

**TIIAP FY 1999**  
**Project Narrative**

John C. Ford Program, Inc.

Grant # 48-60-99031  
Education, Culture, and Lifelong Learning  
Dallas, Texas

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The John C. Ford Program, a small 501(c)(3) community based organization, will initiate a Network of 6 **Inner-City Telecommunications Centers (ICTC)** in the 200 square mile Southern Sector of Dallas, Texas. This cross-application Project primarily addresses the *Education Application Area*, by bringing Low-Moderate Income residents into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through direct access to state-of-the-art, inter-active technology, coupled with a proven set of business education and job training programs pioneered by the Ford Program in the target communities.

### **Project goals:**

1. to connect urban residents in a 200 square mile distressed area with Community Colleges and Universities;
2. to provide neighborhood based GED, ESL, SAT, and Upward Mobility Job Training and Employment Opportunities; and
3. to link microentrepreneurs to Chambers, Business Assistance Centers, and other economic revitalization efforts.

### **Project objectives:**

- 1) to establish a network of 6 ICTC's, serving an area of more than 460,000 residents in Dallas' Southern Sector;
- 2) to train 400 at-risk youth, low-income and welfare-to-work residents of the target area during the first year, and 850-1000 residents each year thereafter;
- 3) to increase the number of high school graduates and college enrollees in the target area;
- 4) to establish neighborhood based employment centers at the ICTC's;
- 5) to establish intra-neighborhood connectivity with the ICTC's technology.

The ICTC network will feature intranet and Internet capabilities, with interactive videoconferencing, and Internet 2, once available. Partnership agreements exist with: small community based organizations, churches, community colleges, and universities. Matching funds totaling \$506,818.46 are committed to this Project.

## NARRATIVE: INNER CITY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTERS

### Introduction

The John C. Ford Program, a small 501(c)(3) community based organization, proposes to initiate a Network of 6 **Inner-City Telecommunications Centers (ICTC)** in the 200 square mile Southern Sector of Dallas, Texas. This cross-application Project primarily addresses the *Education Application Area*, by bringing Low-Moderate Income residents into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through direct access to state-of-the-art, interactive communications technology, coupled with a proven set of economic development, education, and job training programs pioneered by the Ford Program in the target communities.

### **Project Goals:**

1. to connect urban residents in a 200 square mile distressed area with Community Colleges and Universities;
2. to provide young and adult students with neighborhood based GED, ESL, SAT, and Upward Mobility Job Training and Employment Opportunities; and
3. to link small business owners to Chambers of Commerce, Business Assistance Centers, and other economic revitalization efforts.

### **Project Objectives:**

- 1) to establish, within 18 months, a network of 6 ICTC's, *located or based at Inner-City CDCs and Community Centers*, serving an area of more than 460,000 residents in the Southern Sector;
- 2) to train 400 technologically underserved at-risk youth, low-income and welfare-to-work residents of the target area in the first project year, and 850-1000 residents each year thereafter;
- 3) to increase the number of both high school graduates and college enrollees by 200 the first year, and 500-800 each year thereafter in the target area;
- 4) to establish neighborhood based Employment Centers at 3 ICTC's, by June 2001;
- 5) to establish inter-community and intra-neighborhood connectivity through ICTC's technology, to unify the target communities in the Southern Sector and disseminate vital public health, safety, and municipal information.

The ICTC network will feature intranet and Internet capabilities, with interactive video-conferencing, and web-casting. With minor upgrades, the network would be Internet 2 capable, once access is publicly available.

Partnership Agreements have been established with the 6 ICTC sites: The Dallas Urban League; Santa Clara Church at Calumet; members of the East Dallas Weed & Seed Program; Colonia Community Learning Center; Southern Hills Church of Christ; and Holy Cross Church. Additionally, the Ford Program has entered into Agreements with Mountain View and Eastfield Community Colleges, and with the University of Texas at Dallas School of Management. Matching funds from Ford and its Partners totalling \$471,818.46 are committed to this Project.

