library is available to the ICC for instructional use if demand in the ICC is greater than the supply of computers. The ICC is designed to meet the needs of the multi-generational families
prevalent in the Target Area. There will be software applications and training (with senior citizen volunteer assistants) geared specifically toward the elderly. Additionally, 2 children's computers with software and internet-based early childhood education programs will be available in a supervised area so that parents can enhance their internet and computer skills uninterrupted. Finally, the ICC will have a mobile computer lab (which will enhance its outreach efforts) to bring technology to those unable or initially hesitant to come to the ICC. OCU is working with various community agencies and partners to determine exactly how much and what types of mobile, on-site instruction are needed. The van used for the mobile computer lab will be used to bring clients needing transportation to/from the ICC and other community centers. OCU believes that once residents understand the power of broadband and all of its applications, they will recognize its ability to enhance everyday life and expand career opportunities. To encourage the continued use of computer technology by ICC users, OCU plans to make available at a nominal cost the computers it has taken out of service on campus. c. The ICC will be open to everyone, but it will most likely be used by those in the greater Oklahoma City area which has a population of approximately 1.2 million. Although the ICC's actual service area is over a million people, OCU has defined a specific area known as the Target Area that we intend to focus our outreach efforts. This area is more fully described herein, but it extends for roughly 15 sq. miles around OCU. (See map in supplemental attachment.) The Target Area has a population of approximately 60,000, the vast majority of whom are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and are members of a vulnerable population group. Some of the demographic information for the Target Area includes: 'Unemployment rate is approximately 20% ' Over 50% are in a disadvantaged ethnic minority group 'Approximately 25% live at or below the poverty' Over 13% speak no English in the home and an additional 15% use English as a second language 'Given the strong demand from individuals and organizations for ICC services prior to it even being in existence, it is reasonable to assume a utilization rate of ICC computers of 70%. When applied to the hours the ICC will be open, and assuming an average use time of 1.5 - 2 hrs each, it is anticipated that center will have over 71,890 user visits each year. d. OCU has a highly talented faculty, over 80% of whom have terminal degrees in their areas of expertise. OCU also has a strong track record for successfully managing grants and then sustaining and even expanding the grant projects after the grant expires. OCU's technology department currently manages and supports 19 computer labs and 81 classrooms and conference rooms with computer and broadband technology. OCU's commitment to the community is unsurpassed and OCU's mission expresses service learning and stewardship as some of our strongest core values. OCU has strong long-term relationships with many of the area's key community organizations that will partner with OCU on this project and whose clients will benefit the most from the ICC. A sampling of some of OCU's many community outreach programs is uploaded as supplemental material. e. Initially, three full-time professional positions and approximately 15 part-time student positions will be created at OCU. The student positions are usually filled each semester, so dozens of different students will have an opportunity to work that might not have otherwise found employment. A significant number of other positions, both internal and external, will be impacted by and involved in the work at the computer center. For example, there is the potential to preserve positions (such as staff in the Facilities Dept. who will handle the renovations) that might otherwise have been eliminated or reduced to part-time. The biggest job impact may come once the ICC is open. By teaching job skills to those who are unemployed or underemployed, they become more marketable and more likely to gain employment. While it is difficult to calculate the precise impact, OCU believes that thousands of
additional job-years could be added over the grant period because so many community residents will take advantage of the ICC’s services and training opportunities. f. The total cost for the proposed ICC project is $2,224,780. Of this amount, OCU will provide $789,887 (35.5%) and is requesting grant funds of $1,434,893. By completing renovation work with our own licensed department, choosing this particular space to house the ICC (already wired for computers), and by using educational discounts, OCU has significantly reduced the total project cost by at least $350,000. The budget for the ICC reflects its program uniqueness and is designed to provide benefits far beyond purchasing computers and installing them in a publicly accessible setting. By leveraging the faculty at OCU and its existing strong community ties, ICC clients will be able to gain broadband knowledge and benefits far beyond the assets purchased with these grant funds. The proposed budget is extremely reasonable given the depth and breadth of services that will be offered to a sizable and very vulnerable population. OCU faculty and staff have invested significant time even prior to ARRA developing the business model and budget for this project. This project is ready to implement once funding is awarded. The ICC would be open and serving clients in the first year of the grant period. OCU looks forward to beginning this important work.