

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LibertyNet, the regional network for the Philadelphia region, in partnership with neighborhood, city-wide, and regional institutions, will apply telecommunications technologies to the economic and community development priorities identified by residents of the Philadelphia Empowerment Zone (EZ). The Bridge Project will create a network of five community computing centers -- Interactive Community and Career Centers -- in three EZ neighborhoods. The Centers will integrate telecommunications technologies into existing youth and adult education programs; provide access to business information, career support, and health and human services; support EZ planning and implementation; and offer residents opportunities to interact with the city agencies and representatives. Services will be supported through training, on-line subject moderators, and a specially tailored menu of LibertyNet supporting EZ objectives. An innovative on-line component will support project implementation, assessment, and dissemination simultaneously.

NEEDS WE WILL ADDRESS IN THIS PROJECT

Having built the infrastructure for a regional network and established cooperative relationships with businesses, non-profit organizations and county and city agencies, LibertyNet now seeks to create access to its resources and the Internet for low-income resident, non-profit organizations, and small businesses. This project will bring together a variety of resources -- many of them already existing -- to create a service no single institution could provide.

In 1994, residents in the Philadelphia neighborhoods that now make up the EZ defined their visions for their neighborhoods and identified strategies for achieving them. The neighborhoods currently are home to large numbers of people who have not graduated from high school, or even gone beyond 9th grade. The incomes of half the residents are below the poverty level. Unemployment rates are 20% to 25%.

Residents' priorities are economic opportunity and sustainable community development. Residents envision self-sufficient, economically-diverse neighborhoods with community members owning and controlling businesses and providing employment opportunities to other residents. They envision community members as able to support themselves and their families by taking advantage of appropriate training opportunities and acquiring marketable skills.

To achieve their visions, residents have expressed their desires for computer centers to be located in their neighborhoods for on-line business information, career support, life-long learning opportunities, and EZ implementation support. They also want their neighborhoods to be integrated into the regional economy and are willing to work in partnerships across neighborhood, city, and county lines to ensure this happens.

WHY THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PROJECT AND WHY THIS FITS TIAP

This project offers a model for using computer technology to support economic and community development in low-income communities. The proposed model is aided by, but not dependent on, the planning and goal setting that has occurred at the neighborhood level to meet EZ requirements. The model will:

1. Employ the resources and services of a variety of organizations to create and support the access of low-income residents to information that can provide small business development and individual self-sufficiency;
2. Integrate telecommunications technologies with community educational services to: (a) reinforce and enhance the learning of low-income residents; (b) develop their skills using telecommunications technologies; (c) introduce them to opportunities to participate in community life using telecommunications technologies; and (d) connect them with job and business information.

3. Develop a menu on the regional network with the dual purpose of supporting EZ objectives and encouraging local non-profits to provide services on-line in support of EZ objectives;
4. Help empower select local non-profit organizations in providing on-line services; and
5. Enable EZ residents to use telecommunications technologies to participate in and monitor EZ implementation and to encourage dialogue across EZ neighborhoods about the change process.

While focusing on access in EZ neighborhoods, the project will also encompass the Enterprise Zone of Chester County to offer them the benefits of the on-line services that develop around this project. Please see p. 7 for details.

A variety of models are needed to engage low-income people in using telecommunications technologies to improve their lives and communities. The aim of this model is to show that low-income people can participate in and benefit from telecommunications activities when access is integrated with activities they are already involved in and committed to -- such as job training or community development.

LibertyNet requests seed money for fifteen months to demonstrate the value of the Interactive Community and Career Centers. Cost-effectiveness and financial viability are addressed in a variety of ways. The project builds on existing community services and resources; contains plans to develop fundraising capacity; and will benefit from LibertyNet's financial model -- meeting public service needs by meeting commercial demands. Also, because the EZ Strategic Plan calls for the establishment of computer centers, we anticipate EZ resources will help support them after the TIAP grant ends.

HOW WE WILL CARRY OUT THE PROJECT

LibertyNet and the Mayor's Office of Community Services in Philadelphia will work with the institutions below to establish five computer centers -- one of them mobile -- in the three EZ neighborhoods. Except for the mobile center, the institutions will donate the use of computer equipment and facilities for public use for 35 hours per week during times most convenient for youth and adult participation, typically between 2:00 and 9:00 p.m. Centers will each have at least 10 computers with modems and phone lines. Computers will operate on Windows with at least a 14.4 modem using a TCP SLIP connection and Netscape for the browser. They will have at least 4 Mbs of RAM and 200 Mbs of hard drive memory. The mobile center will operate 20 hours a week.

