

1. Project Purpose

Problem --Since the late 1990's, Philadelphia has made great strides in striving to end homelessness, particularly in reducing the number of individuals living on City streets. This key indicator of the homelessness crisis in Philadelphia has fallen from 824 in 1997 to 137 in 2004. Going forward, the City of Philadelphia is committed to achieving the goal: No One Will Live on the Streets.

However, this goal will challenge the City of Philadelphia to adopt new strategies. Today, on any given night, approximately 2,500 individuals, including 900 children, live in 29 emergency shelters. Dramatically, family homelessness has increased by 15% in the last two years and by 8% this last year alone. For this ever-increasing number of families entering the emergency shelter services system and for the hard core 137 individuals remaining on the streets, new approaches will be required to address these complex social, physical and emotional problems.

With wages lagging behind the ever-rising cost of housing, all residents are struggling with finding and retaining affordable housing. A worker in Philadelphia would have to earn \$17.15 an hour – over three times the current minimum wage – to afford a two-bedroom unit at the Fair Market Rent of \$892 a month. The 2003 U.S. Conference of Mayors Status Report on Hunger & Homelessness in America's Cities shows 92% of cities identified lack of affordable housing as a cause of homelessness. There seems to be less and less money available to help more and more people in need. Sadly, each year low and moderate-income individuals and families nationally forego more than \$35 billion in tax and public benefits due to complex application procedures. By networking client information, service/financial resources, and the general public the City of Philadelphia will improve the ability of our community as a whole to confront and overcome the challenge of homelessness.

Solution --*To prevent and end chronic homelessness*, the City of Philadelphia proposes to implement Project Log-IN (Information Network). Project Log-IN will support a reduction in homelessness by directly improving our efforts to coordinate and leverage existing resources and mobilizing new financial opportunities for the people and communities served. Through Project Log-IN, a website gateway, the City of Philadelphia and its partners will start a dialogue devoted to the goal of ending homelessness by using innovative technologies. With laptops and broadband technology, outreach and emergency relocation workers will tap into existing client management information systems to determine what resources are already in place. Through Benefit Bank software, individuals in shelter will be able to determine their eligibility and apply on-line for benefits currently foregone due to ignorance of benefit programs or inability to complete application processes successfully.

Log-IN: The Knowledge Management Component -- Log-IN complements the City of Philadelphia's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which will be utilized by more than 30 shelter providers and transitional and permanent supportive housing providers who have U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) McKinney Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program funding. In Philadelphia, this HUD funding amounts to approximately \$20 million annually for housing and supportive services for homeless individuals and families. There are hundreds of Continuum of Care jurisdictions nationally, all required to utilize a management information system to collect data, making this an ideal project for replication. The HMIS system is a fully integrated system that will provide comprehensive

demographic information and permit detailed client tracking. It enables the City of Philadelphia to report required client-level data to HUD and will enhance management-level data that will be used in developing innovative solutions to the issues facing the homeless population. HMIS is funded by HUD and City dollars.

TOP funding will enable a skilled web designer and G-web E-Business Corporation software to develop the portal through which all providers will access HMIS. The website will be accessible to the general public as well as to service providers and homeless clients. The types of information available on the site will include, but are not limited to: 1. Postings about donation opportunities, benefits, and fund-raisers; 2. Information about available grant and contracting opportunities; and 3. Resources for homeless clients, such as employment and training programs, health education programs, or housing counseling. (See Appendix 1 for content samples) Appropriately, this system is designed to be “community-owned.” While the City of Philadelphia has the vision of an informative and interactive technology resource, the content as well as the format of the content will be determined by the users of the system. Whenever requested, the City of Philadelphia envisions adding information related to services, education, employment and housing. Information will be posted as message boards, PDF files, or through links to other websites.

