

96068 National Urban Technology Center Inc
Executive Summary

The primary application area of this 2-year demonstration grant is community-wide networking and secondarily, human services. The National Urban Technology Center (Urban Technology) will create a *Community Employment Network* to create a sustainable inner-city development model. Urban Technology will partner with and train community-based organizations (CBOs) to help public assistance recipients obtain and retain high-value employment using technology and telecommunications. It will create an economic development initiative in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. It will create an Internet-based network that connects public assistance recipients with community resources, their caseworkers and online business mentors for continuing support. It will also provide adult "life skills" and technology-based employment training (including A+ PC repair certification with IBM/TSS and IBM/TSS employment), internships, and linkage to jobs.

I. Problem Definition

Bedford-Stuyvesant is an inner-city community in crisis. It is a two square mile area of 650,000 people that is 85% black and 13% Hispanic, with an overall unemployment rate of 30%.ⁱ With 71% of the area's population under the age of 18, the employment outlook for Bedford-Stuyvesant youth is typically limited to minimum wage employment. Of these youth: 64% are on public assistance; nearly two-thirds live in female headed-households; and less than half have math and reading scores at grade level. Moreover, one in ten will be reported for abuse or neglect, resulting in one of the city's highest rates of children placed in foster care. Most will not complete high schoolⁱⁱ. In a city where the murder rate has dropped by 38.7% in the last two years, Bedford-Stuyvesant has one of the fastest growing murder rates in the City.ⁱⁱⁱ

This alarming picture is not unique to Bedford-Stuyvesant -- their problems are identical to those of many inner-city communities that are plagued by high unemployment with the accompanying social pathologies typically associated with high unemployment (e.g. government dependency, teen pregnancy, school dropouts). The similar needs of these communities include job training skills, educational support, and "life skills" training^{iv}. Despite growing social service needs, funding has declined while caseworker/client ratios have increased by as much as 63%. With shrinking funding, caseworkers must support their clients more efficiently and effectively. For example, a caseworker can reduce administrative and transportation time by E-mailing her follow-up reports from client's homes without returning to the office. Social service agencies must also find new ways of providing employment skills to training to this "at risk" clientele in the increasingly competitive 21st century job market where 75% of all jobs will soon require computer literacy.^v

The Community Employment Network will link the homes of 100 foster care youth to their caseworkers so they can interact more frequently. Second, it will automate the CBO's administrative processes so that the caseworkers will have added time to communicate online with their clients. As part of this automation, Internet connections will permit CBO access to existing State and City social service agency networks in order to collapse administrative process cycles thus affording more time for counseling. Third, it will facilitate entry into the job market for the targeted individuals by connecting them to online mentors from the business community who will offer supportive and practical business advice, such as resume critiques, and post their job listings and process employment applications online. Fourth, it will provide employment training for technology-related jobs, such as desk-top publishing and computer repair, to make these individuals employable, as measured by an increased rate of job placements. Fifth, it will offer more effective, efficient and personalized "life skills" training with computerized individual development plans (IDP) to create full-functioning, responsible adults who are better able to retain the jobs they acquire (as measured by job retention rates and expressed employer

satisfaction). Last, it will give PC training to small businesses to enhance their competitiveness while training them to mentor and advertise online.

II. Technical Approach

Urban Technology's local partner will be supported by a central/national Urban Technology office. Its local partners, its partner's clients, and the central site will be linked through the Internet using PSI/Net. By using a national commercial Internet access provider, Urban Technology will be able to efficiently effect national expansion. Local CBO Internet home pages on Urban Technology's Web site (developed and maintained by the Urban Technology) will list CBO and neighborhood activities and services to establish a sense of community ownership. In practice, a participating teenage foster child will be able to log on a PC at home using standard telephone lines (POTS). All participants will have home PCs with a minimum standard of a 386 with a 14.4 Kbps modem, 33mhz, 4Mg and a 450 HDD. The first Internet access screen seen will be Urban Technology's Home Page. From there the foster child can move to other Urban Technology pages where she can see her training class schedules, use Netscape to access other Web sites to do online projects that have been assigned by the Urban Technology trainer, send E-Mail to her caseworker and to her mentor, assist another trainee with their assignment and use file transfer facilities to download material from various Internet sites. Her caseworker will be able to collaborate with other CFS caseworkers using Lotus Notes on an NT LAN. The caseworker will also be able to E-Mail other caseworkers to compare experiences, and interact online on the existing Social Workers Advocacy Network Web site. ✓

