

99022

TIIAP FY 1999
Project Narrative

Community Preservation & Development Corp

Grant # 11-60-99022
Community Networking
Washington, D.C.

PROJECT DEFINITION

EDGENET

EdgeNet will place a networked computer in each apartment in this community and provide residents with broad bandwidth telecommunication capability. Residents will use EdgeNet to:

- Learn word processing, spreadsheet, financial management, and internet browser software applications that will enhance educational and employment opportunities;
- Communicate with one another via email and community forums or chat rooms customized for the community and hosted on an intranet;
- Have high speed access to the Internet and a variety of online resources; and
- Register for CPDC coordinated services, assessments, classes, and programs.

EdgeNet will create an electronic village that will mirror the complete physical and social redevelopment of the community that started over three years ago.

EdgeNet's network architecture is designed on a server-based computing model that utilizes Citrix MetaFrame and Microsoft's Window Terminal Server running on NT servers. Residents will have access to the residential network through a thin client machine installed in their apartments with a standard Windows/NT interface. This interface will serve out applications that include a word-processor (MS Word97), a spreadsheet program (MS Excel97), an Internet browser (MS Explorer4.0) and a personal finance application (MS Money98). In addition, each user will have an individual e-mail account hosted on Microsoft's Exchange Server and an allotted amount of server space for file storage. All services will be provided on a fully enabled 10Mbps Network over Category-5 copper and fiber optic cable. The network will provide Internet Service to all residents via a T-1 Frame Relay connection to its Internet Service Provider. This connection gives the network and the services adequate bandwidth to meet the changing technological needs of a diverse computing community. One high rise and six garden apartments are already wired in anticipation of EdgeNet. The rest of the community still needs the basic infrastructure.

CPDC requests \$650,000 from TIAP over a three-year period. These funds will be used for additional wiring infrastructure, for the research CPDC and its partners will perform on EdgeNet, for web development, for salaries of project-related staff, and for the thin client units installed in each apartment.

BACKGROUND: PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES

Edgewood Terrace is a sixteen-acre, 884-unit site that has three high rises and nine garden apartments (*appendix 1*). Located in Ward 5 of Northeast Washington, DC, Edgewood suffered from the neglect and poverty that characterized public housing projects in the 1980s. In 1991, CPDC joined with the residents, conducted a needs-assessment with Catholic University of America's School of Social Work, compiled and analyzed demographic data, and sought input from the community to develop a comprehensive revitalization plan. Today, Edgewood Terrace Phase 1 (EWT I: 292 apartments), a \$17,000,000 rehabilitation of the first of three high-rises and six of the nine garden apartments, is complete. Construction on the three additional garden apartments (42 units that are a part of EWT III) is currently underway, and the renovation of a second high rise, a senior assisted- and independent-living complex (EWT III), is scheduled to begin later this year. The third of the three high rises (EWT II) has been maintained and is not in need of repair. Nearly all of the EWT I apartments have been rented to a low- and moderate-income population that includes all of the former Section 8 residents as well as individuals and families transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing.

When CPDC purchased and began renovating 601 Edgewood Street (EWT I high rise) and six neighboring garden apartments in 1995, the building was less than 40% occupied. The remaining residents all had Section 8 vouchers tied to this complex and were unable to move. The building and the community were seriously deteriorated—pipes leaked, apartments were abandoned and deteriorated, the roof leaked,

there were large numbers of rats, the garage had collapsed, an open-air drug market flourished in the common area, and the crime rate was astronomical. Edgewood Terrace was a 'problem child' of one of the most troubled wards in the District of Columbia, Ward 5. Ward 5 has the second highest unemployment rate in DC, 10.7%. It also has low educational attainment and high welfare dependency.

Today, there are over 1200 residents of Edgewood Terrace, more than 225 of them are children. Less than a year ago, the average annual household income for Edgewood Terrace residents was \$10,879. Since that time, the average annual income of the Edgewood Terrace community has risen to \$17,024 as moderate-income individuals and families have rented some of the renovated apartments and as salaries rise as a result of employment training programs. This annual income (usually a more liberal income measurement than median income) is still far below the Ward 5 (\$26,874) and Washington, DC (\$30,727) median incomes.

Prior to CPDC's involvement in this community, the residents of Edgewood Terrace felt powerless to change or improve their community and detached from needed services that would help them improve their lives. Social services were fragmented and dispersed. Residents expressed frustration at not being able to identify any tools or vehicles at their disposal that could help them get out of the desperate poverty that had seized their community. CPDC realized that in order to 'fix' this community (and not just 'fix' the buildings) residents needed access to social services that could put them on the road to self-sufficiency. In order to provide a vehicle for this social renovation, CPDC developed a model to bring technology into every apartment in this community so that residents could use it as a base to launch individual and community revitalization. In order to lay the groundwork for this innovative approach to community development, CPDC developed technology-centered programs coordinated in on-site learning centers for youth, adults, and seniors at Edgewood.

Phase 1 of the renovation provided a valuable community resource, over 40,000 square feet of non-residential space that CPDC renovated to host on-site social services called The Connection @Edgewood Terrace (The Connection). The Connection is a hub for CPDC's partners, other community service organizations, and a resource for residents and members of the community (*appendix 2*). The Connection has transformed the role of Edgewood Terrace in the broader community by making it a center of revitalization rather than a center of crime, violence, and despair. The Connection contains CPDC staff offices and 'hoteling' space that community partners use to establish satellite offices in the community.

To raise incomes, lower unemployment, and increase education levels of Edgewood residents, CPDC raised cash and in-kind funding to provide computer hardware and a wiring infrastructure to build and connect four computer learning centers that serve as the focus for education and employment training programs (*appendix 3*). These learning centers are located in the 40,000 square feet of renovated non-residential space and are called The Gateway @Edgewood Terrace (The Gateway). These centers host formal workforce development programs, youth development initiatives, and a range of computer training classes for youth, adults, and seniors. CPDC created the Gateway to prepare residents for jobs utilizing computer skills, to enhance youth and adult learning, and to build self-esteem and self-reliance through the use of current technology. The Gateway is the first step, or entryway, toward bringing technology into every residence in this complex. In addition to raising the funds to create and connect The Gateway learning centers, CPDC developed the resources to wire the 334 units of Phase I to facilitate the eventual creation of EdgeNet, an electronic village that will reflect the physical village that is being redeveloped.

To truly impact this community, this technology needs to be in residents' homes. The Gateway learning centers have initiated a process of transformation by bringing the potential offered by technology to this community. However, without computers in every home, this population cannot integrate technology into their daily lives.

OUTCOMES

Network technology has dramatically altered the social, political, economic, and cultural landscape of American society in the last two decades. Corporations, universities, government offices, non-profits, and associations have been able to redefine the nature and scope of communication through the application of this technology. Networking has allowed new entrepreneurs to emerge and businesses to grow at an unheard of rate, improved communication, changed the nature of education, and brought valuable information into millions of homes and workplaces. Advanced telecommunication technology has created new methods for building community by redefining communication, the fundamental building block of community. EdgeNet will bring similar benefits into every residence in this complex. EdgeNet will improve communication by providing immediate in-home access via email to all residents and by creating forums where residents can share interests and information. The network will allow resident associations to circulate information quickly and thoroughly. EdgeNet will also provide access to information and social services chosen by this community. It will provide a web-based resource that residents can use to communicate and improve their lives and to improve the delivery of needed social services.

CPDC has made impressive strides in the last two years in training residents and members of the community for the more than 20,000 open positions in the Washington area for jobs requiring basic skills in administration, customer service, and computing. However, residents of Edgewood Terrace still do not have the power afforded by in-home high-speed, broadband telecommunication capability. EdgeNet will provide them with that access and word processing, spreadsheet, financial management, and Internet software applications. CPDC expects the following outcomes from the installation of EdgeNet:

- 100% of 884 units will have access to EdgeNet through thin client computers;
- 80% of residents will have the thin client box installed and attend required training sessions;
- 90% of 'on-line' residents will use the unit at least five times per month;
- 75% of on-line residents will train in at least one software application;
- At least 50 on-line residents will actively participate in the content and design of EdgeNet;

and the following results from its use:

- Resident employability will improve;
- Youths will do better in school as a result of having a computer in their home;
- The process of community building will expand dramatically;
- Residents will have quick and easy access to web-based information;
- The delivery of social services will improve;
- Existing resident associations will use EdgeNet to disseminate information on meetings, community events, and issues affecting the community;
- Residents will generate at least ten forums to share information and interests; and
- Members of the Computer Users Club will continue to learn about the design, installation, maintenance, and use of this technology and mentor other residents.

EdgeNet will be designed so that residents and CPDC can track this information and report on it on a regular basis.

More importantly, we expect that having the power of this technology in their homes and at their fingertips will *fundamentally* change the way that Edgewood residents think, imagine, learn, communicate, and create. EdgeNet can bring the residents and this community to the forefront of innovative uses of network technology and provide them with the opportunity to integrate and shape this technology. This is, in fact, one of the most exciting and compelling components of EdgeNet. We do not know exactly what to expect as 'big picture' outcomes, and the residents will certainly tailor their use of this technology in ways that we never anticipated. As a result, one additional outcome will be that CPDC can share lessons learned about a community's own vision and use of this technology.

REDUCING DISPARITY

Increasingly, many inner-city, poor, and minority populations do not have the same access to technology that their white and middle or upper income counterparts enjoy, as the study *"Falling Through the Net II: New Data on the Digital Divide"* shows. The disparity in access to technology aggravates already

biased employment and educational "playing fields". "Falling Through the Net II" shows computer ownership and on-line access for central city African-Americans (17.1% and 5.8% respectively) lagging significantly behind the national averages (36.6% and 18.6% respectively). A random survey (N=150) conducted at Edgewood Terrace, which is predominantly African American and located in a central city, shows a similar pattern of computer and on-line penetration with 10% owning a PC and 5% having on-line access. EdgeNet will help to level employment and educational playing fields by providing residents with in-home advanced telecommunication capability and access to current, marketable applications that will help them along the road to economic self-sufficiency.

Many scholars and researchers have confronted issues of access to technology in twentieth-century America. "Falling Through the Net II" points to continuing patterns of disparity based largely on race, income, and geographic categories in computer ownership and advanced telecommunication capability. "Technology Versus African-Americans" by Anthony Walton (*Atlantic Monthly*, January 1999) discusses the implications of an urban black population alienated from the technology that increasingly drives American education, employment, politics, and society. Anthony Walton argues that while African-Americans can purchase new technology they are:

otherwise existing on the margins of the ethos that defines the nation, underrepresented as designers, innovators, and implementers of our systems and machines. As a group, they have suffered from something that can loosely be called technological illiteracy... It is important that we understand and come to terms with this now; there are technological developments in the making that could permanently affect the destiny of black Americans, as Americans and as global citizens.

Walton goes on to argue that this alienation from active participation in the development of technology results both from broader American patterns that have kept them at the margins, or on the edge, of American society and from "black folkways... those unspoken, largely unconscious patterns of thought and belief about what is possible." These 'folkways' are common to patterns in marginalized and underserved populations. EdgeNet will change both the access that keeps inner-city African-Americans on the edge of American society and will chip away at the folkways that reinforce this marginalization by providing them the training that will open up new possibilities through active participation in the design, implementation, and maintenance of this network. EdgeNet will give them ownership of use and content of this resource.

EdgeNet, like other CPDC programs, is founded on the principle that access, support, and training, *not ability*, are the primary distinguishing factors between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' of American society. EdgeNet will directly address disparities in access to current, cutting-edge technology by providing each resident of Edgewood Terrace with in-home computing capability and high-speed access to a community intranet, the Internet, and a complete range of software applications. It will also provide additional resources determined by the resident Computer Users Club, which was formed to advise CPDC on the design and implementation of EdgeNet, and CPDC staff through a community web site and intranet. These resources will include:

- a community newsletter, chat rooms and bulletin boards—forums that residents can use to expand their ability to communicate, share ideas, and learn from and teach one another;
- web-based registration for CPDC coordinated services, assessments, programs, and classes that include psycho-social assessments, computer training, workforce development, vocational evaluations, and referrals to public and non-profit social services;
- access to web-based video curricula for software applications; and
- access to governmental and non-governmental community services.

EdgeNet will build and sustain a 'virtual' community that will complement the traditional community building efforts, physical rehabilitation, and training programs already put in place by residents, CPDC, and the community partners.

SIGNIFICANCE, INNOVATION, AND REPLICABILITY

CPDC has been recognized by local and federal public agencies and other non-profits as a leader in developing programs that use technology to improve the lives and livelihoods of the communities it

serves. EdgeNet will join other CPDC-initiated activities as a national model for low- and moderate-income community development. The organization has partnered and worked with non-profit organizations, universities, corporations, and federal agencies examining these issues. CPDC is unaware of any other initiative that is attempting to provide this level of telecommunication service and server-based technology and thin client computing power to a unified public housing community.

The thin client configuration is appropriate for this setting. Server-based computing allows the ease of central administration and maintenance required for any rental property. System administrators should only have to enter rental apartments on rare occasions. Thin client computers also solve a dilemma inherent in placing personal computers with a relatively high street value into rental properties: they are virtually useless unless connected to an appropriate central server. Also, thin client computers are a cost-effective (both in initial and overall costs) alternative to personal computers, a central reason for their increased use in corporate and university settings. At the same time, they allow for peripherals such as printers or floppy drives to be easily installed.

As a low- and moderate-income rental property with technologically-oriented components already in place, Edgewood Terrace provides an exciting opportunity to implement thin client technology, test its applicability, and provide a new model of network technology for other, similar environments. The installation of this technology will bring universal service as outlined by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 immediately into the homes of the community. This in-home service, with complementary community-based access centers open to the broader community, will provide a unique opportunity to study the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two types of access and service. Its significance as a model for the innovative use of network telecommunication technology is only one part of the overall significance of this endeavor.

As much significance lies in the extension of the power of this technology to the community and its ability to redefine the social fabric, nature of communication, and delivery of social services. The residents, CPDC, and their partners are taking what was only three years ago a dramatic example of everything that could and did go wrong in American inner-cities and is transforming it into a living example of the potential of technology to rebuild communities. This process of rebuilding occurs on a number of levels that include improving the employability of people in the community, reinvigorating residents' associations and organizations, assisting people in developing small businesses, and exposing youths and adults to the potential applications of technology in their daily lives. The demand for learning about technology through CPDC-coordinated programs has already outgrown the capacity of the four Gateway computer learning centers in only six months. This community is hungry for technology and for the ways that it can help them improve their lives and their community.

EdgeNet will provide the opportunity to study this thin client configuration for application in similar environments. The community intranet which will help coordinate delivery of services and build a customized knowledge base tailored to the community's needs is easily replicable as a national model for other community development efforts and organizations. A thorough examination of thin client computing may provide an alternative model to PC-based networks that is less expensive to design, install, administer, and maintain. By using both new wiring arrays run in buildings that require substantial renovation and existing telephone wires with hubs that can distinguish between voice and data transmissions, CPDC will be able to assess and report on the strengths and weaknesses (as well as the cost) of each configuration.

PROJECT FEASIBILITY

Every aspect of the implementation of this community development initiative has been done placing critical attention on its feasibility. The technology we have chosen is appropriate for this community because it extends the precise kind of telecommunication capability and access to information that residents need without the administrative nightmare that a PC-based network would undoubtedly create.

CPDC has identified and evaluated a number of different hardware, software, and network configurations and has decided on this particular configuration for the reasons listed above.

CPDC has the organizational capacity, matching funds, existing initial infrastructure, and community involvement to ensure that EdgeNet happens with acquisition of the resources we have requested. Over three years of planning, design and negotiation have already gone into EdgeNet, and over \$2.6 million in cash and in kind contributions have already been assembled (*appendix 4*). CPDC has developed intensive relationships with the community, other community stakeholders, public agencies, and vendors of the technologies that make up this system.

Two of the three high rises and all nine garden apartments that make up Edgewood Terrace are, or were, seriously dilapidated and in desperate need of extensive renovation. The extent of the deterioration in Edgewood Terrace-Phase 1 required renovation that included rewiring and dry-walling all of the halls and units. This provided CPDC with the opportunity to wire these units at a relatively low cost. During Phase 1, CPDC ran fiber-optic lines to hubs located on each floor or in each garden apartment from a centralized location. From these hubs, CPDC ran category-5 copper cable to jacks in each apartment that will be used to connect the thin client computers. Phase 2 of the comprehensive redevelopment plan will include the renovation of the second of the two seriously deteriorated high rises and the three remaining garden apartments. During the construction, which is scheduled to start at the end of the calendar year, the same type of wiring array will be run. The third high rise was well managed and cared for during the last two decades and does not need substantial renovation. To connect those residents to EdgeNet, CPDC will use relayed telephone hubs that distinguish between voice and data transmissions.

CPDC stands in a unique position to implement this initiative. Organizationally, CPDC has worked in this community for over seven years and, as a result, has a solid presence and a talented staff that is committed to this community (*appendix 5*). In addition, CPDC has staff and partners that will install the remaining infrastructure and the thin client units in each apartment and that will coordinate the training on this technology. CPDC already has a long history of bringing technology to this community and devising appropriate and successful training programs that have won it credibility in the community and in the District of Columbia as a leader in bringing technology to low-income people.

CPDC has raised over 50% of the funds needed to connect all 884 units on this site and create an electronic village for a community once rife with crime and violence. This leveraging ensures the implementation of EdgeNet and reflects the organization's commitment to developing appropriate and innovative solutions to problems in American inner cities. The maintenance and sustainability will develop as EdgeNet and the other programs that CPDC coordinates take hold and reinvigorate this community. As the technology permeates these buildings and changes the educational and employment opportunities of this community, skilled residents will be able to participate in its operation and maintenance. And, higher incomes among residents will provide the community with the opportunity to support the system.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS

A hallmark of the design and implementation of any CPDC initiative is the involvement of the community it impacts. This involvement includes the active participation of the residents' associations and of CPDC's partners that are stakeholders in this community (*appendix 6*). The residents, Catholic University, the Morino Institute, HUD, Microsoft, and the technology firms who will be installing and managing the network have all played instrumental roles in building EdgeNet.

For the preliminary design and planning stages, the resident Computer Users Club has advised CPDC staff on the needs and desires of the Edgewood community with regards to the implementation of EdgeNet. They have provided concrete requests for specific kinds of applications and access to information as well as overall impressions related to the kind of system and interface that would best serve their computing needs. The Computer User's Club will take a leading role in the 'roll-out' of the thin client

network by learning about the system as it is installed and by mentoring other residents in its use. They will help design and implement an appropriate training program and system of support for the end-users. This training and support will help ensure that EdgeNet gets used frequently and thoroughly. The Computer User's Club will also shadow the installation of the servers and thin clients so that they have a working command of the operational aspects of the system and can perform more complex tasks. This Club will eventually manage EdgeNet and coordinate community requests for additions or changes. In this way, the community will control the content and application of this resource.

Catholic University of America (CUA) and the Morino Institute have both recognized the opportunity and potential offered by the integration of technology in the development of this community and have been two community partners that have taken the most active role in the development of technologically-centered programs. These partnerships reflect the potential for combining innovative models of technology in low-income communities and for examining this potential through concrete research and assessment. These partnerships have made Edgewood Terrace a vital testing ground for the use of technology in the process of community development.

Catholic University's partnership brings two exciting programs that greatly expand the value of technology for this community. With an eye toward the eventual creation of EdgeNet, CUA and CPDC have developed the '@Home.On.Campus' (@Home) program which brings a satellite campus of CUA to Edgewood Terrace. @Home offers professional certification programs and college credit courses on site. The professional certification programs include Records Information Management and Network Administration and will incorporate Microsoft certification programs. With EdgeNet, @Home will be able to offer web-based learning programs and tutorials for classroom courses to all of the residents of Edgewood Terrace through a distance learning program already in the planning stages. @Home will create skilled resident network administrators able to manage the maintenance of EdgeNet.

CPDC is also working with CUA's Department of Biomedical Engineering, a nationally recognized leader in the development of cutting edge telehealth and telerehabilitation, to explore the medical opportunities presented by buildings wired like Edgewood Terrace. CUA's Department of Biomedical Engineering is considering using Edgewood Terrace as the primary research site to examine the applications of this technology in American inner cities. Telehealth models were originally developed to serve rural communities that were geographically isolated from traditional medical facilities. Researchers have recently noted similar patterns in reception of health care among many inner-city minorities prompting the extension of this model into these communities to test its impact. Edgewood Terrace would allow a comprehensive study of telehealth in an urban community.

The Morino Institute chose Edgewood Terrace as one of four sites of a pilot project designed to assess the use of Internet-enabled learning as a core component in a youth development program designed to foster the cognitive, social, and leadership potential of American youth. As an active member of the Youth Development Collaborative along with the Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Center, Friendship House, and Perry School, CPDC is taking a leading role in assessing the value of technology for the youth in this community. These five organizations are working collaboratively to establish Internet-enabled Networked Learning Centers as a model for community-based learning.

In addition to these community partners that have taken a leading role in implementing and assessing this community's use of technology, public agencies, corporations, and vendors have also made substantial contributions. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has granted funds to help bring technology into this community as a demonstration of the potential of technology as a basis for community development. Microsoft Corporation has donated software, hardware, and technical assistance to the development of the Gateway learning centers and for EdgeNet. For EdgeNet, Microsoft is contributing the software to run the servers and to provide each resident with the applications listed above. All of the vendors CPDC has chosen for EdgeNet, Data Transit, Netier, Data General, and Citrix, are providing substantial in-kind donations to ensure that this innovative network is up and running.

CPDC anticipates that EdgeNet will be a valuable resource to many other partners and organizations that we have not yet identified and a test bed for other applications of technology in community building.

EVALUATION, DOCUMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION

Each component of CPDC's community building initiative, including the creation of EdgeNet, has been developed so that respective impacts can be isolated and evaluated. Integrated into the design of EdgeNet is the capability to collect data in a form that is easy to export in order to study how residents are using the technology, what aspects of the technology they use the most, and how they would change the technology to best suit their needs. The collection and use of this data will be done only if residents voluntarily agree to it and the data can be scrubbed thoroughly enough to guarantee their privacy. Formal evaluation of EdgeNet will occur on three levels. First, the end-users, the residents of Edgewood Terrace, will be asked to provide constant feedback on the operation and content of the community Intranet. This feedback, gathered largely through surveys, interviews, and 'help-desk' responses, will help CPDC to make appropriate and effective changes to the network.

The second level of evaluation will occur internally. Tim Neill will coordinate the research on EdgeNet. Mr. Neill holds graduate degrees in political science and anthropology and will oversee the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. He has previously co-managed a research study of a computer-driven telephone-assisted care network in Charlottesville, Virginia that presented similar methodological issues and research design concerns including the collection and management of computer-generated data. Mr. Neill will produce an intensive anthropological study of the impact of EdgeNet and of technology on this community's understanding of itself.