“Community of Practice” (COP) theory underpins the City’s business management approach to the Log-IN Project by forming a web-based community of practice targeted toward ending homelessness. Knowledge management technology, a strategy that supports communities of practice, will be applied through the single website. Knowledge management is the systematic contribution, management, and reuse of information, experience and expertise to achieve a specific business benefit or objective – it delivers the right information to right people at the right time. (See Appendix 2) Support service providers, clients, and the general public will be able to tap directly into a wealth of identified resources, knowledge bases and interactive relationships with mentors and peers devoted to teaching and aiding in creative thinking, participating in problem-solving, and implementing best practices. The portal increases interactions leading to increased access to resources. Whether directly or indirectly involved in serving the homeless, individuals can learn about and evaluate where they will make a difference and dedicate their resources appropriately.

Street Outreach Component -- Providers and City of Philadelphia employees who work with homeless individuals and families will access the HMIS system only through this site. TOP funding will purchase seven (7) laptops to be mounted in street outreach vans and emergency relocation vehicles connecting them to the HMIS. As a result, workers will be able to obtain immediate information about the history of an individual to determine whether they are connected to existing resources. Frequently, an individual on the street has multiple supports in place, e.g. intensive mental health case management or a room in a Safe Haven. Immediate access to data will improve the ability of the outreach workers to serve the homeless, and increase the sense of community and camaraderie between the outreach workers and resources in the community. This component is essential to the creation of the community of practice and is an example of its potential.

Benefits Bank Component -- Through Project Log-IN, case managers and clients will have access to the Solutions for Progress, Inc.’s The Benefits Bank, an internet-based software suite, which helps individuals and families apply for a wide range of tax and public benefits. The

Benefits Bank has been piloted in Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Florida. Discussions are underway with fifteen (15) additional states to establish The Benefits Bank as a national resource for individuals and families overcoming poverty. The Benefits Bank will enable 5 community-based, faith-based, and city-operated shelter sites (during the initial grant period) to offer assistance. With just under 100 clients in Philadelphia, early results from implementation of The Benefits Bank resulted in families accessing benefits valued at \$148,839 (including tax refunds, children's health insurance, food stamps, and weatherization subsidies), or an average of \$1,618 per family. The Benefits Bank is the only software package to process federal and state tax returns, as well as health and social service benefits, workplace benefits, and homeownership counseling applications. It allows users to complete benefit applications, print them on the proper forms and file them electronically (when applicable) and is a counselor-assisted package, which creates a dialogue between the counselor and client in the form of narrative screens, written at a fourth-grade level.

Outcomes -- The City of Philadelphia's goal is to prevent and end chronic homelessness. Our objectives for the Log-IN Project are to:

1. Promote information and increase resource-sharing across the homeless system;
2. Engage the business community and the general public in the problem of homelessness and its solutions;
3. Return individuals encountered on the street to an existing shelter, Safe Haven, or other mental health housing placement; and,
4. Assist homeless individuals and families to apply for and be connected to direct public benefits.

2. Innovation

The Log-IN Project builds a prototype community where a broad range of resources, including information, is effectively brought in, stored, accessed and utilized by the community, in service of the common goal of reducing homelessness. To accomplish this, Log-IN brings together several of the most significant information technology approaches in use today, namely: (1) e-government (2) efforts to bridge the digital divide; (3) Knowledge Management software applications; (4) Community of Practice theory; and (5) online communities. Log-IN synthesizes an online community and an e-government site with the support of knowledge management and community of practice theory. Log-IN also adopts and applies business management practices in a social service environment.

From **e-government** is taken the concept of making official systems and processes more transparent to the public. Using online communities, governments can learn from this project how to structure more effective public participation and true interaction.

With Log-IN, the **Digital Divide** concept is extended to include not just access to the internet as a whole -- which can be overwhelming and confusing for first-time users -- but direct access to resources and information that are relevant to the individual. The Benefits Bank application allows users to work with a case manager, rather than struggle through alone, to directly access financial resources.

The community is supported by a **Knowledge Management** approach that encourages the sharing of resources and information, then documents and organizes them so they are easy to access. With Log-IN, Knowledge Management develops from its current use as a commercial

efficiency service for large enterprises to being suitable for non-profits, loose associations based around a central purpose, or other structures that benefit from effective resource sharing.

