

## **Broadband USA Applications Database**

**Applicant Name:** Museum of Science

**Project Title:** Broadening Access, Broadening Horizons: The Computer Clubhouse College/Career Program

**Project Type:** Public Computer Center

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### **Executive Summary**

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The goal of the Computer Clubhouse College/Career Program is to create lasting job and educational prospects for youth in under-served communities.

Founded in 1993 by Boston's Museum of Science in collaboration with the MIT Media Lab, the Computer Clubhouse has served for 16 years as a model after-school learning environment where young people from under-served communities work with adult mentors to explore their own ideas, develop skills, and build self-confidence through the use of technology. A pioneer in innovating new ways to facilitate learning with technology tools, the Computer Clubhouse Network has grown to over 100 Clubhouses in the US and 20 countries. Using the original Clubhouse as a model, the Computer Clubhouse Network supports community-based Clubhouses around the world, providing over 25,000 youth per year with access to resources, skills, and experiences to help them succeed in their careers, contribute to their communities, and lead outstanding lives. Clubhouse Network staff not only support the start-up of new Clubhouses but also offer programmatic assistance to existing Clubhouses, providing professional development for staff, partnership opportunities, youth leadership development, and innovative approaches to using technology to foster learning. The Clubhouse community is diverse, comprising African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, recent immigrants and Whites.

The Clubhouse is guided by four principles:

- The Clubhouse focuses on activities that encourage young people to work as designers, inventors, and creators.
- The Clubhouse encourages youth to work on projects related to their own interests.
- The Clubhouse aims to create a sense of community, where young people work together with one another with support and inspiration from adult mentors.
- The Clubhouse is dedicated to offering resources and opportunities (including job and educational opportunities) to those who would not otherwise have access to them, in an environment of trust and respect.

While the Computer Clubhouse has seen tremendous success over the years – young people who are the first in their family to go to college, or who previously were apathetic about their education feeling empowered and excited about learning based on their experience in the Clubhouse – the program is not immune to challenges. The high school dropout crisis has affected many of our communities, as has the challenge of unemployment and under-employment of youth ages 18-24. At Computer Clubhouses around the country, many older teens and young adults, especially males, continue to visit the Clubhouse to hone their skills, find resources, get support from staff and peers, and participate as a part of this community. Clubhouse staff are faced with the challenge of helping these young people engage more deeply in learning and career planning, and guide them toward a path for the future.

This project will build a bridge between the Computer Clubhouse and workforce or educational opportunities for under-served youth between the ages of 18-24 who continue to visit their local Clubhouse, but are either high school dropouts, unemployed, under-employed or otherwise idle in their lives. The project will also expand the Clubhouse into four under-represented areas where partnerships with the local “host” organizations will help inform our work with this population: the YMCA in Springfield, MA, the Austin (TX) Urban League, the Norris Square Civic Association in Philadelphia, PA and OCCUR in Oakland, CA all have deep expertise in working with young adults in inner-city neighborhoods.

The goals of this program are to create lasting job and educational prospects for youth in under-served communities by starting 4 Computer Clubhouses in economically distressed communities, and improving existing Clubhouses' ability to serve as assets for the economic development of their communities, transitioning Clubhouse users to adulthood by providing opportunities to access internships, part- and full-time jobs, college placement, GED, and other equivalency test support.

The Computer Clubhouse College/Career Program proposes to enrich opportunities for 18-24 year-olds in the following ways:

- 20 Computer Clubhouses in the U.S. will use funding and support to hire and train staff members dedicated to job and education programming geared towards 18-24 year-olds and to launch the College and Career Program.

- Leveraging the experience gained at the flagship Clubhouse, Network staff will provide professional development and program assistance for job and education programming to Clubhouse Coordinators across the Network. The existing Network-wide online social network and collaboration site, The Computer Clubhouse Village, will be expanded to include alumni users and opportunities for obtaining higher education and employment.

- The Computer Clubhouse Network will launch the College & Career Program with sessions designed for older Clubhouse members at the Teen Summit Conference, held in Boston, MA.

- Four new Computer Clubhouses will be established in high-needs areas: Oakland, CA, Philadelphia PA, Springfield MA, and Austin, TX.

This project will create 29 new job positions within the Computer Clubhouse Network, as well as enable 6,000 youth and young adults from at-risk communities to gain marketable job skills and job readiness. Beyond this direct impact, the CCN expects to reach thousands more young adults as additional Clubhouses take on programming for 18-24 year olds.

Our partners in this project are the MIT Media Laboratory, numerous community-based organizations such as the Urban League and the YMCA, and corporate supporters such as Intel, Adobe Systems, Autodesk, and others.

The total cost of the project is \$3,356,970, of which \$684,458 is matching funds.