Institutional Sites and Program by Neighborhood

American Street - Philadelphia: The deRodriquez Branch Library of the Free Library of Philadelphia in the southern part of American Street serves a diverse population of Hispanics, African-Americans, and whites and is a center for volunteer tutoring sessions, ESL and GED classes, and career workshops.

West Philadelphia: The Lincoln University Urban Center, on the eastern edge of the Zone neighborhood and established by Lincoln University in 1984, provides job training and undergraduate courses for minority citizens and is hot to many community-based organizations. It operates an Office Skills Training Program for transitionally needed clients, which it will coordinate with this project. The Family Resources Center, a CBO whose mission is to address drug abuse through education, will join Lincoln in running the center, offering educational activities to address the issues of young parents, 14-22 years old.

North Philadelphia: Opportunity Industrial Corporation (OIC), in the center of the zone neighborhood, was founded by Reverend Leon Sullivan over three decades ago. Its mission is to assist the unemployed and underemployed to achieve self-sufficiency and empowerment through education. It will coordinate its

job training services -- such as its Office/Administrative Assistant Skills Training Program, Adult Basic Education program, and dropout prevention program -- with Center activities.

Lincoln University, the oldest of America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), will open its second urban center in the heavily populated western edge of North Philadelphia in the Fall, 1995. It will be modeled on the Urban Center in West Philadelphia described above.

Supporting the centers through outreach will be *A Truck with a Tale*, a mobile library and computer center. This concept came out of the West Philadelphia EZ planning process. WHYY and The Free Library will team up using a versatile 24' WHYY van to provide mobile educational opportunities to children and adults in locations far from centers and at community hubs such as Recreation Department facilities. Comcast Cellular Communications will contribute wireless modems and air time.

Services

The Bridge Project will coordinate existing community education services with the operation of the Centers. The providers of center services will be the host institutions themselves or based in the community. Each center will have an individualized schedule and program of activities that the neighborhood EZ education committee will design with the host institution, center staff, and other educational providers. Core services will be: on-line information resources; adult education classes, i.e., literacy; GED classes; after-school programs; family programs, time for adults, for youths, and for families to use the computers for their own purposes; time for EZ discussions and organizing; and computer training. The centers will be available for individuals to take on-line courses at their expense. Centers will also conduct outreach activities to community organizations, small businesses, and schools.

Center Staffing and Maintenance

A Lab Manager, preferably a resident of the EZ, will manage two centers. The Lab manager will have technical know-how and be adept at training and community organizing. Managers will recruit and train volunteers from the neighborhood and from community service programs at area high schools and universities to offer one-on-one computer assistance. They will also seek the assistance of AmeriCorps members in the Zone in directing residents to and volunteering at the centers. Six on-line volunteer moderators will support effective use of technology to help Zone residents meet their goals. A technician with LibertyNet will help maintain the Centers and a coordinator will support overall project implementation.

Training

The goal of training will be to reach a variety of people at the neighborhood level to ensure that knowledge about telecommunications technologies will spread throughout the community. Training will occur on four levels:

1. Nonprofit Technology Resources (NTR) will train the project coordinator, 2 LibertyNet staff members, Lab Managers, on-line moderators, AmeriCorps volunteers, 25 building staff not directly involved in the project, i.e., librarians, 150 instructors from adult education programs, job training programs, and public schools, and 30 EZ staff. Serving 10 people at a time, training will range from 4 hours to building staff to 8 hours for EZ staff to 24 hours for educational instructors to 4 days for project staff. The basic purpose of all training will be to develop users' skills using LibertyNet and the Internet and to acquaint users with the specific information resources this project targets. More intensive training will focus on the kinds of recourses available on the information highway and how to locate them. Training for instructional staff will focus on carrying out useful instructional projects using LibertyNet and the Internet. The 4 day training will allow staff to plan center activities and focus on the specific uses of telecommunications technologies in low-income communities, using presenters with experience in this area as inspiration and knowledge builders.

2. Workforce 2000 will train 225 residents in the Zone, facilitating outreach and project participation. It will hold 9 workshops, a series of three in each Zone, and two general sessions for all participants. Training will aim to help residents overcome psychological barriers to using technology and demonstrate the uses of on-line resources.
3. The Lab Managers will train 150 individuals from community-based nonprofits and small businesses. They will also conduct regular training sessions for the general public and volunteers.
4. Residents will receive training concurrently with the educational courses they take at the center and through open help sessions offered by lab managers and volunteers.