The third level of evaluation will occur externally in conjunction with researchers from the Communication, Culture, and Technology (CCT) Program at Georgetown University, the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Catholic University, and from members of the Youth Development Collaborative. Georgetown's CCT Program will lead the external review of EdgeNet and conduct a formal analysis of resident use and participation. The implementation of this community network and the active involvement of these community partners allows research questions to be asked that assess the use of technology for this community and others like it on topics ranging from youth development to senior health care.

The broadest evaluation questions will be: How will the implementation of this technology change the lives of residents of Edgewood Terrace?; How will EdgeNet change the way residents think, learn, communicate, teach, play, imagine, and create?; and How will it transform the way residents see themselves and their community in the context of an increasingly technological America? Because the scope of these questions present theoretical issues and methodological concerns, the research teams will attempt to answer the larger issues of impact through the following related research questions:

- How many end-users will go from computer illiteracy to proficiency?
- How many residents will access and use this system and its applications and how often?
- How will they use EdgeNet? To communicate with each other through email and the various forums or to access software applications that help them at home or at school?
- How many end-users will participate in making substantive contributions to the design and content of the community pages?

Pre-implementation interviews to collect data that concretely deal with computer literacy will be conducted on using technology in the home and workplace, senses of community and alienation, and quality of life. They will be followed by bi-annual surveys and interviews to collect a body of qualitative data that will complement quantitative data generated by the system. The servers are designed to track basic usage data and to register available demographic information of the end-users. Data will be collected and imported into a statistical software package to permit ease of analysis. The research team will be able to analyze data that connects socioeconomic indicators to patterns of usage.

CPDC will document and disseminate all of its research and findings and encourage other researchers to do the same. CPDC will post regular updates on TIAP's web site and speak at relevant conferences to share successes, setbacks, and lessons learned to other community building organizations.

Program Officer Comments

OEAM	Organization	Qtr / Year	Original Submission	NTIA Approval
11-60-99022	Community Preservation and Development Corporation	3 / 2003	2/6/04	4/29/04

PO: Francine Jefferson

Progress: Acceptable Progress

Comments:

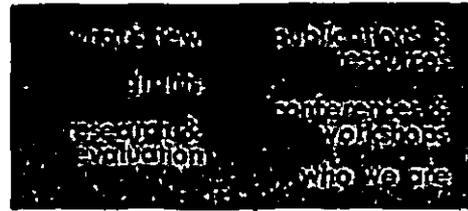
Project Overview. The Community Preservation Development Corporation (CPDC) was awarded a three-year \$500,000 grant in 1999 to provide a low-income community housing project with networked computers. The objective of the project was to deliver broadband Internet connectivity and affect employability and educational performance for residents. The total project costs were \$611,117. The CPDC was awarded a nine-month no-cost extension until June 30, 2003 to complete the terms of the grant. Serving the Edgewood Terrace Housing Project, a predominately low-income, African-American housing community in Washington, D.C., the EdgeNet project placed networked computers directly into the homes of community residents. The result was that residents created their own electronic village. The EdgeNet project is designed around a server-based computing model using Citrix MetaFrame and Microsoft's Window Terminal server and thin-client computers that provide Internet access to each home. Project Outcomes: The expected outcomes were many and ambitious. They were: (1) to provide computers and high-speed internet access to 600 households at Edgewood Terrace; (2) to identify and secure participation of several organizations/corporations in the development of EdgeNet and its implementation; (3) to facilitate the development of an end-user driven board and association to assume ownership of EdgeNet and affiliated programs; (4) in partnership with E-tab, to assist in the development and activation of a community web page to serve as the hub of communication; (5) to prepare community end users to use the technology and continue to use it; (6) to have end users access and use Microsoft Office Suite, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Money, E-mail, Internet, and the community web site; (7) to develop and implement a plan to share lessons learned in the application of technology for low-moderate income housing communities and other partners. All of the above outcomes are implementation or process goals. Each is essential to assessing whether or not the project was implemented and proof of attainment makes the project evaluatable in the long run. Having achieved each of the seven "outcomes" given is an outstanding accomplishment on the part of the grantee. The grantee's report of "Accomplishments" documents the achievement of many important "Outcomes." The grantee expected that the project would result in end users who would be prepared to use the technology and who would continue to use it (#5). There is evidence throughout this final PRS report that this outcome was indeed achieved. For instance it was reported that, "Residents now use email lists, and most notably, began an online newsletter. Students in the program start work in the community labs, but are able to continue their work in the comfort of their own homes—as a result, they study longer and learn more. Graduates are able to do online searches for jobs and use the technology at home to update their resumes and skills." The report offers two vignettes which I reproduce below: • Resident ST has a family of four and works full-time. She enjoys making gift baskets on the weekends and would like to eventually start her own business. She used the Microsoft Office programs to create a business plan and marketing materials and has now grown her business into part-time income. She attended an e-TAB offered class on how to start her own online business and is working on her website now. • Resident SF is a high school student. One day at school a contest was announced - where was Rosa Parks going that day on the bus when she refused to give up her seat? SF came home that night and researched the answer on the Internet. She won the contest the next day. Resident PF was not a resident when she first registered for a series of basic computer skills classes at Edgewood. To fulfill the community service hours required for her program of study, she began to volunteer with Edgewood's resident association. She loved the work she was doing and the community she was doing it for so much that she searched for an apartment and eventually moved into one with her son. She graduated from the program and is employed locally providing services to Edgewood. She is also now president of the resident association she once volunteered for. Another outcome reported in the final report, and that was later added, is especially significant. Specifically, "This technology training and access has translated into higher paying jobs—households at Edgewood averaging \$7,000 annually in 1993 now average \$23,000 per year." Project Accomplishments: According to the report, this project is a "... testament as to what can be accomplished through partnerships between corporate entities, government and invested community developers." CPDC has been a successful demonstration model. Further, it has been a self-replicating model within the Edgewood Terrace community complex. What started as one computer lab and the wiring of 600 apartments has grown to: (1) A Computer Skills Training Program that has graduated over 500; (2) Computer Gateways that provide basic to advanced instruction for youth, adults, seniors, and toddlers; (3) A new music instruction program; and (4) 800 homes wired for Internet access and full Microsoft Office use. Each is elaborated on below. The wired apartments were connected to a residential computer network providing access to the standard business tools of a wired office: broadband Internet access, the Microsoft Office 2000 suite of programs (donated by Microsoft), and, finally, a community intranet (in development) known as EdgeNet. To support the use of this in-home technology and assist residents to secure jobs, CPDC created the Gateway @Edgewood Terrace, a networked learning center with over 60,000 square feet of networked classrooms where students learn computer and other career skills. The CPDC Gateway Learning Center was the primary precursor for HUD's Neighborhood Networks program, which now boasts 1,100 sites nationwide. The community was further empowered through the creation of eTAB – the Edgewood Technology Advisory Board. ETab has registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is seeking funding to continue to grow community based technology projects for Edgewood Terrace. Another major

accomplishment has been the partnerships formed. CPDC's success attracted a wide variety of corporate, university and nonprofit partners that allowed CPDC to maximize and leverage the federal resources. The major problems encountered were that the Beta Testing Period was prolonged and they experienced hardware failure. Though Beta testing had originally been planned for just eight weeks, due to pervasive problems with functionality that affected almost all users, the process of building a working network took significantly longer. In 2000, EdgeNet suffered a catastrophic hardware failure. Its media converters were overwhelmed by the amount of traffic on the network. This hardware failure was beyond the scope of work that the CPDC technology staff at that time could address. A new technical assistance partner, the Digital Support Corporation, came on board to support EdgeNet. In November of 2000, Digital Support Corporation (DSC) was hired to provide outsourced technical labor and to address system wide network problems. Project Expansion: One of CPDC's greatest accomplishments has been its expansion. In addition to wiring the projected 600 apartments, CPDC was able to leverage TOP funds to form additional partnerships that helped to extend access to all 800 units at Edgewood Terrace, as well as an Adult Gateway Learning Center (33 workstations), a Youth Gateway Learning Center (55 workstations), a Senior Gateway Learning Center (22 workstations), a Career Resource Center (13 workstations), and a Music Technology Center (11 workstations). (934 workstations in all) 330 thin clients were purchased for in-home use and were made available to residents who fulfilled Edgewood Technology Advisory Board (eTab) requirements. CPDC worked with eTab to form a partnership with PerScholas, Inc. to provide a low-cost refurbished personal computer option to residents. These computers both extended functionality by allowing residents to set up a printer in their apartments and achieved the goal of convincing families to invest in personal computer equipment, therefore providing a more long-term solution for access beyond residency at Edgewood Terrace. Project spinoffs are extensive. I will report but a few here. • In Spring of 2004 CPDC, in partnership with DC Department of Parks and Recreation, will open Toddler University, an on-site day care facility designed as a comprehensive tool that could substantially improve the fortunes of both children and families at Edgewood. • CPDC has developed a state of the art music technology environment that contains rooms for individual and group instruction, musical performances, studio recording, and instrument storage. It is fully integrated with \$150,000 of the latest technology-based music programs now available. CPDC has formed a partnership with Berklee College of Music to provide instruction in music theory, vocals, and music production. • CPDC has set aside space for the "EdgeNet Café," a resident-driven space. The eTAB resident group manages this space and uses it as a community hub for activism, education, and fellowship among the residents of Edgewood Terrace and the greater community. • Catholic University of America has agreed to work with CPDC to design, develop and implement an integrative program of healthcare, telecommunications and computing technologies to assist our senior residents with monitoring their health and providing access to both health and social service delivery systems. Grantee Lessons Learned. • Innovation is risky business. Or, as the grantee puts it, early adoption is difficult. Choosing thin client server-based technology allowed CPDC to achieve cost and management benefits that made the project possible but, at the same time, it made the project more difficult because the technology was relatively immature and, as a result, there was a relatively small number of technicians who were expert in the management of thin clients, and the Citrix MetaFrame and Microsoft Terminal Server software used to operate them. This created the grantee's most significant barrier or obstacle, i.e., the hardware failure issue. When EdgeNet suffered its hardware failure it created a huge setback in the progress of the project. • Manage Expectations: Even if a great service is provided to a community that needs it, if they were expecting more or something different, the service can fail. In the initial program plan, CPDC believed it would offer EdgeNet services to the community for no cost. When a modest, token fee (\$5 per month for the thin client AND high speed Internet access on a sliding scale) was implemented, some residents were upset even though the fees were far less than the cost of providing services and greatly reduced from equivalent services. • Need for Stable Partnerships: Partners are critically important; both on the technology side, but even more so on the social services and support side. Towards the beginning of the project, some important partners turned over, necessitating a search for new partners and the training and integration of those partners once they joined the project. Bringing partners in during the earliest planning stages of the project and signing contracts that detail expectations of both the project management and the partner agencies may have reduced partner turnover. Without TOP funding, the grantee reports that though the project probably would have been implemented using alternative sources, the project would have been substantially delayed, the range of services offered would have been dramatically reduced, and they would have reached significantly fewer people. Future Plans. According to this report, it is "Edgewood Terrace and Beyond. We believe we have just begun to create a network of communities that learn, play, and advocate together all online." CPDC has actively been taking the lessons learned at Edgewood Terrace and applying them to other affordable housing properties that the nonprofit corporation purchases and rehabilitates. CPDC now budgets apartment wiring into every property it builds or redevelops. Telemedicine: CPDC is working with the Catholic University of America's Biomedical Engineering department to test in-home biomedical devices in Edgewood's senior independent living building. The devices will assist medical technicians in monitoring heart rates, blood pressure and other health indicators. Creating Original Multimedia Content: CPDC has a partnership with the Boston-based Berkeley School of Music to teach community members how to create and produce original audio content. This content can be made available to residents through EdgeNet's broadband network and to residents of other properties through Wide Area Networks (WANs) and to the wider public through Internet Radio. Creating Online Gateways: CPDC plans to offer basic educational skills, career assessment, and training via online "Gateways" on the web. Expansion is in the future. To foster, sustain, and continue beyond the project period, the support of project partners is critical. For example, according to the grantee, the half million dollar investment by TOP gave Microsoft the confidence that the EdgeNet project was one that was going to succeed. The partnership continues to grow with Microsoft's commitment to growing their investment to each of their new sites. Verizon (formerly Bell Atlantic) played a vital role in the growth of the job training program. They provided monetary resources, as well as links to employment for residents who completed training. They continue to provide links for the Career and Skill Enhancement program. PO Observations and Lessons Learned: I inherited this project during its last year of implementation. I am pleased to have had this opportunity. My first observation is that this project is a major success in demonstrating the viability of developing and sustaining "smart communities" in inner city impoverished communities through strategic partnerships. The CPDC project is a model for managing innovation through community participation

empowerment and strategic coalition building between and among partners and end users. So much an example that it is being replicated in the Greater DC area, nationally, and internationally. CPDC has hosted over 300 national and international visitors over the project period. The final evaluation report is a case study of implementation and achievements. The methodology employed was interviews, document review, analysis of user databases, and a survey of users. Interviews were conducted with current and former employees and with resident members of the Edgewood Technology Advisory Board and 130 users were surveyed. An analysis of historical documents was conducted to provide the documentation and framework for the case study. The report includes narratives from interviews, a report of project outcomes and evidence, staff and partner profiles, documentation of the technology used, policy and procedure documents, and a history of the project as documented by press releases and news articles. CPDC's final evaluation report is an example of how project documentation can be used as a manual for replication. An important lesson that I have learned as program officer is that projects of such magnitude and scope should be funded for five years. The newness and complexity of the technology to be used required a longer period to allow for the long learning curve for all involved. Another point to be watchful of is the potential for success-induced failure from the standpoint of monitoring a grant. Projects that become successful midstream may become caught up in spin-offs and expansions that might require closer monitoring to keep the management focused on meeting the grant time line obligations. They are looking to the big picture and moving into the future. Finally, TOP should be more creative in capitalizing on such successes. This is certainly one of TOP's great success stories. In my opinion, the return on the Agency's investment in CPDC has not been adequately measured to date, and may well be immeasurable. The grantee has submitted all requirements for close out except the CD-281. (3/7/04 FEJ). The grantee submitted the final outstanding CD-281 April 28, 2004. The delay was due to a misunderstanding between the grantee and the Office of Acquisition Management regarding requirements for completing the form. I recommend that this report be accepted. (4/29/2004 FEJ)

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Technology Opportunities Program



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Grant Information

Grambling State University

award number: 22-60-01064

start-end date: October 1, 2001 - September 30, 2004

total project cost: \$1,301,104

federal share: \$649,998

contact: Margaret Lowery

address: 100 R.W.E. Jones
Grambling, LA 71245

phone: (318) 274-2436

e-mail: lowerym@alpha0.gram.edu

Project Description

Grambling State University, a Louisiana-based Historically Black College and University, will work with six African-American churches in six rural parishes in north Louisiana to increase Internet connectivity among church members. GSU will place a computer lab, featuring a minimum of five networked computers, in each of the six churches. A cadre of volunteers from the churches will receive extensive training to enable them to staff the computer lab and support their fellow congregation members in their endeavor to learn to use the Internet. The volunteers will work with church staff to select families who will receive the use of a computer with Internet access for 36 months. GSU will provide demonstrations in the church and additional training to families receiving a computer to teach them how to access information and assistance in areas of education, health, workforce development, and family values, as well as community information. GSU will create a home page that links users to its Nursing, Education, and Social Work Departments, and to The CareerNET Center and Technical Support. The church will retain the community computer lab until usage has significantly declined at which time the lab will be set up in another church and the project will begin anew. The project hopes to demonstrate how churches can play a role in serving as a catalyst to get more low-income, black families using technology, and how computers in the home can make a positive difference for all family members.

Project Significance:

Little is known about Internet usage habits of rural, low-income African-Americans. This project will gather base-line information about how the computer is used, who in the family uses it, areas of interest, amount of time spent on the Internet and changes that occur in the families' daily lives due to Internet usage. The data will be extremely helpful to non-profit organizations and companies seeking to increase computer usage among African-Americans. The project will represent the first time many of the church members have been exposed to the Internet. Penetration among poor, rural African-Americans is lowest of all Americans. The six parishes chosen for this project have double the US average number of people living below the poverty line and unemployment is four times the national average in some areas. Louisiana currently ranks 47th in the nation in terms of adults with Internet access. The partnership



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Grambling State University

Award #: 22-60-01064
PO: Francine Jefferson

Special Award Conditions

Name	Due	Submit	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject	New Due Date
Acceptable Use Plan	11/1/01	1/30/02	1/31/02		1/31/02	2/6/02		
Human Subjects Research Exemption	10/1/02	2/3/03	2/4/03		2/10/03	2/20/03		1/1/03
Privacy and Security Safeguard Plan	11/1/01	1/29/02	1/31/02		1/31/02	2/6/02		

Amendments

Name	Submit	PO Reopen	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject
Focus	10/29/03		12/9/03		12/10/03	1/23/04	

Extension Request

Extend Date	Submit	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject
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Site Visit

PO Visit Start	Report Due	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept
7/29/02	8/13/02	8/26/02		8/27/02

Comments: NARRATIVE: July 28th I arrived in Monroe, LA around 10:00 PM, picked up a car, then drove about 35 miles to Ruston, LA on the outskirts of the Grambling campus. July 29th, I drove to Grambling University and met with Ben and Margaret Lowery (co-project directors) and the project team for Louisiana Rural InterNet Connection (LaRINC) to discuss the progress of the grant. The project team members are: Lena Carr (Coordinator/Trainer); Carolyn Wilson (Youth Coordinator), Jean Wilkerson (Trainer), Charles Bloxom (Computer Systems Engineer), and Elwin Sellers (Webmaster). LaRINC is a partnership between Grambling State University and five black churches for the purpose of providing families in low-income African-American Louisiana Parishes Internet connectivity for general and health education and community and economic development. LaRINC has established computer laboratories with V-Sat connectivity at each of the five churches. Each church community will provide 10 families with home computers after having completed a prescribed orientation and training session and satisfying additional competitive criteria. LaRINC Team Meeting. Ms. Carr, with Ms. Lowery, is responsible for setting up the training modules, conducting the train-the-trainer sessions at each site, and for collecting baseline data from each of the sites. We reviewed the training manuals that have been developed for self-paced learning about basic computer skills including Excel, Word, PowerPoint, and Websurfing. The manuals are to be used by the volunteer coordinator at each church site. The manuals are professionally done and well organized. Ms. Carr is to begin her round of training church volunteer trainers in August. Since OGC and OEAM required assurances that the project was not targeting one ethnic group and that the computer and home laboratories would be made available to the entire community and not just members of participating churches, Ms. Carr provided information regarding the community survey conducted by each church to recruit participants to the program and the home site-selection process. Ms. Lowery and Ms. Carr designed the community survey and drafted the site-selection

procedures. The community survey was administered by the churches, but distributed to all segments of the community to ensure that the facilities would be made available to the entire community. Flyers advertising LaRINC were distributed widely in each parish at schools, markets, and other venues. The survey was anonymous and asked for background information pertaining to family, education, employment, computer knowledge and skills, and income. The survey is not an evaluation tool, but serves as an intake form for the project and provides a profile of potential participants. We discussed the home selection process at length to make certain that the criteria for selection will be fair and impartial. The project staff have developed a point system for determining eligibility for home placement of computers. Since there will only be 10 per church site, they determined that the conditions must be objective and rigorous. Points will be given for each condition that a household must satisfy to be eligible. Some criteria are: (1) there must be a school-age child in the household, (2) head of household and family members must complete training in the basic computer literacy module and the Internet training module, (3) all must be willing to sign a consent form, (4) and there can not be a computer in the home already (or ever have been). Additional points are given if the household is intergenerational, there are multiple school-age children, or there is a person in the household who is home bound or disabled. Originally, the selecting of the home site was to be determined by a committee of the pastor, church assistant and project staff. After considerable discussion, the project directors are reconsidering the process in order to break the nexus between the church officials and volunteer staff and the community. It was determined that based upon a review of participants meeting the basic criteria and the scores of the site-selection criteria, the University (or project directors and staff) should make the final decision. Ms. Wilkerson showed the extensive (paper-based) record keeping system that they have developed to track attendance at each site and use of the facilities. Mr. Bloxom gave an extensive presentation of the rationale for the shift from server-based systems at each laboratory to the installation of V-Sat dishes at each church site. Because of a partnership with Vertices Corporation (a subsidiary of Hughes), LaRINC will beta test the V-Sat technology and Vertices will provide the Hub and serve as the ISP to the church sites for \$59.00 monthly. Though Vertices is not an official partner in the application, they are making a modest contribution to have the technology and their system tested. This resulted in a substantial savings for the project and more efficient and reliable technology. Because of the technology now being used, the project is looking at additional sources of "programming" for the sites, for example, webcasting CDC health programs on HIV/AIDS, providing distance learning courses from GSU to participants who complete the GED. The site visit and process of describing the technology sparked animated discussions regarding expanded opportunities for applications to be added to the project. The directors and staff began to plan for meetings between and among church sites and GSU staff and for monitoring and staff meetings. Prior to this meeting they had only thought of traveling the 30-95 miles between the University and church sites. Mr. Sellers gave a demonstration of GSUTigerNet. At that time it was still being tested and revised. The website for LaRINC is the portal to be used by each of the project sites. It has been setup on the computers at each site and was projected to go live by the end of August. The site has been developed by an external contractor. It is accessed via GSU's homepage. Users at the church sites will have direct links to GSU faculty for advice and counseling. The home page is designed to provide links to resources for education, health, employment, and family relations. Each is a designated area of emphasis described in the project application. Each application area is expanded into multiple resource areas. For instance, Education expands to homework, schools, higher education, and GED resources. There is a link to help on the GED to a faculty resource at GSU and there is a link to "Ask the Professional." The staff has been collecting URLs for useful and appropriate links for each of the major areas of focus. The links will be changed periodically based on use and information needs of the communities. We did jointly discuss the potential problem of levels of literacy with regard to likelihood of use. The project directors intend to explore ways of measuring levels of literacy as a part of the evaluation—providing it can be done discreetly and without posing a threat to the users. The website has a link to a description of TOP and LaRINC. There are links to each of the project partners—the five churches. Each church web page has a picture of the church and links to the history of the church, a biographical sketch of the pastor, the mission statement, and an events page. These pages will be used in the future to post news and information regarding LaRINC at each of the community sites. Mr. Sellers explained and showed samples of the web statistics that they will be collecting from each site and home. Dr. Neari Warner, Acting President After the joint session with the staff, the Lowerys and I met with the Acting President of GSU. Dr. Warner is the first woman to serve as President or Acting President of the University. (See attached article.) She is very much aware of the project and its visibility in the surrounding communities. The site visit was an opportunity for the project directors to give Dr. Warner a more in-depth picture of the project and garner her participation and appearance in the community at the sites. Tours of Project Sites On July 29th we visited two project sites. I was taken to the remaining three sites on July 30th and returned just in time to catch my flight home. The churches are located in very isolated rural areas primarily surrounded by cotton fields. The distances between GSU and each of the sites is too great for the project staff to travel often. The only community remotely near a "town" is Bastrop, LA. I might add here that there are no hotels. I stayed in a motel about 6 miles from the campus where the rooms opened onto the parking space. The closest town is Monroe, where the airport is located. Housing in the communities served by the churches are very run down trailers or ramshackle government dwellings. These are country churches, well situated off any major highway and most often along dirt roads, except for the church in Bastrop. It is an odd sort of incongruence to drive up to these communities that probably have very little in the way of amenities, e.g., television even, and to see this V-Sat dish perched on the side of the church. I met with either the pastor or volunteer coordinator for each site. I do not think that I have ever seen such enthusiasm and gratefulness for being part of a project that brings technology to the community. I am not sure that they quite know the magnitude of the capability that is in their midst. But I am sure that they will. It is impressive to see the extent to which each site has prepared a special, newly painted, air conditioned space for

