Located in Cook County, Illinois, the Southside area covers 60 percent of the land area of Chicago. It is a racially diverse area with a higher ratio of single-family homes and industrial zones than the rest of the city. Southside neighborhoods of Auburn Gresham, Englewood, and West Englewood have a collective unemployment rate of 23.2 percent. The Mayor’s office in the City of Chicago estimates that 23 of the 77 neighborhoods in the city have broadband penetration levels lower than that of rural areas[1], leaving almost 40 percent[2] of Chicagoans on the wrong side of the digital divide. The Southside area is a major part of this urban underserved area with respect to broadband internet penetration, leaving its residents without access to the critical technological tools and services that are essential for survival and growth in the 21st century. Broadband is a critical driver of the economy in the digital era. It gives users access to services and applications that can enhance employment opportunities, improve work skills, and provide a competitive advantage to the smallest of businesses. As per an MIT report from 2006[3], communities with broadband experienced more rapid growth in employment, number of businesses overall and businesses in IT-intensive sectors. The iWeb Broadband Project addresses the BTOP goals of providing broadband access, education, awareness, training, equipment, and support to community anchor institutions or organizations and agencies serving vulnerable populations and stimulating the demand for broadband. We will support the effort of broadband access, education, awareness and training with a two pronged strategy: (1) Directly training Chicago Southside residents, private and public organizations in the use of the internet beyond just searches and sending email: trainees will be intensively coached in advertising and selling on the internet, using the social media of Web 2.0 to promote their businesses, establishing a presence on the internet and communicating effectively with suppliers and customers using the internet. Participants will also be introduced to the 'app economy' that has proliferated over the last few years, with smart devices such as the iPhone, iPad, and iPod. They will learn how to integrate their services in this environment of over 85,000 applications providing a host of innovative services to millions of users (2) Recruit and train students of area Community Colleges and Chicago State University to develop and design bandwidth-intensive next generation applications, content and services targeted towards underserved and unservered African American and Hispanic end users and small businesses. The tools will be developed on proven, tried and successful platforms such as the Apple iPhone, iPad and iPod Software Development Kits (SDKs). As a result of this project, small businesses in this area will be able to get on to the information superhighway, advertise their businesses and better contact suppliers and customers outside their immediate geography. The effort will result in more users of broadband internet, a web presence for several businesses and more employment opportunities in the area. The innovative approach envisages
taking the training to the underserved areas where it is most needed: training will be offered in a location (yet to be finalized) in the Southside area, as well as in the local libraries of the Southside neighborhoods. Areas to be served by the project include the Southside neighborhoods of Burnside, Auburn Gresham, Englewood as well as Chicago Lawn and Pilsen. Burnside is the home of the Chicago State University (http://www.csu.edu). The program aims to recruit Senior College Students from Chicago State University to work in the iWeb Broadband Project, and design and develop iPhone/iPad/iPod applications. The latest census statistics[4] for these target areas are telling: AREAS: Burnside: Total Population: 3,294 Black/African Americans (One race): 3,198 Hispanic/Latino: 34 Unemployment Rate (of civil labor force): 18.4 Individuals below poverty line: 949 Auburn Gresham: Total Population: 55,928 Black/African Americans (One race): 55,050 Hispanic/Latino: 347 Unemployment Rate (of civil labor force): 16.7 Individuals below poverty line: 11,439 Englewood: Total Population: 40,022 Black/African Americans (One race): 39,501 Hispanic/Latino: 347 Unemployment Rate (of civil labor force): 25.8 Individuals below poverty line: 17,344 Chicago Lawn: Total Population: 64,412 Black/African Americans (One race): 32,541 Hispanic/Latino: 21,534 Unemployment Rate (of civil labor force): 15.7 Individuals below poverty line: 11,970 Near West Side: Total Population: 46,419 Black/African Americans (One race): 24,706 Hispanic/Latino: 4,415 Unemployment Rate (of civil labor force): 18.9 Individuals below poverty line: 16,149 Lower West Side: Total Population: 44,031 Black/African Americans (One race): 979 Hispanic/Latino: 39,144 Unemployment Rate (of civil labor force): 9.1 Individuals below poverty line: 11,841 As the figures demonstrate, the target neighborhoods consist of low-income individuals, with a majority belonging to the African American and Hispanic/Latino communities. Many small businesses and services thrive in these neighborhoods, however the vast majority of individuals have no access to the tools and technologies of the digital age that can help them better their quality of life and improve their income levels. Implementation of the iWeb Broadband Project would make a radical difference in employment prospects of area residents. A more radical change will be visible in the viability and growth prospects of small businesses, which are often the economic lifelines of low-income neighborhoods. The two promoters of this project are Quinn Smith and Trina Mangrum. An Electrical Engineer and MBA with a long and distinguished career in the technology field, Quinn has worked primarily with the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center and the Department of Defense, first as an Electronic Engineer, and later as a Program Manager/Electronic Engineer and Senior Program Manager/Computer Engineer, responsible for the rollout of a major Infrastructure Planning Program impacting over 20,000 customers. Her experience in these roles gives her the unique ability to understand how to utilize technology services and tools to make a significant impact among customers; and to work systematically towards a set program goal, garnering the necessary resources and tools, while being flexible to changing situations along the way. Trina Mangrum holds a BS in Computer Science, and project and program management qualifications. She has applied her technology and management skills to great effect in diverse communities, first as a long-serving Chief of Staff to 24th Ward Alderman Michael D. Chandler, and later as Village Assistant Manager (Constituent Services) to the Village of Maywood. Trina's background gives her a wealth of experience upon which she draws to mobilize people and resources to execute community-oriented projects such as the iWeb Broadband Project. iWeb Software Development, Inc. team for three years offered the Chicago Southside community affordable application and website design/development services, included in those affordable services we offered pro bono consulatation services to online small businesses. We live and
work in the underserved community which give us leverage to understanding our target market first hand. Using the OMB rubric of 1 job year created/$92,000 of federal expenditure, we estimate that as a result of this project, a minimum of 13 jobs will be created in the Chicago Southside area, we expect more will be derived from the eCommerce Small Business trainee. The number is expected to be higher as our focus is on small businesses. We estimate that we will train 1,549 people over the two years of this project, and about 3,184 new small businesses and people will become new broadband subscribers. The overall cost of the proposed project and requested BTOP funds are $2,727,133.00 for a cost of $270/trainee over the course of the project.