On-Line Support

Five on-line volunteer moderators will lead discussions for project staff, instructors, and the public to reinforce training and to guide them in using technologies in instruction, finding on-line resources, and working on-line with the EZ neighborhoods to meet project objectives. The moderators will be expert in the following areas: use of computers and information systems in public school education; use of technology in small business development; use of new technology for community organizing; use of technology in adult education; and use of technology and information systems in job training and job seeking. One of the moderators will be provided by the Ben Franklin Business Information Center.

A sixth moderator will lead discussions on the project itself -- what Centers are doing, whether they are successful, why or why not -- and will focus on training, civic participation, EZ involvement, collaboration, educational services, regional cooperation, information services, and policy issues. The purpose will be to gather ideas assist project participants in assessing and improving the project, and allow observers to adapt the project to their own communities. LibertyNet will promote the discussions to government agencies and nonprofit organizations interested in community building, as well as through other TIIAP projects focusing on inner city neighborhoods, such as The National Community Building Network. This discussion will be part of the evaluation process.

Information Content

Empowerment Zones On-line, a menu on LibertyNet for people within the Zone to get and share information in support of Zone objectives. EZ On-line, to be developed by the Institute for the Study of Civic Values, will showcase the vision statements, goals, and projects for each EZ neighborhood and will hypertext objectives to lead people to menus where they can find related services and information -- locally, regionally, nationally. Each objective will have a WWW site with room for reports and comments on progress. The Institute will work with a committee of EZ staff and residents to ensure that the menu reflect community sensibilities and desired services. It will also take advantage of resources such as the TIIAP-funded NCexChange Community Information Empowerment Model in North Carolina.

Bi-State Job Bank, an employment clearinghouse to match Zone residents with new Zone-related positions. The Job Bank will maintain a database of all businesses that can benefit from Zone Employment incentives and will include employee classifications and qualifications.

Bi-State Labor Force Information Network, a data service to ensure that the job training offered to Zone residents matches the needs of employers in the region. Temple University's Cocoran Center is conducting an in-depth labor force analysis to identify the skills residents need to effectively compete in the regional economy and the types of job training and school-to-work strategies that will ensure they acquire those skills. Information will be available in the Fall, 1995.

Community Services Workstation, a multimedia, automated, integrated tool to support a holistic approach to service and care in Philadelphia by coordinating health and human services. 90 organizations are involved in designing the system for providers, agencies, caregivers, and families. The public will be able to access provider information. Client files will be private. Available January, 1996.

Other. The Mayor's Office of Information Services is working to connect various city agencies to the Internet. The centers will guide visitors in using computers to contact city agencies and City Council representatives with their problems and questions. By year's end, the Free Library's automated catalogue of more than 6.5 million holdings will be available through LibertyNet. As funding is secured, the Regional Foundation Center at the library will put a variety of fundraising resources on-line.

Support for Nonprofits

WHYY will promote LibertyNet and the Centers by producing four 30 second spots to air during daytime hours. The spots will explain the resources available on LibertyNet -- particularly those of most interest to low-income residents -- and provide viewers with information for locating public access sites. WHYY will also use its van in partnership with the Free Library as a mobile library and computer center. The executive director of Workforce 2000 will help promote LibertyNet and the Centers on her bi-weekly radio program on workforce issues on WHAT, a commercial radio station serving the African-American population. Participating nonprofit organizations will highlight the program in their newsletters and other outreach materials.

Fundraising

A major responsibility of the project coordinator will be to develop a fundraising plan for the Centers. The coordinator will seek volunteers from Senior Retired Executives to identify ways to generate revenue using Center resources; hold regular meetings to identify and plan for funding opportunities; maintain a bulletin board for posting fundraising ideas; and develop a relationship with EZ community boards. Opportunities for collaborative projects involving all the Centers will be the priority. A key responsibility of LibertyNet's Executive Director will be to represent the Centers' interests to the business community.