the computer laboratory. In some instances, there was nothing else in the room and it appeared that the local people did not know what else to do. They were waiting for instructions from the GSU staff for the next step. Nonetheless, the first utterance upon arrival was, "When are we starting? Everybody is so excited and can hardly wait." We gave each a demonstration of Tignet and that thrilled them. The individuals that we met with at the partner sites are: Dr. Annie Brown, New Hope Baptist Association (Jonesboro, 30 miles from Grambling). Dr. Brown is a retired Business Department faculty member from Grambling State University. She is a member of the church. The site is the meeting place for an association of about 15 churches sprinkled around that areas. Participants have been recruited from each of the church neighborhoods. There have been 164 persons in 55 households recruited. Mr. Cleve Lewis, Deacon, Pilgrim Rest (Winnfield, 53 miles from Grambling). The Pilgrim Rest computer lab and V-Sat dish are located in the most unlikely place. The site is what is referred to as once having been a "Juke Joint." I must say, this is apparent. It was the most rundown of all and the most beautiful when looking at the effort that had gone into making a protected environment for the laboratory. We spent some time there discussing with Mr. Lewis some other steps that could be taken to make the space more conducive to parents who will be coming with young babies and toddlers. It did need to be child proofed. The remainder of the building is used for workforce development and feeding the poor. There have been 171 persons in 51 households recruited. Mrs. Gussie Young, pastor's wife, New Hope Baptist Church (Homer, 35 miles from Grambling). Mrs. Young will be the coordinator for this site. The lab is located at the end of a long hall-like room that also serves as a day care and preschool for the church. It is an annex to the church. Again, the refrain, "When are we going to get started?" There have been 200 persons in 55 households recruited. Pastor Steven Conley, St. John Baptist Church (Bastrop, 64 miles from Grambling). This was the only church located on a major thoroughfare. The church has a dedicated education building across the street that has just been newly renovated. This is the most modern site of them all. The equipment is located in a large well lighted and ventilated room. It is the only room in the building equipped. Once more, it was interesting to note that the pastor and others associated with the sites do not know what to do with the space. They are patiently, but eagerly, waiting for instructions. We talked about setting up tables so that youngsters can do homework and the response was, "Oh yes, of course we can do that. What else should we do." There have been 687 persons in 142 households recruited. Pastor James Smith, Mt. Zion Baptist Church (Pioneer, 94 miles from Grambling). This undoubtedly was the most rural of them all. It has been in the community for 135 years and is referred to as the "Powerhouse for the Community." (See attached picture.) The laboratory is a tiny room where they have installed an air conditioner, put up brand new white lace curtains, and freshly painted it neon blue. Pastor Smith works full time as a truant officer in the community and frequently spoke of how much "...the children need something like this to give them a future." Two church deacons and a young man who identified himself as "The Minister of Music" were also present. The young man said that he will help out in the laboratory, but he really wants to get a computer in his home. There have been 183 persons in 48 households recruited. ANALYSIS: By the time the site visits had been completed, I truly believe that my hosts were exhausted. They were correct in keeping this civil servant on the road for 1 ½ days. There was no way to gain an appreciation for this project without having traveled to each of the sites. This site visit underscored the facts stated in the application: (1) The poverty rate in these five parishes ranges from 19.1%-29%; (2) The unemployment rate in the project parishes is 13.6%; and (3) The percent of adults in the state that did not finish high school is 43% and in some areas 67%. LaRINC targets one of the poorest regions in the United States. I was accompanied on these tours by the Lowerys, Ms. Carr, and Mr. Bloxom. It is very clear that the project staff have great rapport with the community and a healthy respect for the community members. They all look forward to recruiting GSU graduates in the long run. There was a slight delay in the time line because the contractor had not completed work on the website, but that issue has now been resolved. There will be a delay in getting to each of the sites for hands-on training. There are not enough staff to conduct concurrent training sessions. Also, it is extremely important that the training is conducted by staff with whom they have established relations. The LaRINC project staff showed great enthusiasm and excitement about the project. It seemed that the site visit was an occasion for them to step back and take a fresh perspective on what they have been doing, review the project goals, and discuss the greater opportunities for use and applications that the technology affords them. An example of the productive nature of our discussions is that by the time I left, Mr. Bloxom, Mr. Sellers, and Mr. Lowery had developed plans to set up the Netmeeting capability between GSU and the sites for discussion groups and to provide tutoring at a distance for students. They also were looking for instances of webcasting health and other programming to the sites as well as using the technology for coordination and communication between volunteers and staff at each of the sites. Some concerns regarding the project pertains to recent news of the financial difficulties that GSU is undergoing. There had been some rumors that the University might be closed. Discussions with the president, Dr. Werner has alleviated some of the concerns. The University was going through a state audit during my visit. They have hired a new VP for finance and five new accountants. Everyone seems optimistic, but we should monitor this situation. The University has submitted the IRB approval of the LaRINC evaluation plan RECOMMENDED FOLLOW-UP: I recommend continued follow up with regard to the financial stability of the University. Ms. Margaret Lowery is an experienced project manager and works very closely with the University Office of Sponsored Programs. She presently has oversight for approximately \$3M in grant funds. There was discussion about concern for families that will receive computers. Fifty homes will have computers placed in them and receive 36 months of Internet access. However, they will go from high-speed broadband connectivity to POTs. They are concerned that users will not know how to handle this change. They are seeking a way to get DSL for the homes. During this 36 months, GSU staff will continue to monitor use and give technical support, additional training, and GSU web page assistance for health, education, family, workforce development, and community information. The most critical concern I have pertains to how the six-station laboratories are going to accommodate the number of recruits. There is such a high level of

expectation in the communities for such scarce resources. The GSU project has gained high visibility in the state. Each of the parish sites will be visited by local politicians and the University administrators. The Grambling project was one of those featured in the Benton report, "A Nation Online."

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PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the Louisiana Rural InterNet Connection (LaRINC) project is to demonstrate an affordable and long-term sustainable model for increasing the number of rural low-income African-American households connected to the Internet to improve the employment, education, family, and health aspects of their lives. Evidence that America's marginal citizens are becoming aware of the Internet's potential is shown in a report by the Center for Civic Networking titled *The Face of American Poverty in the Information Economy* which stated that, "There is some evidence to suggest that low-income Americans want greater access to certain types of information. A recent consumer survey indicated that the poorest Americans - those in households earning less than \$15,000 a year - are the most interested in acquiring independent consumer product information on automobile and health insurance, eyeglasses, and prescription drugs."

Defining A Specific Need or Problem

The La RINC project targets one of the poorest regions in the United States. Specifically, six rural parishes (counties) in north-Louisiana. (See Appendix A). The poverty rate in the United States 12.7%, and in Louisiana it is 21.2%. The individual six parishes range from 19.1% to 28.6%. The unemployment rate in the United States as of January 2001 was 3.4% with Louisiana's rate at 5.8%. Some of the six-parish areas hit as high as 13.6%. The education rate of adults that did not finish high school in the United States is 24% with Louisiana at 43%. In some places, it reaches up to 67%. The lack of access to primary health care according to the Louisiana Health Care Report 2000 shows Louisiana at the bottom of the 50 states. The statistical data clearly indicates low economics, under education, lack of health access, and rural nature of the selected parishes (See Appendix B).

Moreover, the entire state of Louisiana is technologically deficient. A Progressive Policy Institute report quoted in a local newspaper stated that "Louisiana isn't just laid back, it's so low-tech that it hurts". (News-Star, Monroe, LA August 9, 1999). Moreover, that same report ranked Louisiana as follows:

- Only one in five adults have access to the Internet, putting Louisiana 47th nationally,
- Louisiana ranks 46th in the percentage of workers with college degrees or some college,
- Few private firms have ".com" Internet domain names.
- The state ranks 44th in commercial Internet sites per company. The vast majority of the firms in the state are not on the World Wide Web at all.

Abundant evidence indicates that rural low-income African-American households are extremely behind in home computer ownership and Internet connectivity. And what is equally clear is that the potential economic, social, health, family, and educational effects of not being included in the Information Age will almost certainly exacerbate an already critical situation.

Proposing a Credible Solution that Employs Network Technologies

The La RINC project proposes to partner with local black churches in each target parish. The church will attract and inform citizens of the technology diffusion project, provide a computer lab location in the church, a phone line, lab personnel (that GSU will train), and assist in data collection. After general training on the computer and the Internet, selected families that have received the training at the church lab will receive a computer and 36 months of Internet access placed in their home. These selected families will receive continual monitoring,

assistance, additional training, GSU web page "first call" assistance for health, education, family, workforce development, community information, and technical support.

Why the black church? Why not community centers, local employers, or schools? Some general background on the rural south may be helpful. The social structure of the rural south, both White and African-American, is heavily influenced by the church, but it is even more pronounced for the African-American population. "The black church as an institution has always reached out to serve important functions for the black community as a whole. It is in this respect both preserver of the African-American heritage and an agent for reform. Indeed no successful movement for improving the conditions of life for the African-American people has been mounted without the support of the church...The black church is at the leading edge of the African-American community's push to influence the future of its families" (Billingsley, 1992). The principle reasons the schools are not well suited to increase technology awareness is transportation, hours, and they are not multigenerational. Transportation in the rural communities means many students ride school buses, thus, transportation to and from the school for extra-curricular activities such as working on a report, become impossible. Additionally, one of the goals of the La RINC project is to increase "other" uses of the Internet, such as, job searching, health information, etc., which are decidedly adult in nature. This rationale is intended to show that establishing a relationship with the African-American community in the rural south is best effected by enlisting the assistance of the black church.

Identifying Realistic, Measurable Outcomes

The La RINC project will strive to meet the following goals:

Objective 1: Improve household employment status.

Metric: (1) Train on job search access, (2) Access job boards (3) Self-report on job related activity, (4) Train someone else independently, (5) Access GSU web Workforce Development "first-call" job assistance.

Objective 2: Improve family knowledge of health factors.

Metric: (1) Train on health search access, (e.g., WebMD, etc.), (2) Access GSU web Health "first-call" assistance for areas such as exercise, nutrition, safety, pre-natal, etc.

Objective 3: Improve the quality and level of educational attainment and/or employability.

Metric: (1) Kindergarten through college use of Internet for searches, reports, projects, etc. (2) Train on job skill search process, (3) Access job skill training sources, (4) Access basic skills and/or GED preparation sources, (5) Access GSU web Public Schools "first-call information, (6) Access student "help" sites.

Objective 4: Improve family interactions.

Metric: (1) Train on family interaction sites, (2) Train others to use computer, (3) Play games involving two or more people, (4) E-mail friends and family, (5) Access GSU web Social Work department for help/information.

INNOVATION

The La RINC project is innovative in three major areas: (1) It targets a virtually non-served population in critical need of services, (2) It utilizes relatively uncommon technology, (3) It builds on previous projects and research.

First, the project is innovative because it targets the most unconnected group according to *Falling Through the Net II*, "The digital divide between racial groups in PC-ownership has increased since 1994...On-line access is also the lowest for Black households in rural areas

(5.5%).” Both non-served populations – African-American and rural – who are in critical need of services, will be served.

Second, the project is innovative because it utilizes technology not commonly used, that is, satellite provided large bandwidth Internet access. Most Americans and companies are connected to the Internet via landlines, e.g. telephone, cable, or LAN connections. But connecting over a telephone line can be very costly for rural sites especially when large bandwidth is needed. The answer might be to download sufficient bandwidth from satellite. For example, TIIAP funded a project at University of Texas-Pan American (Project NETmobile: #95137, May 1998) which used satellite Internet downlinking with its mobile computer lab very successfully.

Third, the La RINC project draws heavily from Grambling State University CareerNET Center’s Welfare-to-Work experience. The CareerNET Center has for nearly three years operated a six parish Welfare-to-Work grant and a U.S. Department of Labor’s High-Risk Adult grant. During this three-year period it became clear that short-term relationships with the rural low-income African-American community are wholly unsatisfactory. Without long term intervention, changes in life style rarely become permanent. Additionally, the La RINC project will build upon the success of other projects like the Montana State University’s Burns Telecommunications Center grant (#30-40-98086) that demonstrates how to develop the expertise of community leaders, students, teachers, economic development specialists and citizens in the use of information technology. This project provides Native Americans their first access to the Internet and other advanced information resources in their colleges. The La RINC project will take this a step further by providing this access in community churches by training the church leaders to be trainers and then by placing computers and Internet in the homes so that all family members have access at all times. The West Suburban Hospital Medical Center’s Every Block A Village Online project (#17-60-98013) demonstrates Internet access to medical and safety information in homes of citizen leaders in Chicago’s depressed west side area. The La RINC project will build on this and take it further by having the Internet in the homes of church members for more than health and safety related information. Another funded project, the Baltimore County Public Schools grant (#24-4096043) demonstrates electronic access to school information. The La RINC project includes parish school information on its GSU web page “first-call” buttons. In summary, this project will build on several existing grant projects and place them directly in the targeted rural communities.

DIFFUSION POTENTIAL

Grambling State University as an Historically Black College & University is keenly aware of the need for minority institutions to share information. GSU, in addition to posting information relative to the project on its web page, plans to present La RINC project “good news and bad news” at conferences which are highly attended by minority institutions. The church organizations have regional and national newsletters and conferences. Thus, both higher education and black church communities will be apprised of the successes of the project and how to develop a project in their communities. Also, GSU will plan, organize, and deliver a satellite teleconference to HBCU’s and other interested institutions and organizations. The focus will be on “how to” develop and implement a project aimed at increasing the number of Internet households in their communities using this model. The teleconference will take place during the

last six months of the project. Other participants can participate by "calling in" to the teleconference via an 800-number.

The La RINC project is a sustainable model that can be replicated in many different settings. Existing computer labs in HUD housing projects, schools, libraries, community centers, etc., can set up the training program and train area family members who can then transfer their knowledge to use on their home computers. Many of the problems this grant addresses in the low-income rural areas are found throughout the United States. Increased home access is the key to Internet usage that will provide families with knowledge, information on accessing work-skill improvement, job openings, health information, e-commerce for people living in rural areas who do not have the available stores to obtain helpful products, pharmacy access, and educational research access for students or general information, etc.

PROJECT FEASIBILITY

Technical Approach

The specific approach utilized in the La RINC project contains three major technical components: (1) Five church-based networked computer labs with large bandwidth (4 megabit minimum) satellite Internet, (2) Fifty home-based computers with land-line (POTS) Internet connection, and (3) A specially designed and dedicated GSU web page.

Each church will operate a small networked computer lab for use by its members and the community. Each lab will consist of five networked computers, a server, a Model 7000 Helios Satellite Router, a networked color printer, NT software, satellite routing software, packaged software applications, and all cabling necessary to connect the system. The network will be connected via the router to a DirectPC receive dish and interface card. The router functions as a 56K modem that also connects to a regular POTS telephone line for return to the Internet Service Provider (ISP). Each computer workstation can access the Internet independently of the others. The web browser on each lab computer will be set to the GSU "project" web page which will function as a sort of hub where the participants can do searches, e-mails, contact key persons in each of the objective areas, e.g. Health, Employment, etc. or go anywhere the Internet can take them. GSU staff will monitor participant Internet use both at the labs and at the homes by checking the Favorites list, the computer's History, and the actual "cookies" in each computer. The "cookies" reveal not only which web sites have been access and how often, but also when participants are accessing them.

It is important to note that the La RINC project is determined to utilize commercial vendors and readily available products and services as much as possible. Also, the home computer system with 36-months of Internet service that will be leased to families is a regularly advertised product, e.g. PeoplePC.Com. Moreover, any non-profit entity could perform the training and support functions that GSU does, that is, the project can be replicated by organizations other than colleges and universities.

Since the goal is to effect positive changes in households, the church computer lab is only a means to an end. It serves as "advertiser", training facility, and on going "user support group" for participants. Thus, as a particular family demonstrates a strong interest and has completed both training and several weeks of usage, it will be offered a home computer system (if the family meets the minor income criteria). The home computer will be a leased computer system that includes a color printer and 36-months of Internet access. The project will pay up-front the three year lease price (estimated to be under \$1,200 which includes computer, monitor, printer,

Internet access, and 36-months of "in-house" technical support). Since the project will be leasing the system, it will not become GSU property, but will remain with the participating family until the end of the lease at which time the family may renew the lease at its own expense. The key factors here are that under federal guidelines the leased computer system and service are considered "supplies" and thus are not owned by the governmental agencies involved. Thus, the family will have had three years to integrate the Internet into its lifestyle and budget for assuming complete financial responsibility. In this way, the problem encountered by the Florida Institute of Technology project (the removal of the equipment after six months) will be avoided. A major issue in any technology project is how to maintain a complex computer system. The project will use a three pronged approach: (1) GSU technical staff will install and maintain the church labs for the duration of the project (three years) and (2) standard equipment warranties will be utilized to replace any equipment found initially defective (first 12-months), and (3) the home computer lease includes telephone and "in home" technical support. The church labs will be equipment "loaned" to the churches and will be maintained by GSU technical staff handling technical problems initially and gradually "weaning" the home participants into using the vendor provided technical support which is part of the lease agreement. It is hoped that in this way an often felt "techno-phobia" will be lessened for the participants by having a familiar and "friendly" technician to call and/or contact on the GSU web site. Finally, the support function will be a combined effort of GSU technical personnel, GSU's web page, and the church cadre as well as the participants themselves becoming a support group.

Applicant Qualifications

GSU has nearly a decade long track record of technology use. The GSU Distance Learning Program operates a closed-circuit campus cable channel, a community cable channel (Cox Cable), a KU-Ban satellite uplink, a digital-KU-C-band downlink, four compressed video rooms, and the Mobile Automated Learning Lab. The university operates a web page that can be viewed at www.gram.edu. The university also has a well-staffed Information Resource Center that has a Technical Services Unit that performs routine and as-needed maintenance on computers and video equipment.

The GSU cadre consist of the following personnel (Resumes in Appendix C):

Dr. Ben Lowery, Director of Distance Learning
Margaret Lowery, Manager of the CareerNET Center
Lena Carr, Training Specialist & Project Coordinator
Mr. Charles Bloxom, Technical Services
Carolyn Wilson & Veronica Flanagan, Clerical Support
Others to be hired listed in Appendix with Resumes.
Internet Specialist
Telecommunications Engineer

As partners, each church will provide a cadre of volunteers who will be trained in computer literacy and lab management. They will also be the first line maintenance interface with GSU technical support personnel and any vendor provided technical support. It cannot be over emphasized the key role these individuals will play in the project. These individuals are crucial because they will know most of the participants and as such will be the main encouragers. As part of their duties, they will conduct an initial poll of the best days and times to open the lab so that it will be available for participants to use the Internet and become familiar with its potential for their lives. It is through the recommendations of the church cadre combined with user data that will determine which families receive the project-sponsored home computers with

Internet access. They will denote countless hours of service to their church community to help raise the level of technical literacy and redress the "digital divide". It should also be noted that the church pastors and church elders will be intimately involved in the selecting of each church's cadre as well as the general day-to-day supervision and scheduling. In this way, the project becomes a church-community endeavor putting the university staff in the roles of coordinators, technical assistants, and community-related information providers via the GSU web page. Both the church and the university will be involved with the community insuring that the social, educational, and economic effects derived from the La RINC project do not wither over time.

Implementation & Timeline

The La RINC project will span three years to allow time for; development, set-up, equipment to be ordered, select/hire staff and student workers, design GSU web page, select church cadre, train church cadre, train interested families, collect internet usage data, select families for home computer system, order home computer systems, install home computer systems, plan teleconference, develop brochure to teleconference, mail brochures, deliver teleconference, collect internet usage data, and write annual report. (Timeline in Appendix D).

Privacy

The privacy of individuals will be rigorously protected. All surveys will be anonymous except those that involve in-depth interviews. All participants will be given a "project code number" and all data collection and reporting will be done under the code number. The actual identities will be known only to project personnel directors. All identity-related information/documents will be destroyed at the end of the project.

As a household is identified to receive a home-computer, they will be asked to sign an "Informed Consent" form. The consent form will indicate in "plain English" that GSU will be monitoring how and when the Internet is used by participants at both church and home computers. Moreover, they will be interviewed privately every six months in a structured interview to ascertain information on changes in the lives of the household members. For example, job changes, training, family difficulties (e.g. substance abuse, domestic problems, etc.), health changes including physician/clinic visits, contacts with schools, etc. The consent form will inform the participants that absolute confidentiality will be maintained and the information will only be used to better understand how the Internet affects people's lives. Finally, the consent form will be reviewed by the Board of Regents Attorney who is the attorney of record for GSU before being utilized in the project.

Sustainability

GSU will continue to have the project web page available that will allow the church/community and families to access information and individuals beyond the grant period. Moreover, individuals and community groups desiring access to the GSU project web page will be invited to do so thus extending the project's reach. Other church or civic groups may establish labs and avail themselves of GSU's services which are part of the public university's "service mission."

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The La RINC project is not a project in isolation. Rather it is another piece of an ongoing relationship between the university and the rural parishes it serves. An initiative termed the "Workforce Development Initiative" has been in progress for nearly four years. The thrust of the effort is to halt the outward migration from the northeast parishes, retrain and up-skill the

adult population, and assist the public schools in producing competent graduates. From the parish side, mayors from some of the larger communities, clergy, and interested businesses and non-profit organizations also participate; many are GSU alumni. Representatives of these groups have met at the university on numerous occasions to discuss various grant opportunities, current issues, and strategies for workforce and economic development. For example, as a result of a meeting in fall of 1999, a survey was conducted with most local employers. The survey was intended to determine the level of need for more technology-literate workers in area companies. The survey clearly indicated that in addition to basic skills training there was a strong need for more "computer literate" individuals among job applicants. As a result of the collaborative effort described above, GSU was recently awarded a U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration grant to conduct Internet awareness and training with small businesses in twelve parishes in north Louisiana (Rural Mobile Internet Training project #08-79-03515).

