Applicant Name: CHARLESTON, CITY OF

Project Title: Charleston Community Technology Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

The Community Technology Centers (CTC) is a joint information access and computer literacy project of the City of Charleston, SC (City), Greater Charleston Empowerment Corporation (GCEC) and Alliance for Digital Equality (ADE) serving Charleston peninsular neighborhoods. The 5 CTCs will be housed in City operated community centers. The targeted communities are characterized as very low income with high levels of poverty, underemployment and unemployment, high school drop-out rates above the state and national average and absence of broadband technology. The CTCs are community based facilities geared to bring broadband connectivity and provide computer literacy skills for youth and adults. The centers will also provide new opportunities to community residents by providing high speed connectivity to the internet. The CTC will serve as a combination community service, social and educational facility where computers, broadband access workforce and financial literacy, as well as other related technologies are available. CTC will serve African American (AA) youth and adults residing in census tracts 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 44 and 45. Located within this target area are a variety of primary and secondary schools, community centers and social facilities that naturally attract our target population. The primary target area is bound by Highway 17 (Cross Town), Rutledge Avenue, Austin Avenue and the Cooper River. The target area is home to approximately 12,761 residents. The demographics of the area are: Total Population 12,761 African Americans 11,701 Total Households 5,082 Median HSHD Income $19,044 Average per capita income $9,425 % below poverty (5342) 40.73% % less than 12th grade education 37.40% The City of Charleston, SC seeks to educate and train individuals in unserved and underserved communities about the global benefits of broadband services and the digital empowerment that flows based on its use. The project supports the City's 5 year Consolidated Plan goal of increasing access to computers and providing related training among the City's youth and adults. Our center locations include: Kiawah Homes Center: This public housing complex is not located on the resort, Kiawah Island. It is located in the upper west side of the peninsula. There are no libraries or other PCC facilities in walking distance. Julian Devine Community Center: A city of Charleston recreation center serving the city's eastside population through providing programs for children, youth and senior citizens, including after school programs, summer camps, crafts, exercise room and public computer center. According to the 2000 census there were 462 children over the age of 3 and 60.5 % of the population with at least a high school education or higher and 36% of the household was below the poverty level. Arthur Christopher City Gym features a full court gym, several multipurpose rooms of which one has a limited number of computers, all without internet connection. A new Arthur Christopher City Gym is being constructed across the street from the current facility and will include a room to set up a computer center. Rosemont Community Center is located on the North end of the peninsula in a community...
where the quality of life for the residents is constantly threatened by road and infrastructure construction. The 2000 census counted 661 children age 0-14 years. Seventy seven percent of families were headed by females and 60% of those were at or below the poverty level. Gadsden Green Community Center is located in Charleston’s largest public housing development, on the city's West Side. Though when mentioned in the news it may be due to a crime that was committed, the Gadsden Green is being positively reenergized with redevelopment in the surrounding areas and with a public Charter School (K-7 Charleston Development Academy) that was established in 2003. Over 85% of the school’s students are residents of Gadsden Green. With funds from BTOP, the ADE Learning Without Walls (LWOW) Charleston Initiative will be launched in Community Technology Centers (CTC). Five sites will be enhanced to serve approximately 2,200 people per month. LWOW, a community based collaborative program will cultivate and promote broadband adoption, workforce development training, education and online tutorials in unserved and underserved Charleston communities. We will target computer illiterate adults and youth using community-based strategies designed to extend broadband content into every corner of their communities, there by preparing residents to meet new and existing requirements of educators and employers. LWOW and the CTCs will overcome broadband adoption barriers by providing communities with access to relevant online educational and workforce development training resources and content that was virtually non-existent in these neighborhoods. The CTCs will serve as a gateway for families to reap educational and employment benefits of culturally relevant online and broadband content using innovative techniques and technologies. Additionally, the CTCs will provide neighborhood based access to knowledge resources and access to digital technology to improve their lives. The CTCs and LWOW will focus on the needs of underserved and unserved adults and youth. We will provide adult participants with computer-based career training, GED preparation, and job enhancing skills. Additional support services will be offered to complement the courses. The students will have relevant online and portable broadband accessibility and after-school online tutorials. This program will stimulate and promote educational dialogue, digital literacy, e-learning, research, and peer education. LWOW will implement and establish qualitative and quantitative measurements and evaluations to measure the effectiveness of these broadband adoption programs and look for opportunities to adjust programs to meet the needs of participants. Program effectiveness will be monitored on a real-time basis in an effort to stay apprised of recurring trends and potential training shifts that may need periodic adjusting. In addition to monthly reviews, annual qualitative progress reports will be produced. The implementation of the LWOW Initiative will advance 3 of the BTOP’s statutory purposes: 1.) Provide broadband access to consumers in unserved areas. The establishment of 5 new public computing facilities will bring broadband access to areas that did not have access either due to geographical isolation, economic disadvantage, or both. 2.) Provide improved broadband access to consumers in underserved areas. The extension and upgrade of 3 existing public computer facilities will expand the availability of access. 3.) Stimulate demand for broadband. In addition, through direct and indirect job creation, this effort also supports the overall goals of ARRA by providing people information to get them back to work. In these uncertain economic times, the need for affordable broadband services is critical. The lack of these resources disadvantages underserved and unserved communities as they struggle to obtain employment, increase their competencies and skill sets. With unemployment rates at an all time high, families are now also competing for a limited number of employment opportunities. Though CTC/LWOW will directly employ 6 people, this initiative will improve
the employment opportunities of thousands who are out of work. Employers now require workers to have a GED and basic job skills that include competencies in computer usage and familiarity with the Internet and other broadband technologies. To address this demand for basic computing skills and to increase participation, this neighborhood based initiative CTC/LWOW provides community outreach, broadband access, e-learning and tutorials to prepare the participant to compete successfully in today's job market. Total federal funds being requested for the Learning Without Walls (LWOW) Initiative in Community Technology Centers (CTCs) $1,938,268. Direct jobs to be retained or created = 15