Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name:  BOAT PEOPLE SOS, INC.

Project Title:  BPSOS Computer Technology & Health Information Center

Project Type:  Public Computer Center

_______________________Executive Summary_______________________

a) Statement of Need: The BPSOS-PA Computer Technology & Health Information Center aims to i.
bridge the digital divide for some 13,000 Vietnamese refugees and immigrants living in the Philadelphia
metropolitan area who do not have access to broadband services due to multiple barriers, including: low
level of computer literacy, high costs of service, and absence of a community-wide remedy initiative. ii.
provide a unique internet-based Vietnamese health curriculum that focuses on language and culturally
appropriate health risk-prevention, self-care, and information access. While much of the country moves
headlong into the information age ' as healthcare providers, employers, and businesses move paper-
based materials and information online -- a large proportion of Vietnamese individuals do not use
computer or have any access to broadband services. BPSOS' surveys in 2001 and 2002 of 1,500
Vietnamese in several locations nationwide, including Philadelphia indicated that 65% of
newcomers' those being in the US for ten years or less ' did not use computers and 69% did not have
internet access. Since then, barriers to computer and internet have remained the same. Besides new
immigrants, other underserved subgroups include: seniors, Amerasians, and individuals with physical
and learning disabilities. We expect the percentages of individuals with access to broadband services to
be very low among these subgroups. Left out of the information age, these subgroups tend to fall
further behind average Americans in their access to services, benefits, and opportunities. This affects
Vietnamese individuals' prospects for employment, stable income, and self-sufficiency. Vietnamese
businesses are similarly at a disadvantage; they tend to remain very small, operate inefficiently, and
cannot break into the mainstream market. These pre-existing challenges aggravate the impacts of the
economic downturn on the Vietnamese community in Philadelphia and slow its recovery. While we seek
to address the immediate economic challenges faced by our target population, we are deeply concerned
about the impacts of these challenges on the long-term well-being of Vietnamese individuals. According
to research findings, Vietnamese immigrants and refugees face disproportionately high incidence of
certain types of cancer (breast, cervical, lung, and liver) and other chronic diseases (diabetes, Hepatitis
B, hypertension, etc.) as well as mental health concerns. However, health and mental health have been
low priorities for most Vietnamese due to their survival needs, lack of awareness, and scarcity of
linguistically and culturally appropriate services. Due to existing cultural and language barriers,
Vietnamese immigrants and refugees are unable to access reliable health information and services on
such issues such as hypertension, nutrition, and other diseases that are prevalent in our community. The
on-going economic downturn further distracts low-income Vietnamese refugees and immigrants from
giving due attention to health and mental health care. Without access to broadband internet or
computers, many of these individuals are unable to access basic information and services related to
health, employment, public benefits, financial capability, national census, and other ARRA-related priorities for economic growth. b) Overall Approach To address these unique needs, the BPSOS-Philadelphia will team with University of Pennsylvania-Asian Health Initiative, volunteers from local colleges, and the Department of Labor's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to provide: i. Valuable language-appropriate basic computer literacy training, with the goal of opening doors for increased work and business productivity, soft employment skills, job searches and other priority areas for ARRA-funded Public Computer Centers. ii. Web-based health curriculum that will assist and educate Vietnamese individuals, specifically seniors, about where to find, and how to access, online health education. iii. A guide that will teach Vietnamese individuals how to discern accurate from inaccurate health information. Our approach includes the following strategies: 1. Expand and upgrade existing Computer Technology Center (CTC) to include distance learning, digital media technologies; add computers; and upgrade to Windows 7 software. 2. Connect BPSOS CTC to virtual Vietnamese-language library (tvvn.org) and vastly expand Vietnamese-language library content. 3. Hire and train CTC/Health Information Center coordinator, and part-time IT support staff. Further train AmeriCorps volunteers and recruit additional volunteers. 4. Partner with University of Pennsylvania's Asian Health Initiative, which will assist us to develop beginner and advanced computer and internet classes to teach computer skills, internet navigation, online research skills, and methods of accessing online health-related information. 5. Offer web-based workshops to connect individuals with online health information; demonstrate where to find, and how to access, online content such as prevention and screening information for diseases prevalent in the Vietnamese community; and guide users on how to determine the reliability of health content. 6. Make available flyers, literature, and resources from other organizations; books on computer and internet; and books on digital healthcare use. We will leverage existing funded programs to implement the project: i. Assistance to Refugee Couples-Information Technology Center (ARC-ITC): Through our own ARC-ITC funded by the Administration of Children and Families, we will leverage our TV studio and radio recording capabilities to provide technical assistance to FBCOs and businesses for multi-platform marketing. ii. University of Pennsylvania-Asian Health Initiative: Will partner with BPSOS to create web-based health curriculum as well as an evaluation process for the project's overall impact on the community; iii. Department of Labor’s Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP): We will train unemployed seniors in computer and office skills and refer them to job placement services; and iv. Undergraduate Work Study: We will recruit and train work study students to assist the Project Coordinator in outreach for this program. c) Area(s) to be served. This project will cover Philadelphia County, with a focus on South Philadelphia where the largest local concentration of Vietnamese immigrants and refugees reside. Over 3,500 Vietnamese individual live, work, and attend school in South Philadelphia. The full array of services will be offered to the primary target population, consisting of the five underserved subgroups of Vietnamese described above. The CTC will otherwise be available to all members of the local community, including non-Vietnamese. The following clients will benefit from our CTC within 24 months: (i) 400 low-income adults (including 50 Amerasian clients, 150 seniors, and other low-income individuals) will know how to use a computer and have access to broadband technology via the CTC; (ii) 400 individuals will gain increased knowledge and increase their internet usage for health information, healthcare websites, videos and webinars, and other health-related resources. (iii) Two key organizations will increase their access to the Vietnamese community; Vietnamese health-related resources online; and ability to conduct health awareness-related research within the Vietnamese
d) Qualifications of the applicant. BPSOS-Philadelphia, an affiliate of a national community-based organization, has been serving the local Vietnamese community for a decade. We assist community members in need through a broad array of programs including mutual assistance and mentorship opportunities for local faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs); workforce readiness programming, which includes ESL and basic computer literacy training; and immigration services to assist individuals to achieve citizenship and family reunification. Our local branch receives support from BPSOS' national headquarters, which has operated a network of CTCs in seven cities since 2000. Thanks to NTIA and Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funding, BPSOS has equipped three of these CTCs with digital media and distance learning capabilities. BPSOS operates the largest national network of Vietnamese-language mass media. 

e) Jobs to be saved or created. With this CTC, we will maintain one job at UPENN-Asian Health Initiatives; maintain the BPSOS Branch Manager position, while creating two new BPSOS jobs; place 25 adults into the workforce through workforce readiness training; and place 6 seniors into employment through SCSEP. 

f) Overall project cost. Total project cost is $493,626, to be expended within 24 months. We request $385,000 in federal funds and will contribute $108,626 in non-federal matching funds.