Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: OPA LOCKA, CITY OF

Project Title: Opa-Locka Public Computer Centers

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

The City, with strong support from our elected officials, has developed a comprehensive community development neighborhood strategy to address the immediate improvements needed in the community. The overall objective of the neighborhood strategy is to create a sustainable environment for our residents and visitors to live, work, play and do business. The strategy affronts those issues that are of pressing concerns to our constituents which are abandoned and foreclosed properties, infrastructure improvements, neighborhood appearance, job creation and public safety. The community is an economically distressed area. The project will provide numerous educational benefits to the residents of the Opa-locka, employees of community businesses and visitors. The facility will serve to inform, educate and provide individuals with access to broadband. Overall approach to addressing the need is to create computer centers in strategic location which will reach the most number of community residents. The project includes three (3) centers with the largest center located at the Sherbondy Park and will have 25 work stations. The CET and Senior center sites will each have 10 work stations. The remaining 5 computers will be assigned to staff at the locations. Computer centers will provide training to address the needs of the population that uses a particular location. Youth will receive educational programs to help improve areas of studies in which they are weak. The after school tutoring will work hand-in-hand with teachers in addressing that child's need. The City of Opa-Locka (the City) is a 4.2 square mile diverse inner city community in the northeastern area of Miami-Dade County (the County). The City is predominately African-American (77%), followed by Hispanics (27%) and Whites (15%). This community is also challenged with crime and other social ills faced by urban cities. Factors, such as high rates of unemployment, low income, substandard housing, single female-headed households, high truancy and drop out rates, poor school adjustment, negative peer affiliations and environmental influences, substance abuse, and limited access to neighborhood-based services, are disproportionately prevalent in the City. These factors are identified by many social science and criminal justice literature as leading cause of criminal activity. Per the 2000 census, the City has a population of 14,951 with the majority of the population living near or below the poverty income level. Many of our residents are unemployed or employed in low paying jobs. Residents of the City have a per capita income of $9,538 which is less than half of the County's $18,497. In 2007, the Florida Department of Community Affairs reported an unemployment rate of 17.50% for the City and 8.70% for the County. In its January 22, 2010 press release, the Beacon Council reported that the County's December 2009 unemployment rate was 11.3% and the County's Urban Taskforce estimated that unemployment rate in some communities may be as high as 20%. Based on the City's track record, it easily falls in the 20% unemployment rate. Many reside in substandard inadequate housing, in areas where gang, drug and criminal activity is high.
creating negative role modeling and a generally unsafe environment. These areas are the source of many of the shootings and incidents of gun violence in the City. Fueled by drugs and gang activity, gun violence and crimes committed with a firearm have increasingly become a major concern for the City of Opa-Locka and neighboring communities. A persistent high crime rate, drug and gang activity, escalating violence, economic deprivation and a host of other risk factors are well documented in the statistics. The project will provide jobs and business opportunities for minorities and the disabled. The City's EEO Policy and Minority/Female/Disadvantaged Business Procurement Policy will serve to insure that women, minorities and disabled individuals participate and benefit from the project regards to employment contracting and procurement opportunities. The City will ensure that the project complies with ADA guidelines and provision. The economic impact of the community computer center includes employment for area residents who are unemployed or underemployed. This project will save will create 2 new I.T. positions. In addition, a program coordinator will be hired to oversee and coordinate educational programs for each of the centers. Two (2) full-time monitors will be hired with to cover all three sites. For the after-school program, part-time teachers will be hired to tutor students in English, Mathematics, and other science subject.