

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Free Public of Irvington N J

Project Title: Public Computer Center

Project Type: Public Computer Center

Executive Summary

A. Need Statement

Irvington Public Library serves as an information hub for the community of Irvington as well as Essex County. In calendar year 2000, 45,000 people utilized public access computers in the adult library. This number represented a 100% increase over usage in computer related services since 2001.

Every day approximately 20 people wait in queue to use the public access computers while others log on for an one hour session. Sixteen adult and eight children computers are available at any given time.

A great problem is that a large number of adults in Irvington do not own a personal computer and cannot afford the associated cost of accessing the Internet inside or outside their homes. The public library must respond to the needs of its customers for business information, resume writing, job applications, e-mails etc. The library's role in being the primary host agent for public access to the Internet and global opportunities has taken center stage.

The Irvington Public Library has become the premier public computing center within the Township. The library provides access to online education, job searching, skills training, government services and more. No fee is charged to the residents of Irvington.

The library's technical infrastructure needs to be upgraded to accommodate faster Internet connection and improve wireless service in and around the library. The current T1 line with 1.5 megabits and wireless capability have proven to be inadequate to maintain and meet the demands from the public in response to the economic challenges impacting the critical masses within our urban communities.

B. The need will be addressed in the following manner:

1) Expansion of the IPL public computer center to accommodate an additional 25 laptops and peripheral equipment. A space of approximately 1,000 square feet will be completely refurbished to accommodate this new service. This new area is located directly across from the current computer center and will be easily maintained and managed by the IT staff.

2) Customers will have a choice of wireless accessibility or category 6 cabling. Twenty five electrical outlets will be installed within the area to accommodate the computers.

3) IPL will acquire broadband related equipment, hardware, software and digital network technology for broadband services.

4) IPL will develop and provide training, education, support and awareness programs to its customers. Current classes provided to the public will be expanded.

5) Irvington Public Library will conduct broadband related public education, outreach, support and awareness campaigns.

Public libraries across the nation are unable to provide an open access laptop center to its customers particularly due to financial constraints. The majority of libraries offer the traditional service of internet access through public personal computers utilizing a T1 line speed or lower.

This project will provide customers with the option of signing on to our traditional public access computers or utilizing laptop computers with the flexibility of wireless or hardwire.

No other organization or public library offers this service in Essex County on this level.

C. Population

Irvington is a suburb of Newark with a population of about 60,000 densely packed into a little over three square miles. The community is predominantly African American with a large Caribbean presence and a growing West African contingent. Median household income in 2005 was \$42,629, almost \$20,000 lower than the rest of New Jersey. 17.8% of the residents live below the poverty line, which is much higher

The estimated number of potential users for the public computer center is 3,500 per month.

D. Qualifications of applicant

Joan Whittaker, Library Director has served in current capacity since 2000. She has initiated, coordinated and implemented one computer lab and two computer centers, totaling 35 public access computers. Free access to the Internet is provided daily as well as free classes in basic Internet searching, job searching, resume writing and blogging etc.

Assistant Director, Jeanetta Singleton functions in the capacity of Head of IT Department. She manages and supervises all aspects of the IPL's technological infrastructure including managing the IT staff, purchasing hardware and software and troubleshooting.

E. Jobs to be saved or created

Computers will be purchased from HP state contract vendor. The services of NCG Solutions will be solicited to accomplish the following:

1) Wire new cat 6 cabling. 2) Conduct needs assessment survey. 3) Install broadband technology. The library staff will manage, supervise and maintain computers and new infrastructure. Zenith Resources, a minority based computer has worked with the library for four years providing consultants service for the IT department. For this project Zenith will install software, configure, test and deploy 25 new computers.

We project that approximately 50 jobs will be created directly and from the population served another 200 jobs will be created indirectly.

f) Overall cost of project: \$428,014