Technical Description

LibertyNet, the community network for the region, is developing relationships with a variety of institutions -- city and county governments and nonprofits -- to meet their needs for creating public access to information, thus ensuring regional integration of information. LibertyNet's software systems and hardware design are based on Internet standards, ensuring interoperability with the Internet infrastructure, interactivity for end-users, and continuing adaptability to rapidly evolving Internet technology. The LibertyNet computers are housed at WHYY. The LibertyNet computer system comprises two file servers with the Internet host names "www.libertynet.org" and "philadelphia.libertynet.org." "www" is a Dec 5000 with 24 Mb main memory and 1 Gb disk. Primary software includes a WWW server (NCSA http), a gopher server, and an anonymous FTP server. "philadelphia" is a Dec Alpha APX with 80 Mb main memory and 6 Gb disk. The main tools available are "lynx," a text-based WWW browser, "pine," and e-mail program, and "tin," a Usenet news reader. The First Class software system at WHYY will offer opportunities for conferencing and live interactive chat sessions to project participants, complementing the Internet tools described above. PBS has supplied this system to all stations to assist in local community networking. First Class, which controls access through passwords, will ensure privacy when needed.

LIBERTYNET'S QUALIFICATIONS AND PARTNERS

LibertyNet is a nonprofit corporation owned by the University City Science Center, a nonprofit consortium of 28 academic and scientific organizations located throughout the region between Washington, DC and New York City, and one of the world's largest and most successful research parks and business incubators. It provides office and laboratory space, research management assistance, and business development services to science and technology-based companies.

LibertyNet, serving Philadelphia county and the eleven surrounding counties, including parts of New Jersey and northern Delaware, is establishing itself as the primary provide for public information in the region. The City of Philadelphia is considering LibertyNet as a vehicle for providing public access to government information. William Penn Foundation provided a \$100,000 grant to LibertyNet to support development of public access sites around the region. Various counties and Wilmington, DE have relationships with LibertyNet to use its system to meet their communications needs. Counties with their own systems -- such as Chester Counter -- look to LibertyNet as a major content provider. After one year of operation, LibertyNet is host to 200 information providers in the region.

LibertyNet is based on a unique financial model: it produces revenue by meeting the information needs of small and mid-sized business and economic development organizations and uses the proceeds to meet the on-line needs of the community and low-income public. LibertyNet also receives corporate and foundation grants. Users who have access to the Internet can access LibertyNet's WWW server with no registration or charge. LibertyNet provides paid subscription through partnerships with regional commercial internet providers. Users are given a discounted rate and LibertyNet gets a commission of all fees. LibertyNet is strongly committed to using its public-private partnership to provide access to its resources for low-income residents and will continue and expand its efforts well beyond this grant program.

The **Mayor's Office of Community Services**, the Community Action agency for Philadelphia, provides a variety of direct services -- literacy services, economic development, employment and training, youth development, case management, outreach and referral -- to individuals who are homeless, indigent, or in transition and is the administering agency for the Philadelphia portion of the Empowerment Zone. MOCS brings to this project strong relationships with each of the EZ neighborhoods, as well as the Community Services Workstation project, a national demonstration of on-line collaborative case management. See page 2 for descriptions of partners Lincoln University, Family Resources Center, and Opportunity Industrial Council.

The **Free Library of Philadelphia** serves the information needs of its 750,000 cardholders and all who seek its resources at 53 branches in Philadelphia. Founded in 1891, it recently launched its first major campaign seeking to raise \$50 million in private support. \$10 million of this is earmarked for creating a state-of-the art information technology delivery system to link computers in each branch to each other, to the Library's WAN via the City of Philadelphia's fiber optic rings, and to the Internet via LibertyNet.

The **School District of Philadelphia**, the fifth largest district in the country, is led by Dr. David Hornbeck, a national leader in educational reform, who has laid out a four year plan to drastically change the way educational services are delivered. The centers will train teachers in the Zone and will provide programs for students after school, supporting Hornbeck's plan to integrate technology into the curriculum, as well as to strengthen school-community bonds.

WHYY, Inc. operates TV12 and 91FM, the public broadcasting stations serving southeastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and South Jersey. As a founding member of LibertyNet, WHYY is interested in offering through LibertyNet the on-line interactive information services to be provided by public broadcasting.

The **University of Pennsylvania** is a founding member of LibertyNet. It provides access to the Internet, routine maintenance, including software installation and upgrades, and one Internet file server.

Nonprofit Technology Resources (NTR) provides computer training and consulting services in information and communication management for nonprofit organizations in the Delaware Valley. It has trained over 850 people from over 350 nonprofit organizations. NTR is currently implementing a one year Pennsylvania Telecommunications Education Fund project to provide intensive training to 12

nonprofit organizations -- in employment and in health and human services -- to use LibertyNet to meeting organizational goals, including using e-mail and other Internet tools to support collaborations.