The Internet is used to efficiently create a low-cost community network. This electronic community model is scaleable, replicable and interoperable. *The Community Employment Network* will link two CBO training centers: CFS and Latimer-Woods in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and Urban Technology's headquarters site in Manhattan. (see figure 1) It will also link 10 public-access PCs, mentors and the 100 program participants. ✓

The Internet will allow case workers and mentors to reach foster youth and others with whom they are working E-mail managers (mailbots) will be used to make sure mail is routed to recipients and to provide a level of mail privacy. To discourage "inappropriate" communications from adult mentors to their teenage mentees, the mailbot will automatically forward copies of such E-Mail to Urban Technology staff, the foster parent and caseworker. This forwarding system will also enable Urban Technology staff to better evaluate the success of the mentor-match relationship. In addition, businesses will be able to post jobs on a Community Job Bank bulletin board. E-mail and faxed applications would be accepted.

Constituents can participate by obtaining an Internet access account. Public access work stations in lobbies and/or family rooms of participating CBOs will offer additional access points. A prototype community facility is currently implemented at CFS in Brooklyn. (see figure 2) At this location community residents regularly utilize the equipment in one of the two training labs to participate in formal courses, do course assignments or access the Internet. A work station in the lobby is available to those who come in to learn more about what services are available to them. On-site repair is provided by Technology Services Solutions/IBM for all new Urban Technology-manufactured PCs that are purchased by CBOs or end-users. Urban Technology's A+ certified technicians will support and maintain all networks created for *the Community Employment Network*. Including and beyond this demonstration period, as CBOs or end-users wish to upgrade their PCs, Urban Technology will accept a trade-in of their old PCs for credit against the purchase of a new Urban Technology-manufactured PC.

The computer component model for the CBO LANs will be uniformity. Transceiver adapters will transfer data to ensure interoperability at CBO sites with any existing LAN configurations. All Urban Technology-installed LANs will, to the degree practical, be identical. This will allow all hardware to be pre-configured and all software to be pre-loaded prior to shipment. When the boxes arrive at the destination, simple instructions will guide the recipient through the installation process with telephone support as needed. This "shrink-wrap" approach

The Community Employment Network will target one of the most difficult to place employment segments - ~~inner-city teenage children~~ on public assistance. It will also bring a community of resources (enabled by technology and telecommunications), to develop economically self-sufficient, full-functioning members of their communities. *The Community Employment Network* will provide such personalized and in-depth employment-related skills training for over 200 public assistance recipients. In doing so, it will provide a model for other inner-city communities struggling to transform socially and economically dependent individuals into self-reliant, productive citizens thereby transforming tax users into tax generators. Across the country, many CBOs have asked to partner with Urban Technology. (see attached).

Urban Technology has already "shrink-wrapped" the components of its model for efficient replication. This turn-key system includes a preconfigured training lab with a preprogrammed local area network (LAN) and access to the Internet, standardized administrative systems, customized training curricula and the sale of affordable personal computer hardware and software systems, benchmarked against national standards of quality, reliability and cost.

In order to sustain the project after the two-year demonstration, each of the project's training centers will be self-funding within 18 months through revenues generated by computer training fees (trainees who are not in this program will be charged fees) and by low-cost refurbished and new PC sales (see attached Urban Technology Partnership Model spreadsheet).

IV/V. Applicant Qualifications, Partnerships and Community Support

Urban Technology, a not-for-profit corporation (501c3), has formed in January, 1995 by two highly qualified minority professionals, Elsie Crum and Patricia Bransford. (Attached are officer biographies). It is dedicated to providing access to personal computers and information technology in inner-city communities. It works with public/private coalitions of businesses, CBOs and schools to increase technology skills required in today's job market. Urban Technology also provides community telecommunications networks linking homes and local businesses and creates employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to promote sustainable inner-city development. In order for Urban Technology training centers to become self-funding for its CBO partners, CBOs charge fees for training. CBOs are also PC distribution centers for the sale of affordable state-of-the-art computers Urban Technology manufactures and the donated PCs it refurbishes and upgrades.

