Problem For more than a decade the City of Phoenix has been at the forefront of expanding access to broadband Internet, through public Wi-Fi, innovative municipal web services, and public computing sites. The tremendous popularity and demand for these services has led to continuing innovation, and is reflected in rates of household Internet usage by residents. The community has embraced broadband Internet, and recognizes its incredible benefits. The problem facing the City of Phoenix and its community partners is that the impact of the current economic recession threatens not just to stall continued expansion of broadband service adoption, but to significantly reverse the progress. At a time when more and more households are coming to depend on public computing centers for basic needs like homework help and filing for public services, the City's continued ability to provide these centers is hampered by aging equipment and serious budget shortfalls. Without the BTOP funding, the City of Phoenix would have to cut back on current services to the growing vulnerable populations for which expansion of computing centers is most needed. The effect of a reduction in public computing centers and associated training will be significant to those populations most injured by the recession. The City of Phoenix, like many cities throughout the country, is undergoing unprecedented budget reductions. The City recently conducted community budget hearings to discuss proposed cuts, and over 4,500 community members attended. It is significant to note that after weighing the comments from these public meetings, funding was reallocated to save only a few programs, including libraries and community centers. For many individuals, libraries and community centers are where they access the Internet, and this service has become essential. However, keeping libraries and community centers open will not ensure continued availability of computing centers, as aging equipment cannot be replaced during the current budget decline. Unfortunately, the problem is going to get even worse. Arizona ranked second highest in foreclosures in 2009, with a nearly 40% increase in filings from 2008. In 2009 more than 8% of all households in the Phoenix metro area were notified of default or foreclosure. As a side effect, residential property values in the metro area plummeted 50% from their values in 2007. These factors will continue to hamper economic recovery in the area, as more and more families lose their homes. At the same time as families struggle, public services are being cut due to the recession. In addition to service reductions by the City of Phoenix, the State of Arizona must also drastically reduce services in the face of a $3.3 billion dollar deficit through fiscal year 2011. Reductions will affect the most vulnerable populations in the Phoenix metro area, as they lose services for themselves and their children. During these difficult times, the internet can be a powerful tool for locating resources and finding employment. The continued availability of broadband Internet in public computing centers will be more critical than ever before. Approach to Address Problem The proposed approach to address this
The challenge is to create a partnership of City and non-profit organizations which already provide broadband Internet public computing centers. By leveraging existing resources and expertise, the project can expand quickly and affordably to meet the growing needs of the community. The project will target sites which will most impact vulnerable populations within the community. The project will upgrade, expand, or create computing centers in select libraries, community centers, and workforce training centers operated by the City and community non-profit partners. This targeted approach will ensure that those most in need - those who are most likely not to have internet access in their homes - will receive the greatest benefit from the centers.

Service Area / Population / Demographics: The service area for the proposed project encompasses the entire City of Phoenix, with a cluster of centers located in central and south Phoenix, which have the highest percentage of vulnerable populations. The total population for the service area is 1,567,924. Based on current usage figures, the estimated number of users for expanded and upgraded computer centers would be over 35,000 users per week. Phoenix represents an extremely diverse population. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006-08 American Community Survey, Phoenix has almost double the national average of foreign-born residents (24%). Thirty-nine percent of the population over five years of age speaks a language other than English at home, compared to 20% nationally. Of those residents, 51% report that they do not speak English 'very well.' Residents of the City of Phoenix are ethnically and culturally diverse. The population is comprised of 42.1% Hispanics or Latinos, 5.4% Black or African American, 1.9% American Indian, 2.5% Asian, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. The percentage of individuals below the poverty level in Phoenix is 17.9%, compared to 13.2% nationally. The proposed project targets areas within the city of Phoenix which have the greatest need for public Internet computing centers. Of proposed sites, 35% are located within central and south Phoenix. Of families in this area, 27.9% are below the poverty level, compared to 11.5% in the whole of Phoenix, and 9.2% nationally. Additionally, other locations were selected due to their proximity to census tracts with populations below the poverty level. (Please see attached Map 'City of Phoenix BTOP Public Computing Centers').

Qualifications: The City of Phoenix has a proven track record of providing free, accessible, and high quality computing centers to the public. The City is able to leverage existing facilities, experienced staff, and community partners to best serve the community members. The Phoenix Public Library first piloted Internet-accessible public computing sites in 1996. This pilot included three locations, six PCs, and five databases for homework assistance, small business training, and health information. This program was sustained and has increased to the library system's current 700 Internet PCs at 16 locations, providing 1.1 million Internet sessions per year. The current economic crisis is the major challenge to the City's and its partners' ability to sustain the current momentum of increased broadband Internet usage. For this reason, the scale of the proposed project is such that it can be sustained utilizing current facilities, staff, and overhead. As wonderful as it would be to build new computing centers, such a project could not be sustained during the slow economic recovery. Therefore, the proposed project is scaled to be sustainable, and to target those most in need.

Jobs Created or Saved: Because the proposed project targets the unemployed and under-employed population, the number of jobs created will be significant for the amount of investment. The proposed project would result in an estimated 18,600 new jobs, and 10 additional indirect jobs created or saved. The project would allow the Phoenix Workforce Connection and community partner sites to continue their mission to train residents for employment, and place them in appropriate jobs. The much needed new equipment would allow them to maintain and improve their placement percentage, leading to
more community members finding employment. Project Cost The total cost for the proposed project is $1,257,564. More than 20% of the cost would be provided by in-kind match, resulting in $986,500 in federal stimulus funding.