Elauwit Community Enhancement Foundation's ('ECEF's') Alabama Public Computer Center project plans to provide 310 computer work stations in 23 public computer centers located in 6 Public Housing Authority communities, and Public Housing Authorities represent large populations of underserved households, disconnected from broadband adoption. The Public Housing Authority computer centers will serve 34 communities with more than 17,000 residents. Including users in adjacent communities, we estimate that over 25,000 users per year will be served by these computer centers. The project is designed to address the major obstacles to broadband adoption in low-income, vulnerable communities: absence of affordable broadband services, education (computer literacy), and a lack of computer ownership. The project also intends to increase access to essential government, education, health care and jobs websites. The Alabama PCC Program Summary: 'Includes a Laptop Administration Program ('LAP') for 10% of household units per Housing Authority. Residents in these communities will be able to enroll in courses, working toward a proficiency certification. Upon completion and certification, residents will be supplied their own laptops and software. 'Includes 25 hours of paid computer instructor training per week, per public computer center. Instruction will utilize Microsoft’s Unlimited Potential Learning Curriculum, and focus on real-world skill development in the areas of computer literacy, information technologies and workforce development. In addition, we plan to provide 15 hours of volunteer instruction per week per computer center. The computer centers will be open for a total of 61 hours per week. 'Each organization will have its own Web portal. The portal will consist of information concerning the Housing Authority, area institutions and job opportunities, as well as links intended to highlight the Internet's most beneficial uses. Financial Overview of Project We are requesting $5,327,280 in federal grant funds for this project. The total costs for the entire project is $7,629,497. The $2,302,217 difference (30%) will be funded by a cash match from ECEF, a cash and in-kind match from project partners, and projected program revenues. 'Our project will leverage a 30% match to maximize the use of federal funds. 'Our project is forecast to create 83 jobs, 53 of which are direct and indirect, and 30 of which are induced. Statement of Need ECEF has partnered with Housing Authority partners to provide free computer access and education to some of the most vulnerable and underserved populations in Alabama. The population served by the Housing Authorities has the following characteristics: 'Alabama Public Housing households face high levels of unemployment. 53% of the Alabama Public Housing households earn below 30% of the median annual income, 17% earn 50% of the median, and 6% earn 80% of the median (Source: HUD Resident Characteristics Report, As of February 28, 2010). 'Minority populations are overrepresented in Alabama Public Housing households. 70% of Alabama Public Housing households are African American, 29% are Caucasian (Source: HUD
32% of the low income housing population is disabled (according to HUD). Of the disabled population, only 38% report Internet use. Only 19% say that their disability makes Internet use difficult. This means that four out of five members of the disabled community are not using the Internet for reasons unrelated to their disability. 41% of Housing Authority households include children. The dense population of school-aged individuals highlights the need for Public Computer Centers and educational programs. 31% of Housing Authority residents are elderly. The elderly report a high level of negative perceptions concerning the Internet. Only 35% of American households with annual incomes of $20,000 or less enjoyed the benefits of life online (‘Home Broadband Adoption 2009’). Organizational History Elauwit Community Enhancement Foundation is a nonprofit formed to leverage its expertise in providing cost-effective broadband solutions to vulnerable populations. Our executive team has previously applied for and implemented approximately $100 million in grant awards for 50 non-profit entities. In addition, we are one of the few providers experienced in deploying wireless networks for Housing Authorities. We have also designed and managed computer centers in a K-12 public education environment. By adopting this consortium strategy, ECEF will be able to negotiate superior purchasing arrangements, eliminate significant on-site management costs and concentrate accountability in a single, private entity.