Partnerships

Letters of commitments from six church communities is in Appendix E. Each church will donate a room for the computer lab, a designated telephone line, and staff the lab. Five churches will be in the grant while the sixth church will participate as an alternative. Some churches are also providing transportation for families.

Sustaining and Obtaining Community Involvement

The church community and the general parish community are very excited about the prospect of getting Internet "help" as evidenced by the letters of support. Everyone sees web addresses on television advertising and hears people talking about their e-mail, but this rural community segment of society does not have access. Once this project is in the community, the church and community leaders and the individuals in the project will sustain the involvement. GSU will continue to have the web page access for these communities to ask questions and receive help as long as it is used.

The La RINC project by itself will not, of course, solve Louisiana's and the rural south's problem, but it may present a viable approach that can begin to redress a low rate of technical literacy. This project will serve as a catalyst. For example, if each of the fifty participants who get a home computer share the concept of leasing a computer with Internet access for only \$24.95 a month with no money down with their friends and neighbors, the impact could be tremendous. In rural communities with only a couple thousand people, an increase of thirty, forty, or fifty Internet connected homes could be significant. And the evidence is clear, the home setting which provides security, many hours of access time, and builds on the core of American society, namely the family, is the correct approach.

Support for End Users

The La RINC project design stresses "end user support" throughout the project. Training in the churches, individual training in the homes on their system, instruction and help with technical support both from GSU and vendors, e.g. PeoplePC, continued information sharing with church cadre and GSU, and the GSU web page "first-call" information and support system. Major effort has been placed on support and education of the individuals so that they are comfortable with the Internet and not afraid of the technology. However, it should be noted that changes in participants' lives will not be brought about by the Internet itself, but rather by the information and help the Internet makes available to them. As indicated elsewhere, rural, low-income families have severely limited opportunities to access vital information when compared to suburban middle-income households. Further, experience with Welfare-to-work participants

indicates that access alone will not necessarily lead to better lives, rather it is the quality of the initial introduction coupled with on going friendly support that changes lives .

EVALUATION

In order for the enormous potential this project could have on how colleges, universities and church organizations, or other governmental and non-profit organizations conduct their outreach activities, the research data collection and evaluation must be done correctly. Therefore, even though some project personnel have research experience, outside experts will be engaged to design the instruments (initial survey and structured interviews) and collect and analyze the interview data.

Evaluation Questions

The La RINC project is both a demonstration project and a research project. Little is known about Internet usage habits of rural low-income African-Americans. Since little is known, base-line information is necessary. Therefore, the project will develop and administer an anonymous "pre-program" survey which will gather demographic data on church members (potential participants) such as, household income, ownership and use of computers and the Internet, etc. The questionnaire will seek computer experience, the type of Internet use (if any), how they expect to use the Internet, areas of interest, and who in the family will likely use the Internet.

Evaluation Strategy

The evaluation plan will track the project objectives. Specifically, the evaluation program will measure to what degree individuals in the program gained information that made a difference in their lives. Every six months, a key member of each household will be interviewed to determine "changes" in the household. Specifically, the interviewers will be probing for changes (positive and negative) related to the four objective areas. The actual Internet use patterns derived from the computer "cookies" and "hit" rate on the GSU web page will be compared to the "family changes" data derived from the structured interviews to illicit relationships between type and amount of Internet use and the changes occurring in families' daily lives. At the end of the project, a summative satisfaction survey will be conducted with all participants (all adult household members), church cadre, and pastors to determine how the project could be improved.

Data Collection & Analyses

Internet-use data will be collected remotely, categorized, and analyzed. Data on the normal lives of members of the participating households will be conducted using a repeated-measures approach by interviewers. This data will then be categorized as being related to which a particular objective.

Specific analyses will be conducted to establish relationships between various family activities and/or changes and any discernable Internet usage patterns. Actual causality is not expected due to the lack of control groups, however, so little is known of the actual "real life" effects of long-term Internet use by rural, low-income African-Americans that a controlled study is not yet warranted. In other words, clear relationships between the "power of the Internet" and selected activities in people's daily lives must be established first.

Evaluator(s)

The external independent evaluator is Behavioral Analysis, L.L.C of Shreveport, Louisiana. Sandra W. Long, Ph.D. and Thomas P. Springer, Ph.D. and their staff will conduct the external evaluation. See resumes in Appendix C.



CONTINUING EDUCATION & SPECIAL PROGRAMS
P.O. DRAWER 1197
GRAMBLING, LOUISIANA 71245
(318) 274-7771 FAX (318) 274-2355

August 20, 2001

Dr. Francine Jefferson
Technology Opportunities Program
National Telecommunications & Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
HCHB, Room 4092
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Jefferson,

Enclosed are the 8-20-91 revised 424 and 424A originals. In addition, I am enclosing the budget narrative, match, and the spreadsheet. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Lowery". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Margaret Lowery
Project Manager

2001 AUG 21 A 10 40
HTIA/OTIA/THAP

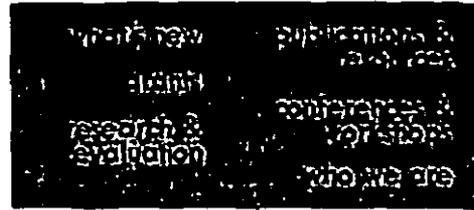
APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

UMED APPLICATION NO. U-340-1043

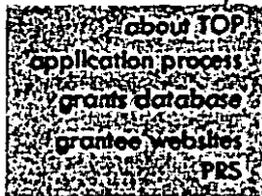
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5. APPLICANT INFORMATION		Federal Identifier																													
Legal Name: Grambling State University		Organizational Unit: CareerNET Center-CESP																													
Address (give city, county, State and zip code): P.O. Box 1197 Cole Street-Room#327 Grambling, LA 71245		Name and telephone number of the person to be contacted on matters involving this application (give area code): Margaret Lowery (318)274-2436																													
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> 7 2 - 6 0 0 7 5 1 </div>		7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: (enter appropriate letter in box) I																													
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12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (cities, counties, States, etc.): Claiborne, Jackson, Union, W. Carroll, Winn parishes		11. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: Louisiana Rural Internet Connection Improving Employment, Health, Family, and Educational Aspects of Rural Low-Income Connectivity																													
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: Start Date: 10-01-01 Ending Date: 09-30-04		14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS OF: a. Applicant: Louisiana-5 b. Project: Louisiana-5and4																													
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING:		16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?																													
<table border="1" style="width:100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">a. Federal</td> <td style="width: 10%;">\$</td> <td style="width: 50%;">649,998</td> <td style="width: 15%;">.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. Applicant</td> <td>\$</td> <td>235,952</td> <td>.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. State</td> <td>\$</td> <td></td> <td>.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d. Local</td> <td>\$</td> <td></td> <td>.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e. Other</td> <td>\$</td> <td>415,154</td> <td>.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f. Program Income</td> <td>\$</td> <td></td> <td>.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g. TOTAL</td> <td>\$</td> <td>1,301,104</td> <td>.00</td> </tr> </table>		a. Federal	\$	649,998	.00	b. Applicant	\$	235,952	.00	c. State	\$.00	d. Local	\$.00	e. Other	\$	415,154	.00	f. Program Income	\$.00	g. TOTAL	\$	1,301,104	.00	a. YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON DATE 03-20-01 b. NO. <input type="checkbox"/> PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OR PROGRAM HAS NOT BEEN SELECTED BY STATE FOR REVIEW	
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18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT. THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.																															
a. Typed Name of Authorized Representative Dr. Neari Warner		b. Title Acting President	c. Telephone number (318)274-6117																												
d. Signature of Authorized Representative 																															

Standa

Technology Opportunities Program



home



Grant Information

Ekklesia Development Corporation ZOE (Health & Wellness)

award number: 39-60-02024

start-end date: October 1, 2002 - September 30, 2005

total project cost: \$1,036,698

federal share: \$510,000

contact: Mr. Kazava Smith

address: 772 Whittier Street
Cincinnati, OH 45229

phone: (513) 378-2608

e-mail: ekkesiadevcorp@prodigy.net

Despite the growing need, barriers make it difficult for underserved individuals to access Hamilton County's faith-based social service resources. Ekklesia Development Corporation (EDC) will develop Project GILEAD, the nation's first online service linking faith-based providers and empowering people to become self-sustaining through a wide variety of supportive services offered by these providers. The three-year demonstration project targets Greater Cincinnati CMSA's hub, Hamilton County, with subsequent rollout planned for the state of Ohio, the tri-state area of Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana, and ultimately nationwide.

Budget cuts at Greater Cincinnati social service agencies come at a time when neighborhoods throughout Hamilton County are facing severe socioeconomic challenges. More than 2,200 Greater Cincinnati faith-based providers offer a vast array of workforce development services, GED preparation/testing, affordable daycare, after-school tutorial programs, substance abuse treatment, and ex-offender support. Project GILEAD will enable Hamilton County citizens, and particularly the 135,396 residents living in the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone and 11 other distressed communities, to go online in order to design, produce, manage, share, and access information on supportive services offered by these faith-based providers. Primary users include:

- (1) Consumers (seniors, single-parent households, homeless persons, ex-offenders, un- and underemployed workers, high school dropouts, and substance abusers) who face difficulty accessing faith-based services because they lack affiliation and/or the skills necessary to navigate a fragmented and disjointed maze of providers. Consumers will publish service requests (e.g., the need for a tutor or affordable daycare), schedule appointments, maintain personal service calendars, publish online resumes, and provide ideas on how these services can become more customer-friendly.
- (2) Providers, who will communicate service information, share data about (and therefore more efficiently coordinate) services to consumers, offer referrals, and ensure that fewer people fall through the cracks.
- (3) Volunteer/Donors, who will enter their interests to volunteer time for providers'

services.

The online system will be accessible on a 24-hour basis and will be offered free to consumers. Program objectives include: (1) establishing interfaith best practices for empowering at-risk/disadvantaged citizens actively to confront socioeconomic problems; (2) demonstrating the feasibility of NTIA/faith-based partnerships; and (3) facilitating long-term sustainability for the system and the services to which the system provides access.

The single most significant goal is to enroll 50,000 economically disadvantaged persons in faith-based services leading to socioeconomic independence. The City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, social service agencies, faith-based associations, technology companies, workforce development agencies, and local media are committed to partnering toward these outcomes.

additional project resources:

[Project Website](#)

[Project Narrative--PDF Version](#)

[Website Story](#)

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Project Gilead: Leveraging Technology to Deliver Faith-based Services

by
Francine Jefferson
TOP Program Officer

“Racial/ethnic healing in the faith community is absolutely critical in order to penetrate systemic socioeconomic problems, especially in a post-9/11 environment. In Greater Cincinnati, a key to the region’s current tensions is the active involvement of the multicultural/multiracial faith community in serving the needs of disadvantaged residents. There is significant social capital at stake with bridging the race/ethnic divide in the faith community.”

The Governor’s Advisory Task Force on Faith-Based Community Service Groups reported, “Every one of society’s major problems has been defeated somewhere and somehow by a faith-based or community group...” Through a partnership of interfaith service groups, business and industry, and the City of Cincinnati, Project GILEAD will “...network currently fragmented and disjointed faith-based services, and provide access to these services for Hamilton County, Ohio’s disadvantaged and underserved residents through customer-driven digital information and customer-friendly business processes”



The Greater Cincinnati civic infrastructure includes 2,047 socially active faith congregations, more than a hundred formal and informal religious organizations, and myriad faith-based agencies that promote values and economic independence. The “Balm-of-Gilead” candicans in this instance is an interactive digital web portal of faith-based services that will enable the 135,396 residents living within the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone, and in eleven other distressed communities, to access faith-based service providers.

In October, 2002, TOP awarded \$510,000 to the Ekklesia Development Corporation of the Corinthian Baptist Church to establish the nation’s first online service linking faith-based human service providers and their clientele in Cincinnati, Ohio. The basic design of the project is to make use of broadband access to the GILEAD Internet server, a scalable data repository and messaging infrastructure for rapid-response transactions. The long-term plan for the project includes handheld devices that GILEAD volunteers will use to access the Internet site through wireless connectivity. The project’s “consumers” include seniors, single-parents, the homeless, ex-offenders, unemployed and under-employed workers, and other at-risk residents who face difficulty accessing faith-based services. They will be able to perform searches, publish service requests, schedule appointments, and submit feedback to the project via online services, accessible free of charge.

Project GILEAD will provide solutions to the “disconnect” between the many services that faith-based organizations provide and those who are in the most need. These disconnects are

associated with: missing/out-of-date service information, search inefficiencies, no integrated tracking capabilities, and disjointed services.

Focus-group sessions are being conducted throughout the community to help project leaders better understand current problems, generate requirements, and to enroll persons to assist the launching of Project Gilead. On February 24, 2003, the project conducted a volunteers focus-group session. Two key points of discussion were information needed to make informed decisions about which faith-based service to volunteer for and the required central help-desk support.



A consumer focus groups was conducted on February 21, 2003, at Corinthian Baptist Church to discuss 1) barriers for economically disadvantaged citizens accessing faith-based services; 2) information needed to effectively and efficiently make service selection decisions; and 3) training needs. Additional volunteer focus groups have been scheduled at branches of the Public Library of Cincinnati and other consumer focus group sessions are being held at recreation centers operated by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission.



Citizen-centered e-government has been described as initiatives that strategically employ information technology to provide government products or services to intended users resulting in enhanced value.

“Enhanced value” is characterized by improved cost-efficiencies, enhanced quality and availability of produce and/or service, improved timeliness, better accessibility, and improved mission achievement. Project GILEAD’s solutions to overcoming the barriers that make it difficult for underserved citizens to access faith-based services is a model both for faith-based initiatives and citizen-centered e-government.

Ekklesia Development Corporation
Cincinnati, OH

Project GILEAD, an online service linking faith-based providers

PROJECT NARRATIVE

I. Project Purpose

To network currently fragmented and disjointed faith-based services, and provide access to these services for Hamilton County, Ohio's disadvantaged and underserved residents through customer-driven digital information and customer-friendly business processes.

I.1 Problem. The Governor's Advisory Task Force on Faith-Based Community Service Groups convened by then President George W. Bush noted that despite 30+ years and \$5.4 trillion spent on human service programs since the 1960s, the nation has experienced a 30-year rise in illegitimacy of 500 percent, a 600 percent increase in violent crime, and over 6 million children on welfare rolls. The centerpiece of the American welfare system — AFDC, the federal cash entitlement benefiting unmarried poor mothers — is gone. This human services context, the funding of September 11th related charities, a global crisis to finance the war on terrorism, and downturns in the economy have led to budgetary cuts at the nation's social service agencies. Locally, organizations such as The Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, Hamilton County Department of Jobs and Family Services, and the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone [CEZ] are undergoing financial downsizing. These cuts, however, are occurring in the backdrop of high crime rates, unemployment, persistent poverty, homelessness, and precipitating tensions in Cincinnati that have reached.

Notwithstanding, Greater Cincinnati's civic infrastructure includes 2,047 socially active faith congregations, 100+ formal and informal religious organizations, and myriad faith-based agencies that promote values and economic independence. See Appendix I.1.1. In a 1998 survey of 400 area residents conducted by Corinthian Baptist Church, the faith community was considered the most important community service asset. In fact, 44.9% of respondents gave faith organizations the top ranking over six other organization types, including community councils, civil rights organizations, and chambers of commerce. A recent Ekklesia Development Corporation [EDC] survey found that faith-based providers offer an average of six community services (e.g., substance abuse treatment, offender/ex-offender services, literacy training, affordable housing, etc.), serving 500 to 999 people annually. Locally, these organizations are centers of volunteerism. And they are committed to asset development in underserved markets. (e.g., JIREH Development Corporation's Equipping Center, St. Aloysius Orphanage expansion, City Cure purchase of new offices, Allen Temple Foundation's Swifton Commons redevelopment. Over 55% of EDC survey respondents indicated that their organizations developed assets (e.g., service centers, recreation facilities) in the past 5 years, and 63% indicated plans to do so in the next 5 years.

However, some of the worst socioeconomic conditions in Greater Cincinnati are found in the very neighborhoods where the faith community is most present and making significant capital investments. For instance, the 3,889-resident Village of Lincoln Heights has some 28 churches within its area of 0.737 square miles. But the village is plagued with a per capita income that falls below \$9,000. Avondale, with 19,000 residents and the region's largest community of African Americans, is the home of nearly 60 churches and the Coalition of Churches' Avondale Towne Center redevelopment. Yet this community suffers from the 4th highest crime rate of area neighborhoods, unemployment that exceeds 60%, and a poverty rate of over 40%. Ironically,

many of Hamilton County's most impoverished, at-risk, and depressed neighborhoods – such as Over-The-Rhine, West End, and Price Hill – have significant faith-based community service capacity. In the EDC survey, aside from obtaining financial resources, respondents ranked the following as the most important improvement areas for faith-based services: 1) utilization by the underserved community; 2) awareness by the underserved community of faith-based services; and 3) impact on the underserved/at-risk community. Thus, *while the Governor's Advisory Task Force position with regards to the role of faith-based services might be accurate, in Hamilton County, there is a "disconnect" between these services and those who are in most need.* This disconnect is rooted in four practical problems:

- **Missing/Out-Of-Date Service Information.** Traditionally used directories (or listings) cannot provide citizens' current capacity (e.g., number of vacant beds at The Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Cincinnati) or availability of temporary/emergency services (e.g., utility bill payment assistance).
- **Search Inefficiencies.** Individuals currently rely on "hit and miss" approaches such as phone calls, word of mouth, on-site visits, and other time-consuming search techniques. An unemployed worker desires a training program that holds classes on the weekend, provides on-site childcare facilities, and integrates computer literacy. Currently, no digital resources exist to provide the names of faith-based services that can meet this need.
- **No Integrated Tracking Capabilities.** Providers are unable to share client information across organizations. This leads to client abuse, budget shortages for legitimate needs, and missed opportunities to address root problems. As an example, Mr. Jones presents a \$1,000 heating bill to Corinthian Baptist Church [CBC] in order to substantiate a \$250 request for food assistance. Mr. Jones receives the assistance because the faith community, as noted by Pastor Kazava Smith, *"Is not in the business of saying no."* However, CBC had no way of knowing that Mr. Jones had received benevolent funds from four other churches that day! The abuse diminishes benevolent funds for future legitimate assistance cases. Likewise, as George Findley of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati suggests, *"The problem might be a drug problem. So rather than dealing with a problem, the faith community in some cases actually enables the dysfunction."*
- **Disjointed Services.** Local faith-based providers have no effective means to share service and project information, offer referrals, locate volunteers, identify experts, and solicit resources. For instance, at the time of this application, New Prospect Development Corporation's Wineskins (emergency shelter/food) service lacks resources and is in need of volunteers. Further, Wineskins is not linked to other faith-based services that work with homeless and ex-offender citizens on GED preparation/testing, computer training, and other workforce development areas. This is not to suggest that resources, volunteers, and complimentary services are not available; identifying them however, is a difficult task.

1.2 Solution. Thus despite the growing need, barriers make it difficult for the underserved community to access Hamilton County's faith-based services. That is, until now. The proposed digital network and related business processes will provide citizens and faith-based service providers solutions to aforementioned problems. Discussed further in Appendix 1.2.1, solutions include:

- **Web Database to Resolve Missing/Out-Of-Date Information** Area faith centers and intercongregation/interfaith coalitions maintain up-to-date service information through Project GILEAD's interactive Web-based data repository.
- **Distributed End-User Access to Solve Search Inefficiencies.** Underserved citizens will utilize a network of Internet terminals strategically placed throughout the Greater Cincinnati area. These include: (1) an installed base of 425+ public Internet workstations at partner facilities (e.g., libraries); 2) GILEAD PC HelpStations installed on-site in targeted areas such as places of worship; and (3) GILEAD Internet-capable Kiosks placed in high-traffic locations (e.g., recreation centers).
- **GILEAD Accounts to Address No Tracking Capabilities.** Underserved residents will be able to enter account information such as needs self-assessments, education and work history, and goals (e.g., employment interests). This gives faith-based providers throughout the region a single repository to identify those in need and the nature of the needs, coordinate services, enter service data, better steward resources, and increase accountability. Note that secure socket transactions and user authentication will address privacy issues.
- **Real-Time Digital Messages for Disjointed Services.** The project will solve response time problems of currently disjointed services through message routers that enable real-time notification. This is useful for (1) linking volunteers to providers; (2) enabling faith-based developers to reach technical experts (e.g., grant writers, counselors); (3) responding to emergencies (e.g., suicide prevention, crisis intervention, conflict resolution); and (4) sending/receiving inter-organizational referrals.

The solution includes mission critical business processes to: train and employ economically disadvantaged residents to manage the Project GILEAD infrastructure; enroll a network of 200 faith-based providers; and provide outreach/educational campaigns for hard-to-reach citizens.

I.3 Measurable Outcomes. Principally, Project GILEAD will empower Hamilton County residents to overcome the grips of dependency and dysfunction. The project will provide residents the necessary tools to proactively access solutions to unemployment, substance abuse, affordable housing, affordable childcare, etc. The project has adopted an activity-based model to measure outcomes and provide accountability: 1) 50,000 underserved residents access GILEAD providers; 2) 2,000 persons volunteer 15,000 volunteer service units to GILEAD services; and 3) 50 new congregation/ intercongregation/interfaith service initiatives. The Evaluation Plan in Section I.9 discusses the approaches to measuring outcomes. In addition, a highly publicized "G-meter" will provide up-to-the minute statistics on how the community is coming together to lend a hand to those in need. See Appendix I.3.1.

I.4 Targeted Population. *The Geographic Market.* Geographically, Hamilton County covers 412.8 square miles within the 13-county, Greater Cincinnati Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (3,810 square miles). See Appendix I.4.1. The county is comprised of 48 statistical distinct neighborhoods. Each is known by certain factors, has developed identities, and contributes to the unique cultural diversity of the area. The West End has produced a number of local leaders such as Ohio Secretary of State Mr. J. Kenneth Blackwell. Lincoln Heights has a rich cultural tradition as the home of Nikki Giovanni and The Isley Brothers. And Amberley Village is historically an enclave for the preservation of Jewish traditions.