As part of this initiative, Urban Technology will administer and coordinate, install and network all training labs, hire and train all computer trainers, develop all curricula, provide access to affordable computers, and Internet access to all project participants. In order to support this initiative, it will use a \$50,000 grant from Con Edison, a portion of a \$200,000 Ford Foundation grant, a \$50,000 grant from Chase/Chemical Bank as well as a portion of its anticipated yearly revenues.

Technology Service Solutions (TSS) was formed in 1993 as a joint venture between IBM and Kodak to provide maintenance and support services for multi-vendor desk-top products. TSS' business direction is to provide service encompassing hardware maintenance, software maintenance and support, installation of data-processing hardware, and network administration and support. Attached is a letter from TSS describing its background, level of *pro bono* support for this program including trainers, quality control, and course design. The letter outlines TSS' commitment to providing mentors for this initiative. TSS is also committed to hiring qualified individuals who successfully complete this computer repair program. This contribution is valued at \$75,000 in year 1.

Concord Family Services, Inc. (CFS) is a well established social service/foster care agency operating in Bedford-Stuyvesant. CFS currently serves the needs of over 250 children and provides a vital link between these children and their 500 birth and foster parents. CFS has one of the State's highest rates of adoption, in part because of the strength of the relationships it is able to foster between the foster-parents and children. CFS also provides its young adults with the independent living and life skills that they will need to become independent, responsible, and employable adults. As a part of this initiative, CFS has agreed to make a monthly \$4,500

contribution to Urban Technology to support this effort and will provide telecommunications-capable home computers (386 and 486 PCs) to each of the 100 participating foster children in this program. CFS will also provide space (electricity, online charges, the cost of an ISDN line, insurance and security) for the creation of a second computer training lab and a repair lab on its premises. The value of CFS' 2 year cash contribution is \$108,000 and the value of the home PCs for its foster children will exceed \$86,900. The value (including benefits) of the program manager/caseworker-coordinator that CFS will assign to this program is \$48,800 over the 2 year project. Urban Technology has partnered with CFS to offer computer training for community residents and computer-assisted "life skills" training to its foster children. Urban Technology, with CFS, has successfully trained over 250 individuals.

AT&T has agreed to create a team of professionals to assist in network design and implementation, community bulletin board creation, marketing/advertising assistance, computer trainers and online mentors. AT&T will donate 7,000 hours with a 2 year value of \$536,200.

Concord Baptist Church of Christ is the largest black Baptist church in the country, c.1847, with a congregation of over 5,000. It has a local development corporation, an elementary school, a senior center, nursing home, and home service agency. As part of this initiative, it will recruit and coordinate community volunteer mentors. It will also be the site for public access PCs for online mentoring in its community sites. This volunteer mentoring is valued at \$25,000.

Latimer-Woods Economic Development Association is a nonprofit local development corporation with 12 years of experience in assisting small and minority businesses. It operates the only minority and women-owned business incubator in NY State and offers commercial lease tenants management and technical assistance. For this initiative, Latimer will recruit volunteer online small business mentors, perform mentor-matching; provide Internet and technology training to the business mentors, act as a liaison to these businesses for feedback and evaluative purposes, and will administer a low-cost modem sale program to ensure that all local businesses with PCs are telecommunications-ready. It will match over 50 business mentors who will each donate 100 annual mentor hours, at an average rate of \$20, or \$200,000 in 2 years. Latimer Woods will also provide a program manager for this project with a two year value of \$48,800 (including benefits).

Central Brooklyn Federal Credit Union is the largest minority-run credit union in New York City, with over 5,000 depositors. In order to partner with Urban Technology to build an inner-city infrastructure for technology and telecommunications. It will offer community residents and small businesses a "pay-what-you-can" installment plan for the purchase of computers at an interest rate 3% lower than its normal rates -- a savings of \$50 per PC. The value of this discount for the 500 yearly PC sales made through this project is \$50,000 over 2 years. It has also agreed to post all of its future job listings on Urban Technology's Web site and has agreed to recruit mentors from among its employees.