## **Project Definition**

**Defining Specific Need/Problem:** In the report, “Reinvesting in Dallas’ Southern Sector” conducted by McKinsey and Company in late 1997 for the Dallas Together Forum and Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce, the area was described as, “[having] a stable [but] underutilized workforce, with nearly 35% of the population neither employed nor actively seeking work. Within these communities and neighborhoods are human needs and social challenges, at least in part, attributable to an inadequate economic infrastructure. Thus, such a disparity yields higher rates of unemployment, poverty, school drop outs, and a host of negative indicators.”

Currently, 41% of the population 25 and over do not have a high school diploma. Only 14% of Southern Sector residents have a college degree, compared to 32% for the City as a whole. Per capita income is \$11,358, and 23% of all households are below the poverty level, compared to 15% for the city.

While as a whole the Southern Sector displays a diverse ethnic population, the neighborhoods targeted through this proposal have populations that are predominately minority. For instance, South Dallas is 90.5% African American; West Dallas is 56% Hispanic and 42% African American; South Oak Cliff is 14.5% White, 16.1% Hispanic, and 68.9% African American.

The National Council of La Raza, in a study issued earlier this year, “Latino Education: Status and Prospects,” reported that while 74.9% of White children in grades 1-6 use computers at school, for African American and Hispanic students, the figures are 56.6% and 57.8% respectively. This disparity is even larger when measuring computer use at home: 30.5% of White students have such access, compared to 8.7% of African Americans and 7.1% of Hispanic students.

As computer literacy increasingly becomes a necessity for school and meaningful employment, ethnic minority children are losing prospects for educational opportunities and, eventually, economic self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, public schools, nonprofit agencies, and churches in the community often depend on donated (used) equipment, which currently includes many 386 and 486 systems incapable of upgrades to allow for CD ROM, Internet, or other interactive advanced technologies.

The ICTC Project will begin addressing these disparities in the Southern Sector of Dallas through an innovative approach that combines neighborhood based inter-active technology with educational and employment programming.

**Network Technology Solutions:** The 6-site ICTC network will feature interactive and multi-casting technology that will allow these centers to conduct webcasting and videoconferencing via ISDN lines on an interactive basis, both among themselves (intranet), and with Community Colleges, Universities and large Corporations in the region (internet). Six sites in low income neighborhoods of the Southern Sector will each have 20 desktops with PC cameras, an ISDN line, laser printer and deskjet printer, along with Windows NT 4.0 and Microsoft Office 97 Small

Business Edition software licenses, and the routers, switches, hubs, and hardware to wire the stations to the network. See diagram in **Appendix A**. The administrative offices of the Ford Program will house the Server Operations Center (SOC), which will host a Webserver and two servers (for redundancy). The SOC will be connected with the other 5 intranet sites, and will have an Internet ISDN lease line for Internet access. The SOC will also have the 20 station configuration of the other 5 sites, as well as a video camera and VCR with VHSC converter. See diagram in **Appendix B**.

The new technology will allow students attending the ICTC sites to be trained by instructors from Mountain View College and Eastfield College, and the University of Texas at Dallas School of Management (UTD), as well as volunteer trainers associated with the Ford Program. The UTD instructors will provide math and reading instruction via distance learning, as well as PSAT/SAT (college entrance exams) instruction. The Community Colleges will provide English as a Second Language (ESL), GED (high school equivalency), and Welfare to Work classes via distance learning.

The Ford Program will bring its comprehensive continuum of education and employment training services to the ICTC Project. This includes the "Core" programs of Intake and Assessment, Case Management, Basic Life Skills Training, Computer Keyboard and Software Training, Customer Service and Sales Training, Resume Preparation, Job Placement, and 5-Year Follow Up. Intermediate programs include Hospitality Training, Computer Repair Training, Cable Repair Training, Sales and Managerial Skills, and Telemarketing Skills. By 2001, the Ford Program will offer Outsourced Work opportunities from corporations, transforming ICTC's into employment bases within the target area.