Targeted Customers and Consumers. As discussed in sections I.1 and I.2, Project GILEAD targets both *customers* and *consumers*. Emblematic of the 1999 NTIA "Collected Case Study Evaluations: Summary of Findings", there is a degree of blurring between project partners and end-users. *Customers* are the area's 2000+ *faith organizations and their membership*, the latter representing a pool of potential GILEAD volunteers. *Consumers* are distressed, disadvantaged, dependent, and dysfunctional residents of Hamilton County, Ohio. The county's economic indicators reflect gross socioeconomic disparities. For instance, while the median income of \$38,763 exceeds the Ohio figure by more than \$2,734, homeownership falls 9.2 percentage points below the state's at 67.5%, and the poverty rate of 11.4% surpasses the state's by .4%. According to the Hamilton County Department of Jobs and Family Services, 8,378 households and 20,710 individuals received Temporary Aid to Needy Families [TANF] cash assistance in 2001. In that same year, 21,769 families and 49,355 individuals received Food Stamps. The Greater Cincinnati Coalition For The Homeless reports that 25,000+ local citizens, including children 9,000+, experience homelessness in the course of a year. Of families with children in the county, 47.5% are single mothers. A particular focus is on residents of the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone and 11 other economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. These areas, referred to "GILEAD Restore Zones", include neighborhoods with poverty rates over 60% and where up to 69% of adults do not have high school diplomas. See Appendix I.4.3.

1.5 Innovations

1.5.1 Partnerships. Against Hamilton County's economic backdrop, is the existence of a diverse group of faith congregations, associations, and agencies. These organizations are providing an assortment of programs available to the underserved community. A sample list is provided in Appendix *Notwithstanding, Hamilton County (and for that matter the country), does not have an interactive digital web portal of faith-based services.* Such a partnership model is readily scalable to the faith-based community across the country. Project GILEAD expands the traditional partnership models achieved through TOP awards. In the case of the 2000 award to the Crisis Services of North Alabama (Helpnet), the target is the 125 area not-for-profit organizations and local government agencies. The Providence, RI COZIN project (TIAP FY 1999) targeted schools, libraries, and traditional service providers as well. IMPACT (TIAP FY 1999) was targeted for Lake County, IL human services organizations, with a possible expansion to the City of Chicago. And Caracole, Inc's SOPHIA system (1997) serves social agencies such as the United Way. Further, the involvement of partners such as The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Department of Jobs and Family Services and City of Cincinnati Career Resource Center leverages the installed base of public Internet workstations. Integrating existing investment in community technology will enable Project GILEAD to concentrate resources on server infrastructure, robust application functionality, innovative end-user access, and deploying an organizational structure that provides needed supportive services. Given role definition problems encountered by Project InterLinc (1995-1996), support letters and Memoranda of Understanding [MOUs] are used to clarify roles. See Appendix I.5.1.2.

1.5.2 Technology-Enabled Social Service Process Re-Engineering. The aforementioned NTIA awards involve Internet-based solutions. Project GILEAD will integrate the Internet and touch screen kiosks (as did Helpnet and IMPACT). But the major long-term vision for Project GILEAD is to use *wireless communications* and volunteers equipped with personal digital

assistants [PDAs] to provide “access without walls” and “rapid service response” for persons in prison, nursing homes, hospice centers, on the street, etc. During the demonstration period, we will conduct a field study to assess the feasibility of and receptivity to using wireless communications for intake functions and service coordination

1.5.3 Promoting Relationships. Racial/ethnic healing in the faith community is absolutely critical in order to penetrate systemic socioeconomic problems especially in a post-911 environment. In Greater Cincinnati, a key to the region’s current tensions is the active involvement of the multicultural/multiracial faith community in serving the needs of disadvantaged residents. There is significant social capital at stake with bridging the race/ethnic divide in the faith community. Project GILEAD will reach out to ecumenical groups to facilitate multicultural collaboration for the benefit of the general community. Further, Project GILEAD represents a faith-based/secular agency joint venture: The recent debate in Washington, DC regarding faith-based initiatives is creating a charged climate of concern in the social service sector. For instance, the National Association of Community Action Agencies [NACAA] recently convened in Chicago, IL to discuss the issue of faith-based initiatives and the impact of CAAs. The Project GILEAD partnership structure, which includes the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency and City of Cincinnati Employment & Training Division Career Resource Center, offers a national model of faith-based/secular agency collaboration.

1.5.4 New Approach to Faith-Based/Government Collaboration. On September 14, 2000, Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) sponsored an issues forum on “Charitable Choice” as a part of the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference. Several panelists cited alternative ways to foster cooperation between church and government in the delivery of social programming. Project GILEAD implements of six key innovations. See Appendix I.5.4.1.

1.5.5 End-Users As Information Producers and System Managers. Project GILEAD extends the functionality of SOPHIA, NetWellness, and Helpnet by empowering underserved citizens to produce information and manage the overall process. Clients will be able to enter their service needs self-assessments, goals, and service plans, schedule appointments with service providers, and reserve service (e.g., emergency shelter, substance abuse treatment, literacy training), maintain a personal service calendar, place a resume online, and provide ideas to the network of faith-based providers as to how they can better serve the underserved community. The project will train and employ persons from the ranks of the disadvantaged population to assist the design, implementation, and management of the overall process and system infrastructure. Fundamentally, we believe that identifying responsible workers from the underserved community will sensitize Project GILEAD to factors that will best position this project to serve the public while in a sense enabling the underserved to take control of their futures. This is consistent with NTIA direction and Welfare Reform’s Workforce Investment Act [WIA] that emphasizes customer choice/control.

1.6 Diffusion Potential

Beyond the 3-year demonstration, Project GILEAD rollouts will be planned for the State of Ohio, the Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana tri-state area, and ultimately the nation.

1.6.1 Market Factors. The convergence of 4 factors creates the statewide and national market for Project GILEAD. First, the gap between the needs of the underserved and the fulfillment of those needs is a national concern. For instance, the U.S. Conference of Mayors [USCM] study "A Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities 2000" concluded that 13% of food requests and 23% of emergency shelter requests went unmet in 1999. Second, the impact of Welfare Reform, financial commitments to the war on terrorism, and the state of the economy pose challenges to social service agencies across the country. This problem was highlighted by the United Way that expressed concerns that charitable giving for September 11th relief has negative consequences on other organizations. Third, the problems associated with underserved populations accessing increasingly important faith-based services are not indigenous to Hamilton County, OH. The absence of a digital network for faith-based providers is common to US cities, both urban and rural. And fourth, the existence of 164,574 religious organizations operating across the nation according to US Bureau of Census 1999 County Business Patterns data represents tremendous capacity to serve the underserved.

1.6.3 Portability. Project GILEAD utilizes Internet access with a scalable back-end data engine that enable seamless expansion and access to new geographic markets. Market entry costs are reasonable given the initial investment in a robust server and network environment. Several project partners – e.g., Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency - have national affiliations. The organizational model includes a Partnership Development function that will be responsible for intra- and inter-market acceptance. Business processes such as users maintaining their information and data standards are geared toward low-cost, customer-friendly practices, and distributed processing. Consequently, expanding Project GILEAD to markets is less of a technical problem per se.

1.6.3 Diffusion Strategies. Strategies to actively share information about Project GILEAD are threefold. **GILEAD Journal**, a national publication, will be distributed to faith-based organizations active in social services across the US. An inaugural prototype edition has been circulated in Hamilton County. The Journal provides income for Project GILEAD, but more than that promotes the program, as well as provides a national forum to discuss best practices in community services. **Statewide Meetings** will be held with faith-based providers in the five largest cities in Ohio – Akron, Cleveland, Dayton, Columbus, and Toledo. Here we will provide program education, community service success stories, implementation strategies, and other details. **GILEAD Conferences**, designed as a forum for faith-based institutions to discuss community development strategies, will provide critical mass outreach exposure for Project GILEAD. Wherever possible, we will connect to Project GILEAD through the Internet to provide live demonstrations during presentations. Care will be taken to "brand" all collateral publications and events under the GILEAD name in order to build awareness and loyalty.

1.7 Project Feasibility

1.7.1 Technical Solution. In developing Project GILEAD's technical solution, a set of Architecture Principals, models, and preliminary platform decisions were established through meetings with and input gathered from numerous groups, including The Salvation Army, Digital Millennium LLC, Triad Development LLC, City Gospel Mission, The Interfaith Alliance, The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Cincinnati Recreation Commission, and

Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency. Learnings from previous NTIA awards – Lane County, Charlotte's Web, Helpnet, IMPACT, COZIN, Caracole (SOPHIA), Pennsylvania Kiosk Project Case Study, Western Brokering Project Case Study - provided valuable insights. The project has adopted 10 Architecture Principles to address major concerns raised on issues such as privacy, interoperability, and compliance (e.g., providers maintaining up-to-date information). See Appendix I.7.1.1. The basic design utilizes broadband access to the GILEAD Internet server (from GILEAD machines), a scalable data repository, and messaging infrastructure for rapid-response transactions. Open directory technology will manage user information, authentication, and other processes. A flow log server will support transaction audits. A firewall and backup cluster will control access and provide seamless redundancy, respectively. A network of PC workstations and kiosks will have dial-up access to the Internet server; the long-term plan includes handheld devices that GILEAD volunteers will use to access the Internet site through wireless connectivity. Reliability will be maintained through a fully redundant server environment maintained at a remote facility. Preliminary platform decisions, consistent with Architecture Principals, are reflected in the Budget Narrative section under Equipment (II.4). Note that the Project GILEAD Advisory Council [PGAC] will own technology direction-setting recommendations, providing such to Ekklesia Development Corporation on a periodic basis. PGAC's Technology Team will include technical resources from agencies such as City Gospel Mission to promote interoperability. *Technical alternatives* existed around: (1) computing environment; (2) data entry data centralization/decentralization; and (3) buy versus build software. Each was considered, with decisions made that are most consistent with Architecture Principals. Project GILEAD will be Internet-based, employ end-user/decentralized data entry, and build proprietary software. See Appendix I.7.1.2. The GILEAD Maintenance Plan was developed to provide direction on the handling requests for system upgrades, notification of system failure/problems, and major enhancements will be managed. See Appendix I.7.1.3.

1.7.2 Applicant Qualifications. Ekklesia Development Corporation is committed to real quality of life changes for at-risk population segments. The Project GILEAD Advisory Council [PGAC] is comprised of partners with extensive experience in computing, business development, community services, faith-based programs, and other core competencies necessary to accomplish the project's goals. This includes The Village of Lincoln Heights, the oldest U.S. municipality of predominantly African American citizens, has made a significant commitment as it seeks to revitalize a community hit hard by economic divestment, crime, and poverty. The Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency, a \$32 million organization, operates a model Head Start program, is investing \$15 million in a new community service facility, constructed a technology center, amassed a fleet of vehicle to transport clients, and implemented weatherization services. Digital Millennium, LLC, the technology manager, has experience in LAN/WAN, enterprise messaging, directory services, client-server computing, database systems, systems integration, and a number of other core competencies. See Appendix I.7.2.1.

1.7.3 Budget and Implementation Schedule. Total project cost of \$1,020,000 includes an NTIA award of \$510,000 and match of \$510,000. This assumes funds are made available in October 2002, with work beginning immediately thereafter. See Appendix I.7.3.1.

1.7.4 Privacy. There is a recognition that holistic and rapid-response services across multiple

GILEAD providers require the maintenance of highly personal information. Business processes and technical solutions will ensure privacy. See Appendix I.7.4.1 Principal #3. A detailed plan will be provided upon acceptance of this application.

I.7.5 Sustainability. Project GILEAD will remain *economically viable* beyond the grant period through four income strategies: (1) Primarily, contracts with GILEAD Providers – that is faith-based services - to maintain their service information content in Project GILEAD; (2) Partners' sponsoring kiosks, PCs, and ultimately PDAs; (3) State/national rollout of Project GILEAD provide incremental operating margin given the major investment in fixed costs; (4) Operating as a Workforce Development Eligible Training Provider to receive WIA funds to train unemployed workers to run the program. Key factors for *operational viability* include commitments from faith-based providers to maintain timely information and the assistance of Digital Millennium LLC to oversee the technology plan.

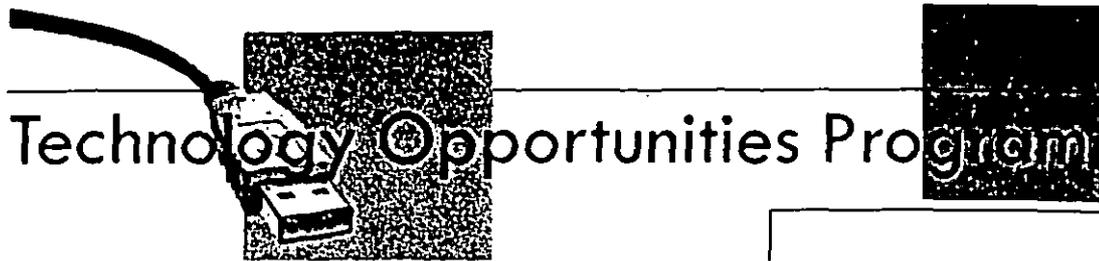
I.8 Community Involvement

I.8.1 Partnerships. From the project's conception, the applicant developed a set of core competency/key resource requirements, giving attention to the need for diverse participation and providers that have a demonstrated commitment to meeting the needs of people in the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone and other GILEAD Restore Zone neighborhoods. Partners were sought through roundtable discussions and on-site meetings. Appendix I.8.1.1 describes one of the meetings. Partners have been confirmed, each with specific roles and contributions as defined in the GILEAD Partnership Model. See Appendix I.8.1.2. As some NTIA award recipient partnerships collapsed at the end of the funding period, Project GILEAD is built on mutual benefits to promote long-term relationships.

I.8.2 Obtaining and Sustaining Community Support. A Stakeholder Support Model was created to clarify external linkages and strategies. See Appendix I.8.2.1. In 1998, a survey of 400 Hamilton County residents was conducted to understand the needs and interests of underserved communities, and the perceived role of the faith community in fulfilling such needs. Several meetings with stakeholders were conducted to discuss the challenges facing underserved population segments, the efficacy of enabling the faith-based community to participate in a more collaborative manner, and barriers facing the underserved. Additional learnings were derived through participation on the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone Task Force and from prior lengthy dialogues with NTIA grantees (e.g., Helpnet). Appendix I.8.2.2 describes users, their needs, involvement in project design, recruitment, training, and supportive services. A Lead User team will work with the development team throughout the process.

I.8.3 Support for End-Users. During the early community meetings, we assessed needs of various anticipated users. Extensive profiles were created and provided in Appendix I.8.2.2.

I.9 Evaluation. Built into Project GILEAD's execution plan are the "Feedback Meter", online feedback, periodic analyses, annual reports, and an end-of-grant period case study. As Project GILEAD will conduct human subjects research, we have budgeted for a third-party institution to develop and review our evaluation plan as well as to assist the execution. See Appendix I.9.1.



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Ekklesia Development Corporation

Award #: 39-60-02024
PO: Francine Jefferson

Special Award Conditions

Name	Due	Submit	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject	New Due Date
Acceptable Use Plan	11/30/02	11/29/02	12/2/02		12/2/02	1/1/03		
Certification of Financial Management System	11/1/02	3/4/03	3/7/03		3/7/03	3/11/03		3/3/03
Human Subjects Research Deferral	10/1/03							1/31/04
Privacy and Security Safeguard Plan	11/30/02	12/9/02	12/11/02		12/13/02	12/18/02		

Amendments

Name	Submit	PO Reopen	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject

Extension Request

Extend Date	Submit	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject

Site Visit

Visit Start	Report Due	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept
12/4/02	12/19/02	12/12/02		12/16/02

Comments: NARRATIVE: Project Gilead, is the first faith-based project funded under the TOP grant. The award was made to Ekklesia Development Corporation, a 501C (3) entity created by Corinthian Baptist Church to demonstrate a model for combining a variety of technologies to link faith-based social services. Project Gilead's goal is to establish the country's first interactive web portal of faith-based services This is the first site visit to be conducted of Project Gilead. The purpose of the December 4-6, 2002 site visit to Project Gilead (#02024) Cincinnati, Ohio was to provide implementation technical assistance to the project directors. Although there have been many telephone discussions and frequent exchange of e-mails, it was decided that a site visit early in the project might provide assistance that would help solve current problematic situations and mitigate against critical problems emerging. In short, we sought to ensure, to the best of our ability, the successful implementation of Project Gilead in this critical period of project start-up. December 4, 2002 The site-visit began shortly after my arrival (12:00 PM) December 4th. After checking into the hotel, I met with Pastor K.Z. Smith, President of Ekklesia Development Corporation and Pastor of Corinthian Baptist Church, Ms. Terri L. Elmore, Project Gilead Administrative Assistant, and Rev. Kenneth D. Price, Project Director for Project Gilead until around 5:00 PM. The particular implementation issues of discussion were: 1. Special Award Condition #19: Privacy and Security Policy. 2. Special Award Condition #21: Cost-Share Exemption of \$64,473. 3. Special Award Condition #22: Review of Ekklesia Development Corporation's financial management system by CPA. 4. Loss of partner and approximately \$48,000 in matching funds. 5. Request to use project income as match. 6. Approval of K.D. Price to serve as Executive Director of Ekklesia Development Corporation. 7. Project activities and time line. 8. Project outcomes and evidence. 9. Budget modification. At 7:00 PM we met with assembled members of Corinthian Baptist Church

to discuss the project. I was introduced and, as requested, gave a description of NTIA, TOP, and an explanation of the grant round. I also gave some details regarding the importance of having an independent entity being the grant recipient and separate fiscal accountability, discussed the role of partners (including Corinthian as a partner), and explained my role as program officer. I responded to a few questions. We were to visit the site of a prospective partner after the meeting, however the continued snow fall prevented us from making the trip.

December 5, 2002 The first Advisory Council meeting was held. Members of this council are the representatives of the project partner organizations. This was the first official meeting of project partners since the award of the grant. The following partners were in attendance: Cincinnati Recreation Commission, City of Cincinnati, Digital Millennium, Public Library of Hamilton County, Volunteers of America, and WCIN Radio. Again, the bad weather accounted for the fact that some partners did not make the meeting. I shared with partners the importance of the partnership role and gave some indication of the importance of this grant as the first faith-based project that could serve as a national model for coordinating and providing services. The meeting agenda included a discussion of: (1) the project's organizational model; (2) project accountability which covered issues of financial management, performance monitoring, and project evaluation; (3) project purpose and expected outcomes; (4) the projected budget modification; and (5) the project time line. Each partner representative was asked to fill out a form identifying individuals in the three target areas (consumers of services, faith-based providers, volunteers) who could articulate barriers and define user requirements for the projects. Project Gilead plans to schedule focus-group sessions in January 2003 to develop system requirements. I was given a tour of the Empowerment Zone, Avondale, which is the primary community for consumers of the services. We also toured the Village of Lincoln Heights, another area to be served by the project. We met with the Municipal Director, to discuss the benefits and problems associated with having the site for the project located at Lincoln Heights. We had a working lunch after the meeting to continue discussion of items listed above. That evening I met with the Ekklesia Board of Directors. The Board wanted to discuss the requirements for having an independent entity and the requirements for having the financial management system certified. December 6, 2002 I spent the morning in a debriefing with Pastor K.Z. Smith and to finalize the action items that had been discussed during the site visit. I was scheduled to depart 11:00 AM, however the flight was delayed until 12:30.

ANALYSIS: The project start-up phase for Project Gilead will most likely take longer than usual because of administrative issues that need to be resolved. They are: (1) the project has suffered the loss of a major partner which resulted in the loss of \$48,000 in matching dollars. In order not to have a reduction in the Federal share, the project has been busy trying to find a replacement partner; (2) the project has requested an extension for completing the certification of its financial management system because they were under the impression that they were required to hire a CPA to handle the accounting for the life of the project; (3) because of the loss of a partner, the project has requested to use program income as a match and are in the process of drawing up a business plan to justify the request; and (4) they have been looking for the appropriate site to serve as headquarters for the project and to house the technology base. The project partners seem to be excited and ready to serve on the project. It was interesting to note the additional ways they were beginning to think of participating in the project after having heard the presentation of project purpose and outcomes. Pastor K.Z. Smith and Rev. K.D. Price are extremely organized and detail oriented directors. They are eager to have the project succeed as a national model for the coordination and delivery of faith-based social services.

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW-UP: I will continue close monitoring of this project to see that they do not fall into a trap with regard to their cost-share exemption and the loss of a partner. A budget modification and business plan for use of program income will be submitted in the near future. The project is meeting with evaluators from the University of Cincinnati to secure evaluation assistance as an in-kind contribution and for a contribution of IRB services. Because of the sensitive nature and complexity of this project, I am requesting to conduct a second site visit in Spring 2003.

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Project GILEAD is a 2002 Technology Opportunities Program Grantee. Through its [Technology Opportunities Program \(TOP\)](#) matching grants, the [Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) assists states and local governments, agencies, and not-for-profit organizations in effectively using telecommunications and information technologies to better provide public services and advance other national goals.

GILEAD News



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Project GILEAD to be featured at Intersections Conference 2004 of over 500 faith-based leaders in Fresno, CA [complete story](#)

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Project GILEAD is now offering free email and calendaring services to it's growing list of partners and to individuals wishing to get involved in serving their communities. This in preparation for the rollout of the GILEAD Network later this year. [sign up now!](#)

Read all about how Project GILEAD, through it's Technology Opportunity Program grant, is redefining the social services delivery model with a results-based approach that empowers service providers and volunteers while assisting those in need access the wide array of services available to them.

Stay Informed, Get Involved, Make a Difference Sign up to receive project gilead news, by email and participate in discussion forums with other volunteers. [register now!](#)

GILEAD Spotlight



Want to tell us about your faith-based initiative or volunteer organization? Hear about a faith based organization touching the lives of people in their communities? Tell us all about it and we'll feature them in the Project GILEAD Volunteer Spotlight. [Click here](#)

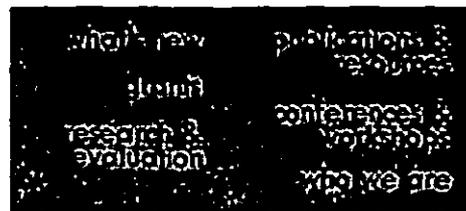
Project GILEAD Events Calendar

May 2004						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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Grant Information

Jubilee Project, Inc.

award number: 47-60-03016

start-end date: October 1, 2003 - September 30, 2006

total project cost: \$698,722

federal share: \$348,193

contact: Mr. Steve Hodges

address: 197 North Jockey Street
Sneedville, TN 37869-0657

phone: (423) 733-4195

e-mail: steveh@overhome.net

The Tele-Guild Project of Jubilee Project, Inc. (a faith-based institution) will help increase the success of start-up small businesses engaged in specialty food production in remote, impoverished counties of east Tennessee.

The project will provide businesses with state-of-the-art laptop computers and create a collaborative online system that will include calendars and production schedules, order fulfillment, inventory and financial spreadsheets, and digital communication tools. The project will develop an e-commerce strategy for the Appalachian Spring Cooperative's website, with shopping cart and credit card capability. The project will also provide CD-ROM and web-based entrepreneurial training and business planning assistance that will encourage participants to e-mail questions and business plans for critique by a network of experienced business people, who will serve as mentors. Widely-used office-suite software and affordable web-based resources will be used to make the project more financially sustainable, easier to use, and more replicable.