Founded in 1973, the **Institute for the Study of Civic Values** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to applying America's democratic ideals to social problems. It focuses on promoting community by supporting the collaboration of citizens, the private sector, and government. For over a year, the Institute has been working with neighborhood groups to identify how telecommunications technologies can serve them. It has designed **Neighborhoods On-line**, an electronic resource center on LibertyNet for grassroots organizations, and is actively helping nonprofits to get on-line.

Workforce 2000 of the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition is an advocate for human resource development to meet workforce needs and focuses on exposing disadvantaged students and adults to telecommunications technologies. It brings to the project ongoing relationships with schools and CBSs in the Zone; experience designing and implementing training activities; and distance learning resources as the local affiliate for the National Civic League's satellite down-linked community leadership program.

CHESCONet is a county-wide high speed digital backbone network in Chester County offering connectivity to 8 educational institutions, 8 public libraries, and 1 county government. This project will provide needed information resources to the **Greater Coatesville Area Enterprise Zone**, a state funded effort to develop the Coatesville economy and community in suburban Philadelphia. The Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Zone share many of the same goals and have similar information needs. Coatesville's participation will enhance the project's on-line communications. The grant will upgrade the LAN and network the computer lab at the Coatesville Public Library. The library will provide training, as well life skills, literacy, and family learning programs in conjunction with the technology.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THE PROJECT

The end user population will be the 50,000 residents of the EZ. In North Philadelphia and West Philadelphia well over 90% of the residents are African-American. In American Street, the dominant ethnic group is Hispanic. End users will also include residents of the Coatesville Enterprise Zone.

The project will address the needs and skills of end users through training, on-line support, and volunteer support (see pp. 3-4) and will take advantage of the resources of the Playing to Win Network, which has developed guides to teach literacy, numeracy and ESL with computers. The project will address disparities of access by offering activities during hours most convenient to the target population; involving the EZ education committees in the development of Center programs; hiring bilingual staff when appropriate; translating Empowerment Zones On-line into Spanish and putting a Spanish version of the EZ strategic plan on-line; ensuring Centers reflect the culture identities of the users; offering programs in which both parents and children can participate; reaching out to community programs, schools, CBOs, and businesses to encourage use; and operating a mobile van.

The EZ Strategic Plan, which calls for computer centers, was developed through an extensive process in which neighborhood residents defined their needs and strategies for change. 1,128 individuals participated in the planning process. The key principle driving the process was that neighborhood-level planning results in the greatest long-term commitment. The EZ education committees participated in the development of The Bridge Project and approved the final proposal.

This project reflects broad-based support both at the neighborhood and city level. Please see pp. 607 for a full description of partners, all of whom have provided strong letters of commitment. The project also taps in the extensive networks that give vitality and viability to LibertyNet, the EZ project, and the Community Services Workstation project.

HOW WE WILL KNOW IF THE PROJECT IS SUCCESSFUL

The evaluation will aim to strengthen the ability of stakeholders in LibertyNet and the communities it serves to assess project efforts and to reflect on next steps. It will take three forms:

1. An electronic forum on the Internet will document the project at the same time it assesses it and disseminates information about it. Conversations will initially begin with "management" reports and develop into discussions attracting critical responses and calls for more or different evaluative information. Please see page 4 for details. Tom Sherman, an internationally recognized consultant to nonprofit telecommunications projects, will organize and moderate the electronic forum. Sherman recently wrote *Electronic Networking for Non-Profits Groups: A Guide to Getting Started*.
2. A formative evaluation will look at how individuals and organizations use LibertyNet, where and for what purposes, at what cost, with what impact on other organizational elements, and how usage in the Zone compares with usage elsewhere without subsidies and promotional campaigns.
3. A summative evaluation will look at the development of users' communication skills. Through a series of panels, including both formal organizations – school councils, neighborhood associations, development corporation, EZ councils – and individuals organized for periodic conversations, we will track changes in reading and writing skills, search and construction, and the ability to communicate with strangers. We will also look at the ways service agencies cultivate or discourage these competencies. Seymour Mandelbaum will conduct the formative and summative evaluations. He is a faculty member of the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania and author of, among other works, *Community and Communications*, a new book to be published next year, *Open Moral Communities*.

In addition to disseminating information about the project through the electronic forum, project partners will disseminate information through the National Community Building and Playing to Win Networks and to other EZ communities and make themselves and the proposal available to inquiries from all interested parties.