Online communities are the inspiration behind Log-IN. These have recently received much deserved attention for their success in effectively connecting people with needed resources and information. (See Appendix 3) To the online community concept, Log-IN applies a Knowledge Management software application and Knowledge Management business consulting practices, especially those centering around the Community of Practice theory. Log-IN and its results would show vendors who offer Knowledge Management and Community of Practice services how they can be implemented outside of a strict enterprise situation.

Pairing the open online community with a government portal engages government and citizens in a dialogue around a common goal. The resulting creation is a community that encourages and values equal participation from any and all interested parties and then has the ability to realize objectives encountered during the dialogue. Those involved in setting up networking structures and online communities can learn how to, based on the Log-IN example, effect substantive changes by embracing participatory interaction with government structures without being subsumed. Another important unique aspect of Log-IN is its structure as a community hub. This allows it the flexibility to pursue and implement solutions to structural impediments to the efficient and effective sharing of information and resources. In fact, doing so is built into the project scope and responsibilities. Log-IN could be replicated in any city that is awarded HUD McKinney funding, where HMIS is functioning, where street outreach teams are working, or where the local government has made a commitment to combat homelessness and needs to marshal the resources of the broader community.

3. Community Involvement

Partnerships -- The City has partnered with six diverse community and faith-based homeless service providers and a technology corporation, as follows. Letters of commitment are found in Appendix 4.

Project H.O.M.E. is a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit organization that is nationally recognized for its ability to empower individuals to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty and to address its structural causes. As the operator of the city's Outreach Coordination Center, Project H.O.M.E. will support the implementation of the laptops in outreach vehicles and the Benefits Bank in their \$3 million Honickman Computer Lab/Comcast Technology Center, located in north Philadelphia. The value of the lab is \$50,000.

Asociacion de Puertorriquenos en Marcha, Inc., a community-based organization with bilingual shelter and transitional housing services (34 beds), will utilize Log-IN and the Benefits Bank at their community-based computer lab.

Lutheran Settlement House provides 95 shelter beds for homeless families and a range of other community services. They will contribute 20% of a Senior Technology Administrator's time to support Log-IN and the Benefits Bank at their computer lab.

Mt. Airy Bethesda Inc. is the secular arm of the Mt. Airy Church of God in Christ. Mt. Airy operates Stenton Family Manor, a city-owned family shelter with 265 beds. They will utilize Log-IN and Benefits Bank at the shelter lab onsite.

Resources for Human Development (RHD) provides a range of community services, but for purposes of this project will utilize Log-IN and the Benefits Bank at Woodstock Family Shelter, which is city-owned but operated by RHD.

SELF, Inc. utilizes a peer counseling approach in its street outreach efforts and in the operation of 200 shelter beds for men and 47 beds for women. They will utilize the laptops in street

outreach and contribute personnel to Log-IN.

Gweb e-Business Company has donated the knowledge management software that will be the central hub of the Log-IN Project. Supporters include **Bethesda Project**, which operates Our Brother's Place, a low-demand shelter for single men; and **Horizon House**, which operates transitional housing for homeless individuals and families and comprises one of the street outreach teams that will utilize the laptops. In addition, **Temple University** has expressed interest in the performing an evaluation of the Log-IN Project.

Support for End Users -- End users include the general public, service providers, and clients. Each group has different skills and working conditions. The gateway website will be simple, easy-to-navigate, and user-friendly to meet the needs and skills of a wide range of individuals. Outreach and relocation workers are mobile – mounted laptops in their vans will improve their working conditions considerably. The Benefits Bank software is constructed to be used by a case manager or volunteer and client together, using the skills and knowledge of each to access benefits to which the client is entitled. These interactions will take place in computer labs in shelter or in the community. In the HMIS system, the City of Philadelphia has built an extensive system of support for end users, including training and technical assistance. To enhance this core software system and ensure its extension to city residents and clients, the City is requesting funding for a technician, a web designer, a software consultant, and 14 workshops.