These activities will help small businesses reduce costs, reach larger markets, and assist each other in fulfilling orders, learn from each other to improve their businesses, and compete successfully as small startup businesses. The outcomes will be increased profitability, increased sales volumes, and the ability to handle larger orders in order to build business capacity.

Project partners include Tennessee Technological University, Carson Newman College, the Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community, Appalachian Sustainable Development, the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Hancock County, the Appalachian Technical Education Center, the Tennessee Small Business Development Center at East Tennessee State University, Rhea and Rhea Law Offices, Gibson's Tax Service, and Collins' Bookkeeping Service.

additional project resources:

[Project Website](#)

[Project Narrative--PDF Version](#)

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Jubilee Project, Inc.: Tele-Guild

Project Purpose

The rural counties of northeast Tennessee share common characteristics of economic depression: *per capita income* is low (\$13,794, half the US average, in the 5 counties of the Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community: Hancock, Hawkins, Grainger, Claiborne and Union) and many people are poor (31.6% in these same counties.) The rugged terrain makes it difficult to attract and keep industry, and the nationwide problems of small farms are being compounded by the rapid decline of tobacco farming - a 65% cut in tobacco allotments in the last 5 years alone - a key source of income for the region during the last 50 years. The dearth of industry has also meant that most local economic activity, including agriculture and forestry industry, has focused almost exclusively on primary production with almost no processing of tobacco or timber to create a value-added product and provide another source of revenue for poor communities.

Given this situation, Jubilee Project -which began in Hancock County 12 years ago - made several strategic decisions on how to promote economic development. It began focusing on developing small businesses: beginning a handicraft cooperative 10 years ago, small business training 9 years ago, and establishing a small business incubator in 1997. In 1999, the increasing crisis in agriculture led Jubilee Project to begin developing a shared use commercial kitchen for the production of gourmet, specialty and natural foods for high-end markets. In 2003, the kitchen is entering its third year, having processed over 22 tons of food in the last year for 12 different businesses. But significant barriers exist to the success of this economic development effort. Most growers, working full-time low-paid jobs in addition to growing tobacco or raising cattle, are reluctant to take the risks involved in starting a small business. To make it easier to get started, Jubilee Project has put together small business training, loan programs, and is now proposing a major tool to help these businesses: a cooperative of food product businesses. Appalachian Spring Cooperative, a member-owned agricultural cooperative of 40 food product entrepreneurs from a 10-county area of northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia, is enabling very small startup businesses to work together to save money on purchases like containers, insurance and product labels, and, most importantly, to market their products together. If they can coordinate efforts to provide a range of products, as a single larger company can do, they greatly increase their chances of reaching larger markets. But the same rugged terrain and widely dispersed communities that make other forms of economic development difficult are problems for this food product cooperative as well. Finally, rural small businesses of this kind, especially those based at home as most of these are, face problems of isolation, sourcing, need for legal information, marketing, lack of credibility, and difficulty integrating technology in their businesses (according to a survey conducted by Dr. Beth Duncan, Small Business Specialist, Mississippi State University Extension and reported in April 2003.)

The solution we propose is 3-fold: First, we would establish a system enabling the food product small businesses which are members of the Appalachian Spring Cooperative to collaborate over the Internet; this also means providing them with Internet-capable notebook computers at their offices (in most cases in their homes) in exchange for a signed agreement to attend both initial and regular training programs at one of four Appalachian Technical Education Center (ATEC) computer centers in each of four counties (Hancock, Hawkins, Grainger, and Claiborne); to use

the computer to participate in a minimum level of Cooperative activity; and to bring the notebook computer in at regular intervals to one of the ATEC Centers for maintenance and further instruction in participating in the online Cooperative community. One method for this collaboration system is further development, based on input from Cooperative members, of an Internet office website where members of the food product cooperative can share calendar and production schedules, information on orders and order fulfillment, spreadsheets on finances and inventory, and conduct the formal and informal business of the Cooperative. Second, working with the Cooperative members as well as experienced consultants, we would establish an e-commerce strategy for the Cooperative, which would combine the existing Cooperative website product catalog with shopping cart and credit card capability. Third, we would try to overcome the geographic and time barriers which keep many entrepreneurs from attending small business classes, by providing a resource in CD-ROM and web-based form, that would include the same material covered in Jubilee's small business courses. This would allow the entrepreneur to cover the material at their own rate and times, at minimal expense, and to email questions to be answered or parts of their business plan for critique. The business incubation staff of Jubilee Project would answer or critique these materials, passing them on to experienced business mentors when appropriate for them to answer either directly or if wished, through Jubilee Project. This part of the project would benefit not only food product small businesses, but any small businesses that wished to participate. We believe these measures will increase the success of small businesses in northeast Tennessee, and particularly the food product small businesses we work with by strengthening the food product Cooperative as an important tool to help members reduce costs, reach larger markets, help each other fulfill orders, and learn from each other to improve their businesses and their ability to compete in the marketplace.

Innovation

This project uses inexpensive hardware, software, and services available on the Internet to do something very innovative: strengthen the ability of very small businesses to succeed by cooperating with each other. Despite their obvious potential, establishing successful cooperatives is a difficult task, since it requires an unusually high level of commitment to the cooperative venture. Successfully establishing a cooperative of this kind is almost impossible in a rural area (Jubilee Project has many years of experience helping to keep a craft cooperative going) where an already difficult process easily bogs down given the distance and time involved in getting together for collaborative endeavors. But now the availability of inexpensive, easy-to-use technological tools for expediting communication among Cooperative members gives new hope for cooperative ventures as a way to increase the odds of success for small rural startup businesses. The low cost of Internet access, ease of email and file sharing, and accessibility of collaborative sites like Internet offices hold great promise if these small rural businesses can be persuaded to make the plunge into using these technologies.

For example, Bill D., a full-time fruit and vegetable producer and manufacturer of value-added specialty food products, determines on a Monday that his strawberry production for the week will exceed his capacity for either fresh-market sales or value-added production that week. From his laptop computer, via an Internet access point in the packing shed, he communicates via email or instant messaging to his co-packer at the food processing facility the number of units of strawberry jelly that he wants to produce that week; places orders with vendors for the required

quantities of packaging, labels and secondary inputs; posts a notice to the "Marketplace" page on the Cooperative website that he has excess strawberry production available for sale or trade to other Cooperative members at a price he determines by accessing the current day's market price for strawberries from a web-based crop price reporting service. Estimates of crop volume and jelly production are entered into a spreadsheet application for comparison with actual production figures at the end of the week.

The technology proposed for distribution to qualifying Cooperative members (i.e., state-of-the-art laptop computers with integrated wireless capabilities) has been selected to ensure reliability, capability, mobility, and capacity for integration with currently-owned desktop PCs and existing and future wireless communication networks in the region. Factory-installed Windows XP Professional operating systems and MS Office XP for Small Business applications will enable maximum productivity for users; built-in Intel Centrino wireless (Wi-Fi) capabilities will ensure ease of integration with state-of-the-art wireless networking systems, such as those proposed for deployment by project partner, Appalachian Technical Education Center, and will enable "hot spot" access to the Internet for those members who do not have residential phone service or access to broadband Internet services. Internal 56K modems and Ethernet cards will support access to the best available Internet service options for each user.

Add-on items such as auto/air adapters will enable usability of the equipment provided, even by those members lacking residential electrical service. Laptop-to-PC docking stations will enable, if desired, integration and synchronization with existing PC applications and data storage media.

Digital cameras proposed for the project are intended to enable efficient and high-quality maintenance of the Cooperative website product catalog and production of professional-quality promotional materials for Cooperative marketing efforts. A camera available for loan to Cooperative members will provide the same capabilities for the development of member businesses.

Cell phone service contracts for Coop staff members (two of whom spend substantial amounts of time in the field in the course of their work) will facilitate communication among staff and between staff and member-clients. A cell phone with service plan will be available on an as-needed basis for use in business development by Coop members who do not have residential phone service,

The handheld PC with integrated cell phone proposed for use by the Project Coordinator will serve two purposes:

- * It will enhance the Project Coordinator's ability to communicate with members and project service providers in a timely fashion, regardless of location, as well as provide mobile wireless Internet access for assistance to members with sourcing and access to web-based business development and management tools.

- * It will serve as a means to test the capabilities of integrated wireless PC/Cellular communication systems, something we see as the probable next step in access-to-technology programs for rural areas like ours.

It is proposed that the Tele-Guild project will provide Quickbooks Professional accounting software to each Cooperative member qualified to receive a laptop computer (with training provided by ATEC) for use in individual member business development and business bookkeeping/accounting. A standardized accounting package such as Quickbooks will facilitate ease of training and enable the eventual development of a member-to-member mentoring program in this critical area of business management.

It is also proposed that the Cooperative be provided with e-commerce capabilities for its website product catalog and the ability to accept credit cards as payment for its products in all sales venues via subscription to the Intuit/Quickbooks E-Commerce service, which will integrate seamlessly with the Coop's existing Quickbooks-based accounting system. We envision that this integrated e-commerce/accounting system will serve as a model for individual member businesses as their growth reaches the point of justifying the addition of credit card payment/e-commerce capabilities.

Adobe Acrobat 6.0 is proposed for use by Coop staff for production of formatted promotional and educational/training materials which can be easily accessed using (the freely available) Adobe Acrobat Reader.

A current version of MS FrontPage (FrontPage 2002) is proposed for use by Coop staff for maintenance and development of the Cooperative website (which was created using an earlier version of FrontPage) and to facilitate the design and construction of individual member business websites hosted by the Cooperative's web server or by other web presence providers.

The Cooperative currently maintains a website at www.apspringcoop.com, which consists of both a public-access area (which includes the Cooperative product catalog) and a member's section for access to Coop documents, a chat room for online discussion, a marketplace for member-to-member labor and product exchange, a links page to online resources for food business entrepreneurs, and a calendar of Cooperative activities and events.

It is proposed that, in addition to the goods and services supplied by the Tele-Guild Project, each qualifying Cooperative member business will be provided with a low- or no-cost personal/business website hosted by the Cooperative's web server and one or more web-based email accounts for business use. Traffic logs will be used to determine the rate of use of these member websites and email accounts, with some minimum level of use required for continued service.

Current plans for further development of the Cooperative website's member section include the addition of file transfer (ftp) capabilities (e.g., business plan templates, spreadsheets, business form templates, and Cooperative publications); expanded member-to-member exchange and mentoring services; capabilities for Internet broadcast trainings and workshops for members; and capabilities for the Coop website to serve as a portal to third-party business support services such as the Tennessee Farm Bureau ACRES program and Pennsylvania State University's Resources for Small Food Processors and Potential Entrepreneurs, to name just two.

Likewise, our choice of one innovative economic development strategy for farming areas -

promoting value-added agriculture - opens up another market to remote small businesses: the Internet, where food sales of \$200 million in 1999 are predicted to mushroom to \$8.8 billion in 2004. And the majority of online food sales are of high-profit value added food items, including the kind of salsas, jams and jellies, and pickled vegetables which the food product small businesses we work with are interested in producing.

Finally, the low cost of CD-ROM production now gives economic developers interested in promoting entrepreneurship trainers another tool to overcome the geographical and time barriers that reduce class numbers and increase drop-outs from small business classes: the opportunity for entrepreneurs to learn the material at their own rate from remote locations, and to contact the teachers when they want further explanation, critique, or information. In our particular case, the entrepreneurial training we have developed is customized for the low-literacy and low-income participants we serve.

Diffusion Potential

While only a few rural communities may choose to develop a shared-use commercial kitchen incubator as a particular way to help small businesses, many rural communities are reaching the same conclusions we are about the importance of some kind of small business development to replace declining agriculture or departing industries. Half of all U.S. small businesses are home-based, and this is the fastest growing segment of businesses in the U.S. economy at 10% per year. Helping these small businesses become stronger by forming cooperatives, business associations, and other collaborative structures and networks is a logical and promising strategy for rural entrepreneurial development. While about 80% of business startups fail, that percentage is reversed for business incubation programs like the one proposed, and for home-based businesses which this project also involves. By the very nature of being rural, many communities face similar problems of geographic barriers that might doom this already difficult task, without the technological tools that this project proposes to showcase. Cooperatives can work in urban areas too, and we hope to show that these same tools can help them work better. While much is known about e-commerce, not as much is known about designing e-commerce for the particular case of cooperating associations of businesses.

Likewise, the potential of entrepreneurial training tools designed to give persons who, because of their rural isolation or for whatever reason, lack access or time to follow through on business training and planning, holds promise for many economic development projects.

We plan to disseminate the results of this project on (1) a website to be created and linked to the existing Appalachian Spring Cooperative website, (2) on CD-ROMs which will be produced to share the experience of the Clinch-Powell Community Kitchens with other communities interested in exploring the possibility of starting value-added food product projects, and (3) at conferences of micro-enterprise practitioners, such as the annual conference of the Association of Enterprise Opportunity.

Project Feasibility

All of the technology proposed by this project is off-the-shelf, inexpensive, and easy to learn and

use. The technology proposed is also easily expandable, upgradable and transferable, in the case that success encourages more food product small businesses to join the Cooperative. As food product cooperative members succeed in their businesses, they can afford to purchase their own computers and project-provided equipment can be passed on to newer members of the Cooperative. The project will train entrepreneurs on software (Microsoft Office for Small Business) that is so widely used it will allow them to share files and information easily, not only with each other, but with potential and actual buyers, and others. The choices made will allow inexpensive password protection of sensitive business information shared with the Cooperative. During the planning stage, we considered handheld computers or PDA-type devices. We discarded these alternatives as more difficult for our participants to learn and use, and less conducive to sharing calendars, spreadsheets, and other tools at the center of our strategy. We also considered the idea of wireless networking, but many in our mountainous area are out of the reach of cell phones or pagers, and the high cost of satellite-based networking did not seem economically sustainable.

Various partners in this project bring essential expertise: Kevin Liska, the Director of the Business Media Center at Tennessee Technological University has agreed to be the chief technical advisor to this project, with his significant expertise and proven ability in creating successful e-commerce sites and in designing web- and CD-Rom based training programs; James Dudley of James Dudley Consulting and David Abraham of David Abraham Consulting bring experience in the design and implementation of corporate and organizational networking and training systems; Jubilee Project, Carson Newman College, and the Small Business Development Center have proven ability in teaching entrepreneurship and assisting with award-winning business plans; The Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community and the Center for Profitable Agriculture sponsored by the Tennessee Farm Bureau and University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service are contributing serious work in innovation in economic and agricultural development; Appalachian Technical Education Center (ATEC) will contribute invaluable experience in training residents of our rural communities in the use of modern information technology.

Project Sustainability

Inasmuch as the proposed Tele-Guild project is intended to promote the economic success and viability of the Cooperative and its individual member businesses, sustainability beyond the life of the project and the economic resources to achieve this are expected to derive primarily from the Cooperative's revenue streams from product sales and fee-for-service programs such as product label printing and business website design.

Coop members who qualify to receive goods and services provided by the Tele-Guild Project will be encouraged but not required to consider "passing on the gift" by relinquishing currently owned desktop computers in exchange for a (probably better) laptop computer so that the relinquished PCs could be passed on to other Coop members who do not presently qualify for participation in the Project and who do not currently own a home computer.

These pass-ons will be incorporated into the Coop's on-going "Connections Project", which distributes, free of charge, donated personal computers to Coop members who do not already

possess one, or who are in possession of outmoded or poorly functioning machines.

While the resources provided through the Tele-Guild Project will be limited to distribution to qualifying members, passing on the gift of no-longer-needed PCs will enable achievement of the "Connections Project" goal of providing every Coop member with basic home/home office access to a personal computer and connection to the Internet. Moreover, as food product cooperative members succeed in their businesses, we expect that some will be able to afford their own computers, enabling project-provided equipment to be passed on to newer members of the Cooperative, beyond the life of the Tele-Guild project.

Similarly, we expect that Tele-Guild Project partners and the services they provide will be available beyond the term of the project on either a voluntary or fee-for-service basis. Indeed, many of them have already made long-term commitments to the Cooperative to provide no-cost mentoring in their areas of expertise to Cooperative member businesses.

Community Involvement

In addition to the above partners, the Hancock County Industrial Board and 17 local small businesses have already expressed enthusiastic support for helping with this project, with business mentor services and in other ways. In late 2002 and early 2003, Jubilee Project and the Appalachian Spring Cooperative have surveyed local farmers, and determined significant interest in the project: 30 existing or prospective food product small businesses from a 10-county area have indicated interest in the Kitchen and in cooperative ventures related to it, even before recruitment for this project begins. Extensive community surveys taken in 1994 and 1998 during Empowerment Zone applications show substantial interest in innovative economic development of this kind; community reaction to the Clinch-Powell Community Kitchens has been extremely positive, and the Representative to the Tennessee State Legislature from this area has invited the Project Director to present the project to legislators at the State Capitol.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this project will be carried out based mainly on data collected initially by the food product Cooperative itself, and compiled and analyzed by Lindy Turner, Executive Coordinator of the Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community. It is proposed that at the outset of the Tele-Guild Project a survey will be administered to Coop members who qualify for receipt of goods and services to determine current attitudes about Information Technology and its application to business development, as well as to determine initial levels of proficiency with both hardware and software proposed for the project. This survey will be used to identify necessary areas of focus for training provided to project participants.

The survey will be re-administered at 3 to 6 month intervals for the duration of the project, with an expanded version administered at project conclusion designed to assess the success (or lack thereof) of the program and the methods employed in its implementation.

At every stage of administration, the surveys will be designed in such a way as to determine the information above, as well as the degree to which the participants feel that the Project and the

goods and services provided have assisted them in the development of their individual businesses.

A similar survey, re-administered at similar intervals, will be conducted with Cooperative staff with reference to Cooperative business and marketing development. Project Outcomes, Indicators, Data Collection Methods, and Analysis are outlined below: Project Outcome: Small food product businesses become more successful.

Outcome Indicator #1: Increased profitability of food product small businesses through technologically enhanced business cooperative. #1 Standard: 60% of businesses in food product cooperative report a 20% increase in profitability between 1st and 3rd years. #1 Data Collection: Profit/Loss Statements from each business each year are required for use of Clinch-Powell Community Kitchens and involvement in the Cooperative. #1 Analysis: Compare profit reported on Profit/Loss Statements.

Outcome Indicator #2: Increased sales volumes of food product small businesses through technologically enhanced business cooperative. #2 Standard: 60% of businesses in food product cooperative report 50% increase in sales volume between 1st and 3rd years. #2 Data Collection: Profit/Loss Statements from each business each year. #2 Analysis: Compare sales volume reported on Profit/Loss Statements for each business each year.

Project Outcome: More entrepreneurs served by Jubilee Project and its Clinch-Powell Community Kitchens practice business planning as a result of technological tools which enable distributive, remote-access learning systems.

Outcome Indicator #1: The number of entrepreneurs served each year by the small business training (which is oriented toward business plan preparation) of Jubilee Project increases. #1 Standard: The number of entrepreneurs participating in the small business training program of Jubilee Project increases by 20% from the year prior to the 1st year of the project to the 3rd year of the project. #1 Data Collection: Jubilee Project will record numbers of participants enrolled in small business classes and those emailing in assignments and questions from the CD-ROM-based and/or web-based, self-paced version of the small business classes. #1 Analysis: Compare numbers of entrepreneurs participating in project years to the number preceding project years

Project Outcome: The food product cooperative affiliated with the Clinch-Powell Community Kitchens will be stronger as a result of this project

Outcome Indicator #1: The number of food product small businesses joining the food product cooperative will increase. #1 Standard: The number of food product small businesses joining the food product cooperative will increase by 20% from the 1st year to the 3rd year. #1 Data Collection: Membership rolls will be kept, with names and members and dates joined. #1 Analysis: Compare number of members joining each year.

Outcome Indicator #2: The number of times members of the food product cooperative use the collaboration system will increase. #2 Standard: The average number of measurable uses of the

collaboration system will increase 20% from the 1st year to the 3rd year. #2 Data Collection: Emails, contributions to threaded discussions and quick notes, file and calendar modifications, and other changes to the collaboration system will be tabulated. #2 Analysis: the number of these changes will be compared from year to year.

Outcome Indicator #3: The percentage of cooperative sales attributable to the e-commerce program will increase. In the near-term, this will pertain primarily to retail sales made via the Cooperative website. It is likely that such sales will typically involve modest quantities (though perhaps in considerable variety) of products, which can be shipped to customers cost-effectively via common package delivery services such as the US Postal Service and UPS. Delivery charges (clearly detailed in the website catalog) will be paid by the customer.

In the longer term, strategic plans call for the development of business-to-business sales via the Cooperative website (i.e., sales to wholesale/retail outlets) in larger volumes than can be accommodated by package delivery services. It is expected that distribution of volume sales such as these will be primarily via common carrier freight services. Where possible, advantage will be taken of relationships with partner organizations and businesses for distribution of Cooperative products via channels already in existence, such as the distribution network for Appalachian Harvest products to Food City stores in Abingdon, VA and to markets in northern VA and the Washington, D.C. area, or by backhaul arrangements with potential customers/partners such as the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative. This would entail shipment of Cooperative products to the central TFC warehouse on trucks returning from local deliveries to Cooperative retail outlets in the vicinity of the Cooperative's production/warehouse facility in Hancock County. #3 Standard: The percentage of all food product cooperative sales made through the e-commerce program will increase by 20% from the 1st year to the 3rd year. #3 Data Collection: Sales records will be kept for all sales made through the food product cooperative, including through its e-commerce program. #3 Analysis: The percentage of sales made through the e-commerce program will be calculated for each year and compared.



"proclaim liberty to all the inhabitants of the land" Leviticus 25:10

**A United Methodist Mission Project, National Advance Special #781350
(program and operating expenses)**

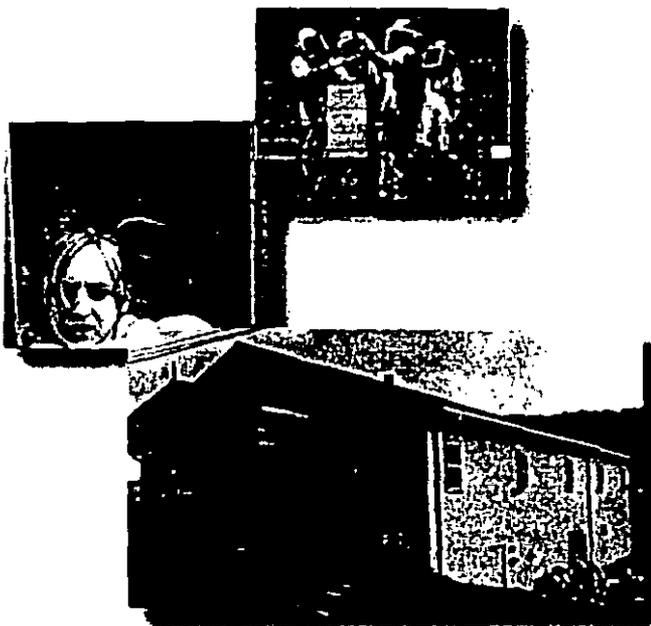
A Mission of Community Development, Service and Empowerment in East Tennessee

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Jubilee Project Inc.

