Applicant Name: REID COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP

Project Title: Reid Public Computer Centers Coalition

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

a. Statement of the problem with regard to improving Broadband service adoption rates: Accokeek resident Margaret Schmid gets the Internet at home through a dial-up connection, but she drives to a nearby public library and sits in her car with her laptop when she needs to download big files or visit Web sites with graphics and videos. Ms. Schmid is symbolic of many Prince George's County residents who are frustrated by the lack of internet access options. While broadband service is offered in some of the more denser areas in the County, too many other areas are underserved, especially the more rural areas of the County. This project will address three significant problems facing vulnerable populations residing in Southern Maryland Counties. Vulnerable populations will include African-Americans, unemployed, underemployed, ex-offenders, seniors, and those whose native language is not English. The problems to be addressed are: 'Lack of affordable public access to high-speed broadband services, education, training and technical support.' Southern Maryland's increasing unemployment rate and critically distressed economy. 'Lack of access to essential online services and resources (including federal, state, and local e-government resources) for employment opportunities, healthcare, education and job training, and citizenship.' Julius Genachowski, Chairman of the Federal Communications Committee in emphasizing how critical broadband access is has said, 'First, because broadband is essential to our global competitiveness' and our ability to create jobs and lead the world in innovation in the 21st century. Second, because broadband is essential for opportunity in America' for all Americans, from all communities and backgrounds, living in rural towns, inner cities, or in between. And, third, because broadband is essential to solving so many of the challenges facing our nation -- including education, health care, energy and public safety. In the FCC's Broadband Adoption and Use in America Report published in November 2009, included information on the state of broadband adoption and use as well as barriers facing those who do not have broadband at home. It reported a 78% general population adoption rate but a 59% African American rate and a 49% Hispanic rate. Only 48% of senior citizens are internet users. According to the Report non-adopting Americans fell into three categories: 1. 22% were not Internet users. They are the oldest non-adopting group with a median age of 60 and include the highest share of Hispanics (at 20%). Some 84% have high school degrees and live in households with incomes of $30,000 per year or less. 2. 6% have dial-up connections at home and 29% live in rural areas. 3. 12% of the non-adopters say they cannot get broadband where they live. The report further identified primary barriers to broadband use as cost, digital literacy and relevance. The proposed project will increase broadband adoption rate by overcoming these barriers in the following ways: 'Cost-' by providing no-cost access to broadband technology 'Digital literacy-by providing technical assistance and training to increase comfort level and skill' 'Relevance-' by increasing knowledge
of and access to needed services and resources to help with employment, groceries, doctors, prescriptions, etc. b. Overall approach to meeting the need: Reid Community Development Corporation (RCDC) has formed a coalition (RCDC Public Computer Centers Coalition, RCDC PCCC) of partners (identified within this proposal as "Main/Core," "Core," and "Outreach") to expand access to broadband technology services and resources in unserved or underserved areas in Prince George's, Montgomery, and Charles Counties. This coalition is unique in that it proposes yet untapped anchor organizations existing in all communities that have united to meet the need to serve vulnerable communities and small businesses. Traditionally, many classified as "vulnerable" in society have looked to the church as a primary resource to meet its needs. Therefore, there is a level of trust already established and intrinsically woven within the structure of these relationships. This unique approach uses a coalition of community development corporations founded by churches in the targeted communities. RCDC and its Executive Director will provide oversight of the entire Public Computer Centers project together with a Project Manager, who will provide technical expertise for all coalition locations. Each individual location will have a Public Computer Center Manager and a part-time Administrative Assistant. Technical Assistants will be utilized for troubleshooting in all locations; consultants, facilitators, and instructors will lend their expertise to provide training and education; college student interns will lend technical assistance coupled with trained and skilled volunteers, who will also staff each of the Public Computer Centers. This will aid in keeping costs down, while having trained the persons available onsite (on location) to quickly address any issues that may arise. RCDC as the Main or Core Public Computer Center will serve as the hub within the scope of this project. In order to provide quality and efficient services, Public Computer Centers will purchase necessary equipment (or upgrade necessary equipment) within each PCC facility. Each PCC will operate a minimum of 10 workstations for public use. Purchasing includes desktop computers; LCD projectors, printers, scanners, software, routers, switches, hubs, firewalls, servers, equipment necessary for establishing a wireless access point, ethernet cables, computer tables and chairs, and additional equipment to ensure adequacy to respond to public demand (detailed budget provided in this proposal). The RCDC PCC Coalition will work together to cover a minimum of 8 service areas to small businesses and the public. The goal is to provide access to broadband technology to those who would not otherwise have access and to educate, train, and equip individuals to no longer be unemployed or underemployed. Businesses will gain the necessary tools to be better able to manage and expand their small businesses. "But for" receiving BTOP funds, this project will not be able to succeed. c. Area(s) to be served: The proposed Public Computer Centers are located in six strategic locations throughout Prince George's County, one in Montgomery, and one in Charles County. Prince George's County has led the state of Maryland in foreclosures and its increasing unemployment rate is 7.2% in December 2009, up from 5.4% in December 2008. The Maryland National Park and Planning Commission reports that Prince George's County will experience the greatest growth in the State of Maryland in age groups over 60. d. Qualifications of the applicant: The solution to addressing the problem resulted in the formation of the RCDC PCC Coalition. RCDC and other members of its coalition are experienced professionals, who are adept at providing an array of services to both individuals and businesses in public and private sectors. The experience and expertise of coalition members spans more than 40 years. RCDC PCC Coalition skills and expertise include: executive leadership, management, supervision, budgeting, finance, computer training, computer center operations, organization, teaching, training, educating, starting businesses (both for profit and nonprofit
organization), mentoring, tutoring, training on purchasing homes, job training (training, readiness, interviewing, resume writing, etc.), writing, grant writing, and many other areas (other skills detailed within this proposal). The Coalition is equipped and prepared to serve the needs of businesses and our most vulnerable populations (estimated at approximately 11,000 in the first year). e. Jobs to be saved or created: An estimated 150 jobs will be created, saved or induced through Coalition efforts during the BTOP project funding period. f. Overall cost of the proposed project: The BTOP funding request to operate eight Public Computer Centers over the next two years is $2,601,452. Matching funds are provided at $1,068,820, a total of $3,670,272.