Stakeholder Involvement – The Log-IN Project grew out of the efforts of a VISTA volunteer working at the City's Office of Emergency Shelter and Services whose role was to develop relationships with providers to determine their resource needs, and then go about developing those resources. Since last fall, our VISTA worker has conducted more than 40 informal interviews with community and shelter providers. Due to her conversations and her vision, what was originally envisioned as a Resource Manual has been transformed into this proposed community.

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) tracks client progress through the homeless continuum of care. In development and implementing this tracking system, the City of Philadelphia has held and continues to hold an extensive and impressive array meetings and training sessions. The City has made a concerted effort to share its approach to technology with the almost 100 providers under contract, making three presentations at Quarterly Provider meetings and three presentations to the union leadership in 2003, conducting 17 joint application design sessions with end users throughout the system, and hosting 22 customized HMIS review sessions with internal and external end users. More than 30 organizations participated. In all of these sessions, the City has emphasized the way that technology can improve our effectiveness.

Demonstrating Sustained Commitment --With regard to long-term sustainability, the City of Philadelphia envisions distinct strategies for the three components. With regard to the website, the City is considering funding its ongoing management through an independent non-profit that is run by group of participants, perhaps under the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness, with an independent budget. At a minimum, the City will raise funds for the site through fundraising events, advertising fees on the website, or if necessary, membership fees. The City envisions funding the ongoing connectivity needs of the laptops used by the outreach and relocation workers through its federal and state funding sources.

4. Evaluation

During and following the first year of the grant, the City of Philadelphia will formally evaluate Project Log-IN. Continuous evaluation will begin in month 6 and continue throughout the grant

period through the use of bi-annual surveys for each program. The results of the formal evaluation will be used continuously to improve quality and to the program model for replication.

The qualitative measures will focus on and then help us eliminate obstacles and problems associated with implementation. The quantitative measures will determine the number of individuals and families whose service coordination or financial circumstances improved as a result of the benefits technology implemented. As a result of technology including the COP portal, the Benefits Bank, and other portable/wireless tools, the City of Philadelphia will measure address the following research questions:

1. Was the program implemented as designed? (We know that many programs fail to have an intended effect because the implementation differs from the design.)
2. What successes and challenges arose during the implementation process? How were problems addressed? (As the City of Philadelphia considers Project Log-IN an important national model for other cities seeking to end rather than manage homelessness, this question is especially important.)
3. Who was served by Project Log-IN? Which clients used all three components? (We know that some programs fail because they do not reach their intended audience -- or are not truly implemented.)
4. Did the clients, case managers and social workers, and members of the general public change their behaviors as a result of "logging in"?

5. Project Feasibility

Technical Approach -- This system connects a central information hub with existing resources, especially the HMIS, and then allows appropriate access. One server will run two applications, a Lotus based Knowledge Management application and a Linux based Benefit Bank application. Gweb e-Business Company offers a software application coupled with business management consulting. Too many ambitious information technology applications have failed because the social aspects were not dealt with and participants did not participate fully. Access to professional business consulting services specializing in Knowledge Management and creating Communities of Practice is invaluable to ensuring the success of the program. We favor the Benefits Bank brand application over other similar applications from MicroMax and other because although the prices were comparable, Benefits Bank was designed to utilize a counselor or social worker to help clients with use.

Maintenance and future upgrades of the system are based on dual responsibility. The computer labs donating access are responsible for their own maintenance and upgrades; any equipment and software belonging to Log-IN will be maintained by the Log-IN Network Technician and funded as part of Log-IN's budget. An important aspect of this program is its ability to adopt other programs or actions that contribute to the creation of a community where resources are shared and leveraged toward ending homelessness. We can add new resources to be connected to through the program because all resources are accessed through a central web based site. In addition, Log-IN can help fund and implement other programs that need special infrastructure.