Jubilee Project was begun by United Methodists in 1991, and it has expanded to include many others, joining together to help people in the name of Jesus Christ, by helping them meet their spiritual, economic, social and physical needs.

Jubilee Project's vision is to assist in the empowerment of people in Hancock County Tennessee, especially those with the greatest needs, through enhancement of self-worth, abilities and opportunities. We do this as an inclusive, community-based organization initiated and guided by Christian values and relationships. Jubilee Project is open to everyone, regardless of religion, faith, creed, gender or race.



Jubilee Project, like so many other non-profit organizations, is experiencing a down-turn in funding. The good news is that there are several ways that you -- and your group, club, family, or church (of any denomination) -- can help! You can make a contribution directly to Jubilee Project, to help with general funds, staff salary, or other expenses. You can check out our [needs](#) list and make a material donation. You can see if your church supports Jubilee Project as a mission, and if not, you can request a copy of our slide show to educate your church or group as to our purpose. You can also join iGive.com, which is partnering with Jubilee Project to turn your online shopping dollars into charitable profits. iGive.com has over 500 stores as members, including Ebay, Land's End and L. L. Bean, and the donations we receive from our partnership with them are tax deductible for you!

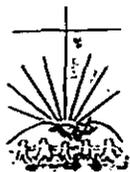
Click on the link below to join iGive.com today. With your help, we can make a real difference. We need you!



Learn more about Jubilee Project! Contact:

Steve Hodges, Executive Director
Diantha Hodges, Associate Director
Randy Hildebrant, Youth Ministry Coordinator
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Jubilee Project Inc

This page updated April 26th, 2004

Jubilee Project's Tele-Guild: Community Development, Service, and Empowerment in East Tennessee

by
Francine Jefferson
TOP Program Officer

Established by the United Methodists in 1991, Jubilee Project, Inc. began as project to help residents of one of the lowest-income areas of Appalachia gain the skills, experience, and hope necessary to provide for their own needs. The Jubilee Project's Tele-Guild is a faith-based community initiative whereby the citizens of East Tennessee have come together to work on business development, purchasing, and marketing of value-added food and farm products.



According to *Food and Drink Weekly* (June 30, 2003), online food sales was expected to total \$3.7 billion in 2003, a gain of 40% over 2002 sales. The Tele-Guild initiative is this community's business response to this market opportunity.

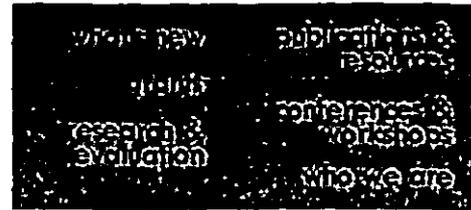
Jubilee's Tele-Guild is designed to organize the local economy. Partners include the Tennessee Technological University, Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community, University of Tennessee Agricultural

Extension Service, Hancock County, Appalachian Technical Education Center, and the Small Business Development Center at East Tennessee State University. The Hancock County Industrial Board and 17 local small businesses expressed support and pledged to help the project with, for instance, business mentoring. Thirty existing or prospective small specialty food businesses expressed interest in participation.

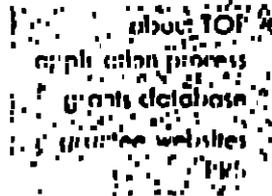
The "Tele" component of this modern day equivalent of Middle English Guilds will use technology to create opportunities for economic development. The Tele-Guild will provide local home-based farm businesses with Internet-capable notebook computers with integrated wireless capabilities; digital cameras to enable efficient and high-quality maintenance of a web-based product catalog; professional level marketing materials; cell phone service contracts; and Quickbooks Professional accounting software and with training.

The Guild will also provide instruction on the use of shared calendars and production schedules, information on orders and order fulfillment, spreadsheets on finances and inventory, and communication tools for the formal and informal business processes and procedures. Participants will be given entrepreneurial training and business planning through web-based mentoring by Jubilee's Business Incubation staff and a network of experienced business people. Finally, each qualifying Cooperative member business will be given a low-or no-cost personal/business web site hosted by the Cooperative's web server and one or more web-based email accounts for business use.

Technology Opportunities Program



home



Grant Information

Medicare Rights Center

award number: 36-60-01049

start-end date: October 1, 2001 - September 30, 2004

total project cost: \$1,432,878

federal share: \$712,248

contact: Ms. Diane Archer

address: 1460 Broadway
New York, NY 10036-7306

phone: (212) 204-6223

e-mail: darcher@medicarerights.org

Project Description

The *Broadband Education and Empowerment for People with Medicare (BEEP'M)* project will create an easy-to-use Medicare counseling and assistance system to give New Yorkers access to vital Medicare benefits and health care services. Medicare counselors serving low-income seniors at 24 sites throughout the City will be linked to BEEP'M via a virtual private network. Counselors will access BEEP'M from touch screen kiosks at the 24 centers or the World Wide Web. BEEP'M will provide counselors access to an interactive client screening and intake tools that will walk them through the information and services that can help their clients. A case management database will track activities and outcomes of each client's case. BEEP'M will also provide on-demand training videos and an electronic bulletin board so that counselors can provide technical assistance to one another. Counselors at each of the 24 BEEP'M sites will enter client encounter and outcome information into a shared system, which can be used to improve services, recognize trends, and develop better client services.

Project Significance:

The complexity and frequent changes in the Medicare program make it difficult for counselors to stay current with its requirements. In New York City, as in most large urban areas, the Medicare assistance system is overtaxed and fragmented. Service organizations struggle to keep their counselors up-to-speed; the training and experience of counselors varies widely across the system. The BEEP'M network will make a significant impact on the training level of service providers with online training modules that can be accessed any time, from any location. In addition, the shared client database, enhanced counselor-to-counselor communication, and the searchable online database of resources will improve the ability of counselors to serve their clients. The BEEP'M project will be a model for using interactive technology to help Medicare counselors navigate the Medicare maze.

Partners:

The Medicare Rights Center, the nation's leading Medicare consumer service organization, will work with nine community-based organizations in New York City to

develop and implement the BEEP'M project.

additional project resources:

[Project Website](#)

[Project Narrative--PDF Version](#)

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Project Narrative

Mrs. P, a Spanish-speaking, 75-year-old woman with an annual income of about \$10,000, walks into her local senior center in Brooklyn because she can't afford her diabetes supplies. She asks a caseworker if Medicare will help pay for her care. He refers her to 1-800-MEDICARE because he has no information available to address her question. He doesn't tell her about Medicare coverage of diabetes supplies, the two organizations nearby that offer low cost diabetes treatment, a community health fair next week on managing diabetes, or about the Medicare low-income assistance program she qualifies for that helps pay for Medicare. Mrs. P leaves the office—without the help she needs.

Mrs. P is one of the 1,015,650 New Yorkers with Medicare, the federal program that provides health insurance to adults over 65 and to people with disabilities. In New York City, the percentage of older adults with Medicare with incomes below \$10,000 is higher than the national average.¹ In addition, many of them have low literacy,² are undereducated, or have limited or no English proficiency. Thus, many New Yorkers with Medicare, especially those with low incomes, face numerous barriers to accessing affordable, stable, and high-quality health care services. The greatest and almost insurmountable barrier keeping people with Medicare from the benefits they are entitled to is the mind-boggling complexity of the Medicare program.

In trying to manage their health care and avoid exorbitant medical costs, New Yorkers with Medicare often rely heavily on counselors in community-based organizations to help them navigate the Medicare maze. New York City, like most urban areas, has a wide network of organizations that help older adults and people with disabilities with their Medicare concerns through counseling, advocacy, referrals, and other forms of assistance. The experience and training of their counselors varies widely. Some are well versed in Medicare, while others struggle with the basics. Regardless of their level of expertise, ongoing support and training is vital in order to keep them abreast of ever-changing Medicare regulations and benefits.

Since 1998, the Medicare Rights Center (MRC) has developed and led the innovative City Network, Education, and Training program (CityNET) in order to assist counselors to help people understand their Medicare benefits and access affordable, high-quality healthcare services (a description of CityNET and list of participating organizations can be found in the Appendix pp. 9-11). After conducting focus groups of CityNET agency staff, MRC identified barriers in each community to providing Medicare education and to accessing benefits. MRC then provided staff with training sessions, consumer education materials and back-up technical assistance on Medicare basics, options, and consumer rights and protection.

¹ Thirty-four percent (34%) of seniors on Medicare in New York have incomes below \$10,000, in comparison to 30% of seniors in the U.S. "Medicare Beneficiaries and HMOs: A Case Study of the New York City Market," Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., January 1998.

² PRNewswire/American Medical Association Foundation. December 2000. Research indicates that about one-third of older adults do not have the health literacy skills needed to understand basic health information.

The success of CityNET and the existence of other stand-alone Medicare assistance services is not enough to meet the ever-increasing need. MRC's experience in answering over 75,000 hotline calls annually from people with Medicare and in operating CityNET has demonstrated that the Medicare assistance system is overtaxed and fragmented. In a survey MRC recently conducted, CityNET agencies reported that agency staff need regularly updated information, frequent "refresher" trainings and training on demand for new hires so that they can meet their clients' needs. Further, because their staff are juggling a myriad of duties and complaining about the complexity of Medicare, they cite the need for a comprehensive, one-stop tool that will help them navigate the Medicare maze quickly for their clients and provide information tailored to their client's needs. Clearly, the current Medicare assistance delivery system is inefficient:

- New York City lacks a single place to access Medicare and local health care information that is tailored to an individual client's needs
- Most clients face multiple barriers to accessing health care and therefore may need service coordination involving multiple agencies
- Staff turnover and the constantly changing Medicare program require a comprehensive, accessible, and easily updated Medicare information tool and catalogue of related health care resources so that staff can provide clients with individualized information, without having to learn complicated regulations or gain extensive experience with the service provision "landscape"
- There is no tracking of emerging issues faced by people with Medicare so it is impossible to respond quickly to these issues or to assess whether responses are effective.

The Solution

Broadband Education and Empowerment for People with Medicare (BEEP'M) will create a comprehensive, streamlined Medicare counseling and assistance system that will help New Yorkers with Medicare quickly and easily access the Medicare benefits and health care services they need. BEEP'M will link at least 9 CityNET agencies at 24 sites serving 3500 people with Medicare every month over a broadband virtual private network (VPN) and allow CityNET client access to user services over the VPN through consumer kiosks located in each participating CityNET agency as well as public access to user services over the World Wide Web (see Appendix, pp.11-13 for a list of CityNET organizations participating in BEEP'M and their organizational descriptions. Letters of support are found at Appendix pp. 23-35).

BEEP'M will be designed primarily for counselors and will provide users with high-speed, broadband access to these four components and services:

- MedicareHealth Screen – an interactive client screening and intake tool
- ReferralEase – a searchable database of resources
- MedicareU—an online, interactive training program
- MediBoard—a bulletin board and chat room that enables users to share information and benefit from the experiences of their colleagues.

MedicareHealth Screen: An interactive client screening and intake tool that will provide staff with a "virtual guided tour" to information and services that can help their clients.

After inputting data on a client's income, residence, ethnicity, age, language, health care problems and expenses, the program will identify problems and then provide individualized Medicare information to solve those problems. This case management database will track activities and outcomes of each client's case. For the first time, all member agencies will enter client encounter and outcome information into a shared system, enabling development of efficient and effective case resolution strategies.

ReferralEase: ReferralEase will provide state-of-the-art assistance in finding the right healthcare services or public benefits advocacy services. ReferralEase will consist of an on-line, searchable database of no- or low-cost healthcare service providers, disease-specific service organizations, and public benefits advocacy organizations. A case worker will be able to search for information using interactive decision trees based on a client's topic of interest, location and operation hours preferences, language, ethnicity, income restrictions, and other factors. The database will find all the latest diabetes information, for example, including upcoming diabetes events and programs, community resources and organizations that specialize in this disease, materials in the client's language, and community groups for diabetics. ReferralEase content will be updated by CityNET agency staff so that all BEEP'M users have access to the latest information in real time.

MedicareU: MedicareU will consist of multi-media presentations of the eight *Let's Learn Medicare* training modules developed by MRC, containing consumer education presentations. These on-demand training videos, accessible via broadband Internet connection, will enable CityNET agencies to conduct more community outreach, train more staff and assist more people with Medicare in their community. On-demand training enables new staff to quickly develop a solid understanding of Medicare issues and enables experienced staff to get "refresher" courses as needed, without losing time traveling to off-site trainings.

MediBoard: This electronic bulletin board will enhance direct communication within the CityNET network. Staff members will be able to post concerns, questions and answers, and other requests. For instance, a CityNET counselor who is having trouble with staff at a local welfare office regarding application for a program for those with low-incomes would be able to share that information with other agencies.

Consumer BEEP'M: The final phase of this project will provide CityNET clients access to computer kiosks at CityNET sites to find information about Medicare utilizing touch screen technology. And, the general public will have access through the Internet. Parts of this Consumer BEEP'M will be available in English and Spanish and will include the following:

MedicareInteractive: A public user version of BEEP'M available on the Web, which will enable any user to get individualized Medicare benefit information using a self-assessment tool and interactive decision trees.

ReferralEase: User-friendly, accessible information on the complete array of services that can help people with Medicare access Medicare and other health care benefit information.

MediBoard and MediChat: Chat rooms and bulletin boards for older adults and people with disabilities to post their concerns or needs to a wide network of agencies and people with Medicare who may have similar questions.

Outcomes

The anticipated outputs and outcomes of BEEP'M are listed below:

Goal	Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance Communication and Services within CityNET Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased efficiency in serving clients with streamlined intake, screening, and eligibility process • Increased linkage and coordination between our 9 organizations • More outreach to consumers • Increased knowledge of health care problems of New Yorkers with Medicare • More up-to-date, comprehensive information available to clients • More appropriate referrals • Improved staff training and support • Increased awareness of community events and resources • Increased ability to handle multiple needs of clients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the Public with Tailored Medicare Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to health care services and information • Better quality and more individualized services • Increased consumer awareness and enrollment in Medicare Assistance Programs and prescription drug assistance programs • Better consumer understanding of Medicare rights, benefits, and options • Increased access to user-friendly health care resources on the Internet

Innovation

BEEP'M will use broad band technology to enable CityNET agency staff to interact with a linked continuum of Medicare consumer information, community healthcare resources and Medicare training materials, with community information regularly updated by CityNET agency staff. Unlike other Medicare Internet information, BEEP'M's interactive tools will provide information and referrals tailored to individual needs, *facilitating problem-solving and speeding casework*. For example, if the counselor assisting Mrs. P had used BEEP'M, he would have been prompted to advise her about the Medicare Assistance Programs and could print out take-away information providing eligibility guidelines, a map of where to go to apply, a list of what documents to bring, as well as an example of the form that is used in applying for the program. The screen would also then remind the staff member after a period of time to follow-up with Mrs. P to learn whether she needed additional assistance in accessing the program. (See Appendix pp. 14-15 for prototype)

Additionally, agencies serving people with Medicare will be able to provide Medicare training on-demand to their staff and glean service and outcome information from a

shared database in order to identify and implement best practices. CityNET agency clients will use emerging touch screen technology to navigate Consumer BEEP'M.

BEEP'M both builds on the success of past TOP awardees like Portland Area Housing Clearinghouse and improves upon the efforts of other TOP awardees like the New York State Aging Services Network and the existing Medicare.gov website by providing interactive individualized Medicare information that includes local resources. BEEP'M places content development at the outermost layer, with the community-based organizations that best serve their clients and present culturally and linguistically relevant services and materials. These aspects complement and build on what we have learned over the past three years of our CityNET project:

- The importance of overcoming cultural, ethnic and language barriers to help clients access services and counseling
- Making information relevant to the individuals within that population, and
- Using community-based organizations to deliver information the last mile to vulnerable subpopulations

BEEP'M will demonstrate a new way to meet client needs that requires less counselor time and intervention to achieve better outcomes.

Diffusion Potential and Dissemination Plan

BEEP'M will serve CityNET agencies in the four most populous boroughs of New York City. Since Medicare information is consistent throughout the region and suburban consumers frequently access health care and other resources located in the city, as well as those within their particular community, BEEP'M will ultimately provide a city-wide and regional system that will assist Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley.

BEEP'M can be replicated in communities nationwide because Medicare is a federal program and BEEP'M's core Medicare screening, service, information and training components can be used in every community. Further, BEEP'M's design will enable it to be easily adapted to reflect different state and local conditions. Medicare consumer service agencies across the country will be interested in BEEP'M because it offers small, underfunded agencies with overworked staffs the same opportunity as better-equipped organizations to help clients without costly training sessions and materials. This system will ultimately result in better coordination of services, referrals, and the identification and sharing of best practices between partners.

BEEP'M has a regional and national diffusion plan. The Project Director at MRC will recruit other CityNET partner organizations and suburban Medicare services agencies for BEEP'M and identify funding to sponsor their participation. Nationally, the Project Director will attend major aging services and health care conferences, including the Biennial SPRY conference and the annual American Society on Aging/National Council on the Aging joint annual conference to demonstrate BEEP'M success and gain exposure for the project and its applicability in other communities. The Project Director will also produce an article about BEEP'M for MRC's Communications Associate to place in professional journals and other media outlets.

Project Feasibility

Technical Approach and Interoperability

The technical approach to BEEP'M relies on accepted standards and existing network hardware (See Appendix pp. 16-17 for Technical Specifications Chart and System Diagrams). Our approach builds on existing technology that is already deployed like Internet Browser programs to view content, Adobe Acrobat to download and view static documents, and various media playing software to view streaming multi-media content. In selecting the platform and standards, MRC conducted a thorough analysis of alternatives.

The provider applications will be available to BEEP'M agency users over a virtual private network (VPN) hosted by an Internet service provider. Thus, the BEEP'M system will leverage the existing infrastructure of the Internet as well as the connectivity already in place at a few partner agencies.

We will equip each BEEP'M partner with Windows 2000 PC with a high-bandwidth connection to the Internet via newly installed Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) connections. BEEP'M agency clients will use computer kiosks with touch screen technology at BEEP'M partner community centers to access Consumer BEEP'M Medicare information.

The BEEP'M system will employ several well-established technology standards. The database will be a traditional SQL-compliant relational database. This format is compatible with existing legacy data sources that will serve as the primary source of data for the system. The network protocol will be TCP-IP, the public standard for communication in an Internet environment. The server will be Windows NT, and the information search and input tools will be programmed in Java and Active Server Pages.

Maintenance

By using a web-based architecture, maintenance will be significantly simplified and future installations and upgrades will be efficiently managed through the centralized server. Further, all contractors will be required to be available to troubleshoot, add new user accounts and maintain system components for which they have responsibility.

Scalability

BEEP'M will serve as a prototype environment for several innovative communication strategies. Each of these strategies – centralized case management, effective Web-based distance learning, and web-based communication and information exchange – were selected because they are easily scalable beyond the initial environment to other boroughs or other cities. These strategies all promote management and maintenance of communications from a centralized office, while at the same time providing cost effective tools for distributing access to public information.

Applicant Qualifications

The Medicare Rights Center (MRC) is the leading national nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to ensuring that older and disabled Americans with Medicare get the health care they need. Since 1989, MRC has directly helped over a million people receive good, affordable health care. MRC has a strong and successful record of grants and program management with governmental and private funding entities.

MRC and its CityNET agency partners have considerable experience in serving all people with Medicare in New York City. Each BEEP'M CityNET partner has particular expertise in serving one or more vulnerable sub-populations in New York.

SomethingDigital, an Internet design and development firm with significant long-term work experience with public institutions and non-profit organizations, has broad experience in developing and implementing digital network technology projects. For a full description of qualifications of MRC and SomethingDigital, along with biographies of key staff, see Appendix pp. 18-21. For descriptions of CityNET BEEP'M partners, see Appendix pp. 11-13.

Budget, Implementation Schedule, Timeline and Sustainability

BEEP'M will be implemented over a three year timeline, with a total project budget of \$1,431,269. Budget details are provided in the Budget Narrative. A detailed timeline is in the Appendix, pp. 22.

Given our experience in developing Medicare education and service projects, MRC is confident that BEEP'M will be sustainable with (1) local resources and (2) revenue received from corporations and unions which will want to use BEEP'M components for Web-based staff training and employee/member interactive Medicare counseling, once a sound track record is developed.

Privacy and Security

BEEP'M will ensure client privacy and efficient and controlled transmittal of information from the project. BEEP'M plans to employ several robust security strategies such as SSL encryption, proprietary VPN access, and a unique username and password logon with user-based security and data access roles. Other security features, such as firewall technology, would be implemented as part of the physical infrastructure.

Partnerships and Staff Turnover

We do not anticipate any change in the BEEP'M partnership structure during the course of the project, except that we may add other community-based organizations as we raise additional funding to connect them to the BEEP'M network. We will guard against the consequences of BEEP'M project staff turnover by cross-training staff to take on various responsibilities. Further, the highest level of project responsibility will rest with a senior manager at MRC who has worked over six years at MRC.

Community Involvement

MRC has worked with and sustained relationships with the BEEP'M CityNET partners over the past three years and with SomethingDigital over the last 18 months. With the

support of Something Digital as technology leader and the BEEP'M partners as project implementers, MRC will function as the project coordinator, organizing and securing funding for the BEEP'M project. MRC will hold regular meetings of the BEEP'M Planning Group/Advisory Committee for all partners to ensure constant input and feedback as the project is implemented. BEEP'M partners will address specific issues such as accessibility, usability, and effectiveness in the development and implementation stages of the project. BEEP'M partners will serve as consultants on culture and language issues that face their client populations.

BEEP'M partners have agreed to contribute 5% FTE staff time for a Project Coordinator at each BEEP'M site. The BEEP'M Project Coordinators will be responsible for ensuring that BEEP'M is being utilized and to provide feedback to MRC and the independent evaluators on BEEP'M's effectiveness. They will also participate in content development for the network by updating information in the ReferralEase database. Letters of support from CityNET agencies participating in BEEP'M are included in the Appendix, pp. 23-35.

BEEP'M partners will be intimately involved in the design of the technology and will be thoroughly trained during implementation. Navigation will be designed with the most basic user in mind, using buttons and automated help options to guide users to requested information. BEEP'M also calls for the project staff to play the role of traffic cop, directing people to the tools and information that will solve their problems. Technical support for BEEP'M Project Coordinators will always be available from the MRC Project Assistant through the MRC HelpDesk. Technical support for users of the public website will also be available through email from the HelpDesk.