Alliance of Black Telecommunications Employees is a national association of telecommunications employees that will recruit online mentors from its members. Its members will devote over 1,000 hours for mentoring valued at \$25,000 for 2 years.

VI. Support for End Users

The Community Employment Network will serve over 100 public assistance recipients (foster children between the ages of 13-21 from CFS). Of these young adults, 49% are male and 51% are female; 15% are teen parents; less than 50% perform at grade level; 30% have learning disabilities; 40% have been involved in juvenile delinquent activities; 95% have been the victim of domestic violence, abuse or neglect; 25% have had substance abuse issues; and only 18% have ever been able to find any form of employment either after school or during the summer (85% of which were minimum wage jobs). Over 70% of these youth are expected to remain on public assistance once they become adults.

With rising caseworker ratios, growing job competition and increasing employer demands for technologically skilled workers, CFS' survey of their clients' needs reveal that more efficient social service support, coupled with relevant technology training, is necessary to assist these individuals obtain and retain productive employment. Urban Technology has devoted the last 12 months to planning, conducting focus groups, training and assessing the needs of nearly 400 members of this population, in partnership with CFS. In the program design and implementation phase, Urban Technology will develop computer-assisted "life skills" training for program participants supported by IDP software for online diagnostic tracking and reporting; provide online linkages for caseworker counseling; technology skills training (in training centers with homework on disk and online, online mentors and peer counselors); and, online job placement assistance with online post-placement support.

VII. Evaluation and Dissemination

Urban Technology will contract with the Education Development Center (EDC) to design and conduct an independent evaluation of this 2 year demonstration project. EDC is a nonprofit that has been conducting research and development projects in education since 1958. EDC's Center for Children and Technology focuses primarily on the uses and effects of technology as an educational and developmental tool. EDC will conduct a formative and summative evaluation of this project. The evaluation will include measured outcomes such as the frequency of caseworker contacts, student attendance, trainee in-class evaluations, caseworker IDP evaluations, change in educational aptitude, demonstrated behavior, improved interpersonal/communication skills, demonstrated acquisition of computer skills, raised career awareness, job skills acquisition, job placement and retention, employer expressed satisfaction, mentor evaluations and the ability to peer counsel. The evaluation will use participant surveys and focus groups. Urban Technology will disseminate the results of its evaluation online and at the CPB Technology Summits, and will seek publication in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, Harvard Business Review and Education Week.

VIII. Reducing Disparities in Access to and Use of the NII

While nearly 38% of the nation's 97 million households own a home computer, computer ownership among the nation's 15 million lowest-income households is under 10%.^{vii} The majority of these low-income households without home computers are inner-city homes.^{viii} Notably, only 5% of all computer owners who are also modem users are black -- underscoring the lack of public access to the wealth of Internet resources.^{ix} The two most significant predictors of home computer ownership are household income and the head of household's educational attainment. This is not a causal phenomenon. It is largely due to early exposure to the technology in the school and workplace.^x As a result, many inner-city residents are increasingly unemployable as employers demand technology skills at all employment levels.^x

In the target inner-city communities of Bedford-Stuyvesant (*see* Narrative, Section I, p.1), and the target end-users (*see* Narrative, Sec. VI, p.5), the barriers to technology access are: 1) the inability to use the technology; 2) the prohibitive financial costs of computer ownership and, 3) a lack of interest in acquiring the technology and technology skills. Urban Technology overcomes these barriers with 1) engaging, employment-relevant training in accessible CBO locations; 2) affordable new and refurbished computers; and, 3) compelling online applications for its program participants, such as a community network that connects individuals to their caseworkers, peer support, business mentors, job placement and applications.

By ensuring that there is a computer in the home of every program participant, Urban Technology will be able to introduce technology and telecommunications to an entire family of new users. And, by manufacturing state-of-the-art PCs and refurbishing donated PCs, Urban Technology will be able to offer affordable technology access to an entire inner-city community.