Applicant Qualifications --The City of Philadelphia's Adult Services/Office of Emergency Shelter and Services (OESS), which will oversee the project, has as its mission assisting

individuals and families to move toward independent living and self-sufficiency. Adult Services/OESS is responsible for developing and implementing policy around homelessness, including managing the HUD McKinney Continuum of Care planning process. With a budget of approximately \$56 million a year, Adult Services/OESS serves approximately 15,000 individuals a year in emergency shelter, manages nearly 3,000 units of transitional housing, and is responsible for all citywide emergency relocation efforts. In 2003, Philadelphia was one of 7 cities identified by HUD as having best practices in the area of reducing chronic street homelessness, meeting all 11 key elements of success identified by the Urban Institute and Walter R. MacDonald and Associates in their report, "Strategies for Reducing Chronic Homelessness." In April, Philadelphia was awarded the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty's (NLCHP) Solutions through Alternative Remedies (STAR) Award, which honors programs and communities throughout the country that are working to address the root causes of homelessness.

The project team members and their qualifications are as follows. The City intends to hire a Project Manager and Network Technician (see Appendix 5 for job descriptions).

Marcella Maguire, PhD., Director, Chronic Homeless Initiative: Oversees street outreach teams, has PhD in Community/Clinical Psychology, and has extensive experience with street outreach and working with homeless individuals.

Cynthia Ferguson, Director of The Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs is the former Executive Director of Community Women's Education Project (CWEP) and has 18 years of non-profit management experience.

Roberta Sharpe, MSW, Director of Strategic Planning & Resource Development, City of Philadelphia: More than ten years experience in program development, project management, and resource development.

Judy Barnett, Grants Administrator, Office of Emergency Shelter and Services: More than twenty years experience in grant management and reporting.

Matt Berg, Information Technology Manager, Office of Emergency Shelter and Services: More than 14 years experience in public information technology; created pilot version of city's Internet site; transformed agency's data communications infrastructure.

Project Implementation and Completion --Please see Implementation Timeline included in Appendix 6.

Privacy and Security --The primary need for privacy and security is for the client-level data found in the HMIS and information entered by clients in the Benefits Bank. The HMIS provides multiple security levels based on the end users' login identification (ID), which is, in turn, related to the end users' Job Role(s). Each ID is password-protected. The system identifies the time, date, and user ID with every transaction. Access to the various functions of the HMIS is available to end users on the basis of the Job Role(s) assigned to the individual users and is limited to only those functions in the HMIS that are performed by that Job Role. The City has developed specific end-user responsibilities that are agreed to by each worker prior to access.

Sustainability -- Log-IN hopes and expects to continue serving the homeless by ensuring resources are utilized, shared and distributed in the most effective way possible as long as there continue to be homeless to serve. After the term of the grant, the intention is for Log-IN to operate as a self-sustaining, independent non-profit agency. This agency would be directed by the participants and would continue to be staffed by a full-time administrator and a part-time

Network Technician. These costs as well as operating costs and the licensing fees for the Benefit Bank are estimated to run about 150,000 a year. It is reasonable to expect that the organization would be able to raise at least this amount through bi-annual fundraising events, web-site advertising fees and membership fees.

Dissemination --The City of Philadelphia regularly welcomes visitors to see the work we have done in reducing the street population, and will continue to provide opportunities for colleagues in other cities to see the Log-IN Project. Our Deputy Managing Director for Special Needs Housing travels frequently to other cities to tell our story in support of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' as they share the Bush Administration's goal to end chronic homelessness. We will distribute information about how to replicate Log-IN at industry-specific conferences, such as the annual National Alliance to End Homelessness conference, and will complete and distribute a paper detailing model procedures and lessons learned. Finally, we will submit the project for awards, such as the Government Solutions Center Pioneer Awards and the Innovations in American Government Awards, and participate in government and technology gatherings such as the Annual Government Solutions Forum and the E-Government for All Conference.