Executive Summary

a.) Statement of Need: The Neighborhood Empowerment Support through Teamwork-Computer Technology Center (NEST-CTC) project will serve the two hundred thousand Vietnamese in Orange County, California, which forms the largest concentration of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam. A large proportion of these Vietnamese 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. BPSOS' surveys in 2001 and 2002 of 1,500 Vietnamese in several locations nationwide, including Orange County, indicated that 65% of the newcomers' those being in the US for ten years or less did not use computer and 69% did not have access to the internet. These proportions continue to stand because the barriers to computer and broadband have remained the same and also because there is a continual stream of new arrivals from Vietnam. Besides new immigrants, the other underserved subgroups include: seniors, Amerasians (children born to US servicemen and Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War), and individuals with physical and learning disabilities. Large proportions of these subgroups live in poverty. Left out of the information age, the target population tends to fall further behind the average American in their access to services, benefits, and opportunities. This affects the individual Vietnamese's prospect for employment, stable income, business growth, and self-sufficiency. These pre-existing challenges aggravate the impacts of the economic downturn on the overall Vietnamese community in Orange County and slow its recovery. Despite the tremendous need for broadband access, there are only a handful of public computer centers serving the target population. There are not enough facilities and equipment to conduct computer training and offer internet access for the target population. There is no public computer center in Orange County designed specifically for Vietnamese with disabilities.

b.) Overall Approach: The NEST-CTC will provide culturally and linguistically appropriate broadband access points, training, education, and support resources to underserved Vietnamese immigrants and refugees. Within two years: 1) 5,000 low-income adults (including 500 disabled, 1,000 elders, 200 Amerasians, 1,000 owners of small businesses, and the rest low-income individuals) will know how to use a computer and have access to broadband service via four Community Technology Centers (CTCs); 2) 900 children and their parents will have a safe place to study, socialize and play; and 3) 10 faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) will use the CTCs to implement health and human service programs, and to offer support, job training, education, and services to community members and businesses. Our approach is to: 1) Expand and upgrade two existing CTCs to include T1 connections, distance learning capabilities, digital media technologies, and accommodations for wheelchairs; set up five new CTCs to be strategically located throughout the targeted geographic
area to accommodate sub-concentrations of Vietnamese; 2) Connect all CTCs to the Vietnamese Library Online and vastly expand the content of the library; provide relevant healthcare information connect all CTCs to job banks, benefits check, social services, and appropriate service provider websites; 3) Provide computer training and broadband access to community members and specialized training to business owners; 4) Use CTCs as platforms for program implementation: workshops, training seminars, and classes with live webinars and taped sessions to share with other communities via the virtual library; and 5) Provide technical assistance to FBCOs and businesses in using the CTCs for web marketing and for the production of TV, radio and print PSAs or ads. We will leverage the federally funded programs to implement the project: 1) 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; 2) AmeriCorps Program: We will apply for four AmeriCorps members to coordinate CTC activities; 3) AmeriCorps*VISTA Program: We will apply for one VISTA member to develop and execute the project’s sustainability plan. c). Area to be served: This project will cover the greater Orange County area, which includes the cities of Westminster, Garden Grove, Santa Ana, Irvine, Costa Mesa, Anaheim, Stanton, Huntington Beach, and Fountain Valley. The full array of services will be offered to the primary target population consisting of four underserved subgroups of Vietnamese: new immigrants, seniors, Amerasians (children born to US servicemen and Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War), and individuals with physical and learning disabilities. The secondary target population includes people with low income and Vietnamese small business owners. The CTCs will otherwise be available to all members of the local community at large. d.) Qualifications of the Applicant: BPSOS in Orange County is the local, community-based branch of a national Vietnamese-American organization. We have provided culturally and linguistically competent social services for immigrant and refugee families in greater Orange County since 2000. One of the first programs we established in 2000 was a small CTC; the CTC is still in operation, but in need of upgrading. As an organization founded and primarily staffed by Vietnamese immigrants and refugees, we have special insight into the needs of the target population. As a local branch of a national Vietnamese-American non-profit organization, we receive funding, training and technical assistance from our parent organization. Founded in 1980, the national organization has operated a network of CTCs in seven cities since 2000. In 2005-2009, with NTIA and Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funding, we upgraded three of these CTCs with digital media technologies capabilities. Two grants from NTIA Public Telecommunications Facilities Program have allowed BPSOS to establish distance learning capabilities at three CTCs. On a national level, our parent organization operates the largest national network of Vietnamese-language mass media and supported the formation of the Vietnamese-American National Chamber of Commerce. BPSOS has managed multiple federal grants in the millions of dollars each. e) Jobs to be saved or created: This project will directly create ten full-time jobs after completion: four CTC managers, two web hosting specialists, and four IT instructors. These jobs will be funded through tuition and service fees charged after the second year. We also expect to place 30 seniors into employment through SCSEP. f.) Overall cost of the project: Of the total of $1,428,603 we request $1,118,120 from BTOP. There will be $310,483 in-kind match.