

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Lumity

Project Title: Lumity Community Centers Of Excellence Program

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

Lumity, in conjunction with project partner Aunt Martha's Healthcare Network & Youth Service Center (Aunt Martha's), has created an exciting project to provide digital literacy services and public access to underserved and unserved families and individuals on Chicago's southeast side and south suburban Cook County, IL.

The proposed project augments four existing Aunt Martha's brick and mortar facilities utilizing Lumity's proven experience in creating, improving, and expanding the services of Community Technology Centers or CTCs. The project service area is chronically underserved where families struggle with few learning options, historic and recently expanding unemployment reaching as high as 25% and chronic under-employment; as well as many other challenges faced in economically challenged areas. Bringing together the strengths of Lumity with the service facilities and partner network of Aunt Martha's provides a unique blend of services that will help area residents make effective use of digital literacy training and broadband access to improve their lives.

Lumity propose development and delivery of direct training, curriculum design, and service integration. Lumity also supports operational development and metric reporting through best practice assessments and deployment of best practices. The proposed curriculum offers several entrance levels based on initial skill level and culminates in IC3 certification which is well recognized and highly valued by employers. Residents that do not achieve IC3 certification may exit the curriculum at several levels, each of which provides excellent skill advancement that is designed to promote employability and success in numerous job roles.

Aunt Martha's provides a wealth of accompanying services that are essential for area residents to utilize the investment in broadband service and training. For example, offering and connecting residents with child care services during training is critical for single head of household mothers to access training and work opportunities.

However, skill obtainment is only one key element in helping area residents improve their lives. Lumity and Aunt Martha's project leaders will integrate the CTC training activities with existing workforce development programming, resulting in a more holistic set of services that leverage skill and credential obtainment to obtain life changing employment. The project will include providing digital literacy training oriented toward employment, support services, and complementary training on using online tools to seek and secure employment and on basic financial literacy skills. In this integration of services residents are supported through the skill development training as well as through the challenging task of locating and securing employment. Supplemental services will also stimulate interest in wider use of broadband as participants learn to take advantage of online tools.

Lumity and Aunt Martha's have deep experience working in underserved areas with demographics that present unique challenges to train and support when compared to the general population of Illinois or the broader Midwest. The proposed service areas include the Southeast Side Community area of Chicago, Calumet City, Park Forest, and South Holland, Illinois. These areas suffer from high unemployment, poverty, and violence. The US Census shows between 28% and 33% of people are living in poverty compared to a statewide poverty rate of 12%. Additionally, nearly a third of Southside Chicago residents (31%) are reported as having a disability with 12% having some form of mental disability (All data from US Census, 2000). In the target service area nearly 83% are Latino. This demographic has been specifically challenged with nearly three out of four individuals living in poverty and nearly 40% being children. A third of Latino families in poverty are single-parent households, with 80% headed by females. The proposed program and integrated services are designed to engage this population effectively and overcome language, cultural and logistical barriers unique to these situations and this population.

Lumity and Aunt Martha's each have multiple years' experience in delivering training and services that qualify them to carry out the proposed project. Since 2002 Lumity has supported the creation and improvement of 19 Chicago-area CTCs operating in un/underserved communities. As a nonprofit experienced in helping organizations use technology to develop and deliver programs, Lumity has the capacity to bring technology training, certification resources, and community facilities together for maximum community impact. The experienced team of leaders and service staff brought together for this project have many years of experience developing and delivering this type of project into these communities. Aunt Martha's currently operates 16 Federally Qualified Health Centers throughout Illinois, and is preparing to open its 17th, the South Holland site, in September, 2009. Aunt Martha's Park Forest facility, one of the proposed sites, is where most of the Family, Education & Development Services (FEDS) are offered. The FEDS Division Manager oversees Youth Development and Prevention, Employment and Education, and other programs including many federal programs such as Head Start and Workforce Investment Act.

The four proposed sites will serve 3,000 people, train 560 people, and place 224 people in jobs over the two years.

Lumity requests a grant of \$762,472 to support the development of the proposed CTCs and implementation of Lumity's digital literacy curriculum at the four sites. The overall project budget is \$956,595.