Reducing Disparities

The direct beneficiaries of BEEP'M will be low-income New Yorkers with Medicare who are African-American, Asian-American, disabled or Spanish-speaking. The services provided by BEEP'M partner agencies through BEEP'M will reduce disparities by increasing access to affordable health care and increasing agency and community access to broadband technology.

Evaluation

The primary purpose of the evaluation of BEEP'M is to provide formative feedback on the development of the various technologies and the effectiveness of their diffusion to community sites. Some of the key evaluation questions include the following: How we can improve the comprehensibility, navigability and usability of the products offered through BEEP'M? What factors hinder and support the adoption of new technologies by agencies serving older Americans? How effective are the training and technical support provided to community sites, in terms of their knowledge, their attitudes toward the use of technology, and their expectations of benefits from that technology for themselves and their clients? What are the trends in use over time? What issues influence initial and sustained adoption?



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Medicare Rights Center

Award #: 36-60-01049
PO: Amy Borgstrom

Special Award Conditions

Name	Due	Submit	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject	New Due Date
<u>Acceptable Use Plan</u>	11/1/01	12/13/01	12/13/01		12/17/01	12/20/01		
<u>Certification of Non-Federal Matching Funds</u>	4/1/02	3/11/02	3/12/02		3/13/02	3/18/02		
<u>Human Subjects Research Exemption</u>	10/1/02	5/3/02	5/10/02		5/23/02	5/30/02		
<u>Other</u>	12/1/01	11/29/01	12/18/01		12/18/01	8/14/02		
<u>Other - Cost Share Exception</u>	10/28/02	10/25/02	10/31/02		11/1/02	11/15/02		
<u>Privacy and Security Safeguard Plan</u>	11/1/01	12/5/01	12/27/01		12/28/01	1/2/02		

Amendments

Name	Submit	PO Reopen	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject
<u>Budget (No Cost)</u>	10/10/02		10/10/02		10/15/02	10/24/02	
<u>Budget (No Cost)</u>	5/28/03		5/28/03		5/28/03	6/3/03	

Extension Request

Extend Date	Submit	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept	GO Accept	GO Reject
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Site Visit

PO Visit	Report Due	PO Submit	Interim Review	Director Accept
3/14/02	3/29/02	3/25/02		3/29/02

Comments: On November 14 I met with Monica Sanchez, Project Director for the Medicare Rights "BEEP 'M" (Broadband Education and Empowerment for People with Medicare) from noon until 5:00 p.m. at their offices on the eleventh and thirteenth floors at 1460 Broadway in New York City's garment district. Diane Archer, Founder and Executive Director of Medicare Rights joined us for about an hour to discuss "big picture" issues. Brigid Sweeney, Grants Manager and Project Assistant met with us for most of the afternoon. I also met Rachel Ramos, Education Director who acted as Project Director before Monica was hired; Cathy McElroy, Director of Operations; Carol Abrams, Associate Director of Volunteer Services; Suzanne Levin, Hotline Supervisor; Leanna Jones, Communications Director; three volunteers answering the Medicare Rights hotline; two Student Fellows training and assisting the volunteers; and project partner Bob Weber of the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged at his busy office twelve blocks from Medicare Rights. Medicare Right's TOP project adds a digital component to their successful twelve year old hotline designed to answer people's questions about and demystify Medicare. This sophisticated organization has a total staff of twenty and its volunteer counselors field 60,000 phone calls per year. The organization is also involved in direct advocacy around HMO refusal of coverage. Their Student Fellows speak for clients, especially those with limited English, in courtrooms in these cases. Their organizational website currently ranks in the top three in most search engines and the organization also manages a national electronic

mailing list that has 4,000 members. The project is designed to provide an array of tools for people who need assistance accessing Medicare benefits and services, and to link 24 sites administered by eight agencies where agency staff will use the system in their interaction with clients. Long-term plans include expanding the service to other agencies, and allowing the public to access services over the web via Internet kiosks. This project just started up in October. They have successfully hired the two primary staff (Monica and Brigid) and an evaluator, and are in the midst of designing technical specifications for the project with their developer. Monica and Brigid worked together in their prior positions with another purveyor of online health information that was bought out and transformed to a for-profit site. They report an excellent working relationship with each other and with their software developer. They will eventually hire a network administrator and a content developer as well. They have already lost one partner (Gay Men's Health Crisis) and added a new one (Jewish Association for Services for the Aged). They expect the project to unfold in four phases. The first phase is the development of the informational web page (MedicareHealth screen), including "Benefits Checkup," a resource that will enable consumers to identify what benefits they are eligible for. During the second phase they will develop and deploy the "Referral Ease database," an online rolodex designed to simplify social service delivery processes for the elderly, and streamline case management. The third phase involves transferring training materials to the Web, including the modules of "Medicare U" which will be offered to consumers and the staff of the project partner organizations via streaming video. The fourth phase will focus on developing the MediBoard and MediChat interactive communities for clients and agency staff. Overall, project staff hope that this digital gateway to Medicare information will help people to become informed about Medicare before they are in crisis. Project staff have successfully facilitated meetings of the partners in December and February. Diane Archer, founder and executive director, noted that at the first meeting, the partners were a little confused. Many of them are less than computer adept themselves. Their software consultant attended the second meeting, and his presentation excited the partners. They became enthusiastically involved in providing him with design suggestions. Diane is very interested in ensuring that the design of the website is engaging. She plans to include elements to make it fun, including health tips of the day; "Medicare Minutes," very short presentations of key facts related to Medicare coverage; site-wide "treasure hunts;" and so forth. Diane became excited thinking about the possibilities—"Who knows? We could have Medicare Bingo, Medicare Solitaire—even—and I'm not being entirely facetious—Medicare Dating!" The key obstacle that this project faces is the diversity of and the distance between the partner organizations. They include groups that serve primarily African American, Puerto Rican, Japanese, Korean, and Russian/Jewish seniors, and are located in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens. Each organization is at different places in the spectrum of computer competence. Monica and Brigid are aware that the website and training will be deployed a little differently at each site. Their first step is to begin to build excellent relationships with each of the partners through a series of on-site one-on-one meetings. Another challenge is the current multiplicity of intake systems. Currently each partner agency has its own slightly different intake process usually based on requirements of the state Department on Aging. Medicare Rights staff would like to develop one consistent system for all of the partners to use for both their clients and their counselors. I referred them to Jessica Harner who was able to surmount this obstacle in Maine. I observed the telephone hotline in action, where three senior volunteers answered questions, assisted and supported by the Student Fellows. The volunteers currently use hard copy scripts which they follow on various common kinds of calls. They were looking forward to being able to access these online. The hotline was busy when I was there, with all three volunteer counselors answering calls. Bob Weber, Development Director for the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA) explained that his is a multi-service agency that focuses on housing, individual services, legal aid, home care, and advocacy for senior citizens. They also provide group services to 26 Senior Centers and 2500 Meals on Wheels per day. Their clientele is largely older Jewish Americans, many of who immigrated from the former Soviet Union. They already offer 8 different computer courses on Sundays at their offices, and are looking forward to making Medicare information and training modules available to their staff and clients at six Senior Centers. Mr. Weber was obviously well acquainted with the project and its timeline, and genuinely interested in seeing how his clients will respond to the new system. He suspects that use will fluctuate in relationship with age and economic status and recognizes that older folks and those who have never used a computer before will need more training. He thinks that the system will be especially useful when people are in crisis, although recognizing its educational potential. He is also interested in working with project staff on the intake issue. At the time of our visit, about sixty seniors were attending a monthly social meeting in their large meeting room. ANALYSIS: This project is moving along well. The grantee organization has a solid track record and reputation. I don't anticipate any significant problems with successful implementation of the project. Their systems for financial management, personnel management, and project management are all sound, if not state-of-the-art. They use Quickbooks Pro for their accounting with at least four hands on each transaction. The TOP grant is one of 35 current funding sources, and the organization employs a Director of Operations who approves all expenditures as well as a bookkeeper. They will be using their milestones in the PRS as well as various reports from their contractors as key project management tools. This grantee will be submitting a budget revision in the near future. They are postponing the hiring of the Network Administrator until the website and training modules are built, and so plan to divert some of the funds earmarked for that position to another category. They are up-to-date with all Special Award Conditions, and ready to get started with the Human Subjects Research exemption process. RECOMMENDED FOLLOW-UP: I followed up this meeting by e-mailing them the Human Subjects Research template for requesting exemption as well as e-mail addresses for Jessica Harner, David Massey, and Steve Snow, as project staff were intrigued with the concept of touch screen kiosks. I also sent them websites for Barnes Jewish Hospital's OASIS project. I have asked the Project Director keep me apprised regarding the two obstacles that they have identified—diversity of and distance between sites and multiplicity of intake processes—in each quarterly report. They also are planning a

move in the next six months. This move will most likely be within the same building, and will result in consolidation of staff all on one floor (currently administrative staff is on the eleventh and the actual hotline operation is on the thirteenth floor of their building). I will be monitoring for any slippage in the timeline caused by the move.

8/14/03 8/29/03

8/25/03

8/25/03

Comments: AWARD RECIPIENT: Medicare Rights Center, Inc. AWARD NUMBER: 36-60-01049 DATES VISITED: August 14, 2003 SITES VISITED: Medicare Rights Emmanuel A.M.E. Baptist Church NARRATIVE: Since my visit last year, this organization has moved up from the 11th to the 17th floor in the same building at 1460 Broadway and 41st. They now occupy the entire 17th floor, which used to be headquarters for the Capezio shoe company, resulting in some interesting elements in the office design including large glass showcases and etched glass dividers that say things like Commitment! Theater! Performance! in elegant two foot high script. I arrived and project staff Monica Sanchez and Brigid Sweeney ushered me to Diane Archer's office where they gave me a tour of the Medicare Rights web site in its present incarnation. This project made great progress during the last reporting period, and every module of the online toolkit except "Medicare University" are up and running. They demonstrated the Medicare Interactive Counselor and the Medicare Interactive Community components. The site is very easy to navigate and otherwise user friendly, with a nice look and feel. The MI Counselor component includes all of the scripts that volunteers use over the phone with clients at the Medicare Rights Hotline. It also includes case examples of actual calls they have received. A particularly nice feature throughout the site is a text size toggle so that older people that may not see all that well can make the text very large. The MI Community feature is designed to be a communication vehicle for the counselors at the 18 partner sites. Only some partners have received training to date and traffic has existed solely of "testing testing" type messages at this point. Monica and Brigid expect that traffic will increase once everyone is trained. We had an interesting discussion on what motivates people to participate in online discussion spaces. They are going to think about organizing some virtual guest speakers to spark participation. "Dear Marci" is an online interactive newsletter that is a very popular feature on this site. Over 3,000 people have subscribed to this newsletter. They are expanding this feature to include a second newsletter for professionals such as counselors and advocates. The Medicare Interactive University element has changed the most through the life of the project. It was initially envisioned as a video curriculum for professionals. They discovered that the production of this as video was very expensive, for one thing, and also not very flexible. They decided that a more interactive teaching tool using Open Source My SQL made more sense. This way students can customize the curriculum to their own particular learning needs. I asked Monica and Brigid about quality control for all of the information on the site. How do they make sure that they are passing on the most up-to-date information in terms of Medicare regulations? Monica replied that having up-to-date and accurate information is core to the mission of the organization. They already have two full-time staff that focus only on that program component, otherwise the volunteers that answer the Hotline could be giving out bad information. In addition, they have three attorneys on staff, including the founder and Executive Director, Diane Archer. I also asked Monica and Brigid about the sustainability of the project. They were very excited to report that they have already successfully applied for a grant from Atlantic Philanthropies to not only continue to implement the project, but to take it national. They are also talking with AARP to try and figure out a mutually beneficial relationship. Monica said "Medicare Interactive is absolutely central to the educational mission of the organization, and the leadership is committed that it continues to be so." Monica and Brigid also demonstrated the "back end" or management side of the web site. This was also very clean, clear, and easy to use. The site as it is now includes 231 active links. They both reiterated what they stated in their last quarterly report i.e. "all of the Medicare Interactive users are very pleased with the results and we're confident that the site is exactly what we had planned to develop." I asked them what were the biggest lessons learned to date. Monica said they had learned that everything is more work than you think, and often what you think is going to be the most simple is the hardest. For example, they have had a really hard time getting DSL installed at their remote sites. They said that if they ever did a project like this again, they would simply pass the money on to the partners and let them purchase their own access. Verizon has been very difficult to work with, up to and including sending bills for services rendered to Brigid personally instead of to the partner organizations. Monica said the easiest partners to work with, of course, were the one that already had cable or T1 connections. They also learned that there is a need for training for the counselors themselves, rather than training for the coordinators of these counselors. Information and skill sets do not simply "trickle down" to the people actually interacting with the clients. In one case, an organization that received a computer had so little information from their coordinator that they called Medicare Rights asking "what's with this computer that was dropped off here?" They have changed their training strategy to include much more interaction with the counselors themselves. The agenda for the rest of the afternoon included visiting at one of their partner sites in Harlem, and meeting with the CEO, Robert Hayes. We took the subway up to 116th Street and visited with Martina Ordenana and Tashaya Butler, staff at the Emmanuel AME Baptist Church. This is church that has a rich history going back to 1922, and serves as the spiritual and community center of this part of Harlem. Martina is very much a Medicare Interactive advocate, cheerleader, and general spark plug. She has sent faxes out to over one hundred other churches in the community telling them about the online system. The church has a public access machine in one of their basement offices that Martina uses to demonstrate Medicare Interactive. She said that people really liked the system. She has also produced a brochure that is on the table in the foyer outside the sanctuary. If all of this project's sites had a committed staff person like Martina involved, it will no doubt be very successful, and serve lots and lots of the mostly senior citizens that it is supposed to be helping. After this meeting, we took the subway back to Medicare Rights offices. On the way up to the 17th floor, the elevator stopped, and all of the lights went out. After about an hour of unproductive pounding and shouting, Monica gave the doors a shove, and they opened right up. We walked down ten stories, and found out from some people in the stairwell that there had been a massive power failure over

MRC Update

Medicare Interactive in Action

When older adults come to see Martina Ordenana, the Medicare counselor at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in Harlem, they often have many concerns. On top of their worries about staying healthy, they wonder whether their doctors will accept their insurance, what they will do if they need home or hospice care, and how they will keep track of the many rules that affect their Medicare coverage. They are faced with a daunting task: navigating a complicated and frequently expensive health care system.

Luckily, they do not have to face these challenges alone. At Emanuel A.M.E., they have access to Medicare Interactive (MI), the online counseling and assistance system developed by MRC. Counselors like Martina are using Medicare Interactive in churches, senior centers and community centers throughout New York City to help people with Medicare access the health care services and information they need.

Medicare Interactive is a vital tool

because it puts up-to-date, comprehensive information about Medicare at their fingertips. On the MI web site, they can access user-friendly explanations of Medicare's rules and regulations. And they are also linked to a database of local organizations from which clients can get help, as well as a broad array of information, including frequently asked questions and links to other web sites for further research.

So, for example, counselors reading information on MI about Medicare Savings Programs will have everything at their fingertips: an application form they can complete on their computer and then print out, a list of Medicaid

offices nearby where they can submit the application, printable flyers in Spanish and English explaining the programs, and case examples describing problems real people have encountered when applying for the programs and how to resolve them.

Martina uses MI to lead several seminars a month that give seniors the opportunity to get answers to their Medicare questions, find out more about their community's resources, and learn to find information on MI themselves.

At Emmanuel A.M.E. and the other 23 pilot sites that use MI, even people who have little experience with computers are quickly learning to use the web site. That's because MI is designed with Medicare recipients in mind: it is easy to search and navigate, can be viewed in large print, and explains complicated topics in jargon-free language. "A lot of times, once they get the hang of it they do their own research," Martina says. "It's so easy that they can just go ahead, find the information they want and print out what they need."

Since March 2003, Martina has been making sure people in her community know that they can come to her when they need accurate, straightforward information about their Medicare coverage. She has contacted senior housing units in the area, slipped flyers under doors, and sent faxes to more than 100 churches in the A.M.E. network, asking them to announce MI in their bulletins. "It was slow going in the beginning, but the main thing is that people know we're here, so when the need comes I'm here for them," she says.

As more people hear about MI, seniors—as well as their caregivers—are seeking help. "Sometimes a younger crowd comes in for their parents or grandparents,"



explains Martina (pictured above using MI). "I show them where to go and they branch out on their own from there. The more we advertise, the better flow of people we get."

Medicare Interactive was developed by MRC as part of the Broadband Education and Empowerment for People with Medicare (BEEP'M) project, made possible by a grant from the Department of Commerce's Technology Opportunities Program as well as by matching grants from the Altman Foundation, the Stella & Charles Guttman Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund.

Thanks to these grants, MRC has been able to pilot MI with 24 community centers and churches throughout New York City and provide these sites with computers, internet access and printers.

Now, counselors in the BEEP'M program have an easy-to-learn, easy-to-use tool that can help them assist their clients' needs. As word spreads, more and more New Yorkers with Medicare will discover that they do not need to negotiate the complexities of Medicare alone.

A New York-specific version of the Medicare Interactive Counselor will be available to the general public in early 2004. Check www.medicarerights.org for details in the coming months.



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The Connections For Tomorrow (C4T) project supports organizations in capacity building and best practices development by providing grants and technical assistance to community technology programs starting up, expanding, and improving services, thereby equipping them to better provide assistance to at-risk youth or homeless.

C4T is a collaboration of organizational partners, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide technical assistance to community-based and faith-based organizations located primarily in Illinois, California and Massachusetts. The C4T partnership includes Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet), the Association of Christian Community Computer Centers (AC4), the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) and the Illinois Community Technology Consortium (ILCTC).

The 2003-2004 C4T California Grants Program will provide \$750,000 in grants and substantial in-kind support to Community Technology Centers and Programs throughout California. Small and medium-sized community and faith-based organizations are eligible to apply. The Application Deadline for both grants is December 17, 2003.

More information about the 2003-2004 California Grants Program can be found [here](#).

Connections For Tomorrow is supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and State Street



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WHO WE ARE:

Connections for Tomorrow, C4T, is a collaboration of organizational partners funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide technical assistance to community-based and faith-based organizations located primarily in Illinois, California and Massachusetts. The C4T partnership includes Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet) as lead, the Association of Christian Community Computer Centers (AC4), the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) and the Illinois Community Technology Consortium (ILCTC). The C4T partners bring forth an especially strong combination of skills in technology, accessibility, and programmatic and organizational development. Our strength lies in years of experience of providing services to a broad array of organizations within and beyond our 1,900+ members.

Established in the fall of 2002, C4T is part of the Administration's Compassion Capital Fund and is expected to continue through 2005.

C4T PARTNERS:

Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet): CTCNet is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to support community technology centers so that they may better serve their constituencies. CTCNet currently serves over 1,000 centers across the United States. www.ctcnet.org, Cambridge, MA, lead partner

Association of Christian Community Computing Centers (AC4): AC4 is a national non-profit organization that was established in 2000 to support Christian organizations that are addressing the digital divide. AC4 currently has over 200 full members and another 200 organizations to which the organization provides some support. (www.ac4.org), Boston, MA

Alliance for Technology Access (ATA): ATA is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to increase the use of technology by children and adults with disabilities and functional limitations. ATA includes 38 assistive technology resource centers in 24 states and the Virgin Islands, as well as 45 community-based organizations. (www.ataccess.org), San Rafael, CA

Illinois Community Technology Consortium (ILCTC): The Illinois Community Technology Consortium comprises a dozen core members representing social service, settlement house, university and other organizations. Facilitating the organization's work is the Midwest

Technology Access Group, Inc. (www.mtag.org), Chicago, IL

*Connections For Tomorrow is supported by the U.S. Department of
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OUR MISSION AND GOALS:

The main objective of the C4T project is to help faith- and community-based organizations increase their organizational capacity and to initiate, improve and expand their social services programs serving at-risk youth and/or homeless. The primary focus is on programs that integrate technology into their social services. C4T serves organizations at many points along the spectrum: from those just adding a few computers for occasional use to those with a more developed program they would like to improve or expand.

C4T welcomes collaborations with diverse networks of community and faith-based organizations.

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OUR SERVICES:

C4T focuses our expertise and resources to provide the following types of assistance:

- [Technical Assistance](#)
 - [National](#)
 - [Regional - Capacity Building Program](#)
 - [Grants Programs](#)
 - [Faith-Based Technology Resources](#)
-

Technical Assistance - National:

The C4T project continues and expands the existing technical assistance projects of CTCNet, ATA, AC4 and ILCTC. These services include:

- CTCNet's annual [National Conference](#) (Seattle: June 10-14, 2004)
- ATA's annual [National Conference](#)
- A variety of specific training events
- [AmeriCorps*VISTA](#) members provided to organizations
- [National email discussion lists and archives](#)
- Free or discounted written materials and equipment.

Technical Assistance - Regional: Capacity Building Program

C4T provides phone and on-site technical assistance to 150 organizations (50 in each of the 3 target states: CA, IL, MA) in order to achieve two primary goals:

- Increase the capacity and effectiveness of organizations through the appropriate use of technology and
- Help organizations initiate, expand and improve their social service programs directed towards at-risk youth and homeless individuals.

In addition, C4T also conducts a number of regional workshops and training including:

- A two-day Leadership Development Institute in California and Illinois (CTCNet)
- Training for 120 organizations in California (ATA)
- A day-long workshop in California and Massachusetts (AC4)

Grants Program:

2002-2003: C4T provided \$750,000 via small grants to 42 Illinois community and faith-based organizations in 2002-2003. These grants targeted small and medium size organizations wishing to expand or start-up community technology-based programs that serve at-risk youth or homeless individuals.

2003-2004: The C4T California Grants Applications is closed. More information can be found here: <http://www2.ctcnet.org/c4t/grants/>

2004-2005: Check back in late 2004 for information about the Massachusetts Grants Program.

Developing Faith-Based Technology Resources:

C4T is assisting in the development of resources for faith-based organizations. AC4 is providing a number of workshops and conference calls on community technology for faith-based social service agencies. This project is also assisting AC4 in launching its TechMission Boston Program which provides training, volunteers, staff resources and equipment to over 20 Christian CTCs and non-profit social service agencies in the Greater Boston area. AC4 has also developed a Computer Curriculum Manual and Capacity Building Manual for faith-based and community organizations.

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We would be happy to discuss this exciting initiative in more detail with you.

For questions about:

- The California Grants Program contact Ben Cain (bcain@ctcnet.org) or Anne Neville (aneville@ctcnet.org)
- The Illinois Capacity Building Program contact Ellen Caffrey Garza (ecgarza@ctcnet.org)
- The Massachusetts Capacity Building Program contact Marissa Martin (mmartin@ctcnet.org)

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