**Measurable Project Outcomes:** Anticipated outcomes for the ICTC neighborhoods:

- Increase the number of high school graduates and college enrollees by 200 the first year, and 400 the second year.
- Increase the number of Low-Moderate Income residents who obtain upward-mobility jobs by 400 the first year, and 850-1000 the second year.
- Intra-Neighborhood Connectivity, through the ICTC's technology, of 4-6 new community-based organizations or schools within respective neighborhoods of the largest area each year.
- Increase the number of certified ESL Trainers to 10 the first year, and 25 each year thereafter.
- Increase the number of GED graduates by at least 10% each year.
- Conduct at least 3 town meetings each year through ICTC interactive technology, connecting neighborhoods throughout the target area, with one another and with interstate videoconferences, to discuss public safety, health or other issues of significance.

## **Evaluation**

### **Evaluation Questions:**

1. *Can community based education and economic development programs offered in inner-city neighborhoods, through webcasting and video-conferencing modalities, achieve success rates equivalent to or better than current instruction/training methods?*

Direct comparisons can be made to current community college computer lab training and GED and ESL classes offered in other traditional settings, which have seen reduced enrollment in recent years.

2. *Will deployment of the new technologies at ICTC neighborhood sites reduce the barrier to technology?*

End users in the centers will be surveyed, at Intake and Assessment and upon graduation from the ICTC, to determine their degree of computer literacy/experience.

3. *Will a comprehensive continuum of education, support, and employment training services result in improved educational achievement and/or business/employment success?*

Case Management and 5-Year Follow Up Services will track markers of success for all end users.

**Evaluation Strategy:** *Process Evaluation* measures will be made for the start-up of the 6 ICTC sites, including:

- Quarterly review of status of Objectives, Outcome Measures, Implementation Plan and quarterly report from project Evaluator, by the Cooperative established among the Partners in this Project.
- Monthly finance and operations reports to the Ford Program Board of Directors.
- Quarterly Newsletter documenting the number of new corporate or educational partnerships, in-kind services donated, pro bono hours of professional service, and employment opportunities/placements made available through the sites. Newsletter posted on website developed specific to the ICTC.
- Annual Team Performance Survey of Project Partners. See survey in **Appendix D**.

**Outcome Measures:** In FY98, Ford documented over \$550,000 donated professional services from corporate, legal and business volunteers teaching or mentoring in various business development and training programs across the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex. The ICTC Project will track such donations for each Southern Sector site. The new technology will make it easier for more corporate volunteers to provide instruction through distance learning.

The Ford Program's 5-Year Follow Up Services reflect that from 1997-to-date: 1) 92% of Small Business Owner Graduates are still in business; 2) 85% of Small Business Owner Graduates have increased their number of employees. Similar impact measures will be developed for each ICTC. With state-of-the art technology and training, high school graduates and college enrollees should *double* in number at targeted schools, while the number of urban residents trained for, and placed in upward-mobility careers should *increase fivefold*.

At the ICTC sites, Case Management Services, anchored by the Intake and Assessment Process, and continued through the 5-Year Follow Up, will measure outcomes for students in terms of

ESL,GED, and SAT class completion and grades. High school graduation rates for targeted at-risk youth will be compared to their cohorts in non-targeted neighborhood public schools, as well as enrollment rates in community colleges and/or 4-year universities. Adult participant outcomes will be measured in terms of job placements, business start-ups, income earned through outsourced work, reduction in welfare utilization, and changes in annual income.

**Data Collection:** Standardized Intake and Assessment Forms will be completed for each enrollee, containing demographic and contact information, academic/employment status, family income levels, and previous training/employment history. Counselors at the community colleges will review information with enrollees. Together, they will develop an individualized plan of services and opportunities documented in a confidential file stored in locked file cabinets at each site. See copy of Skills Inventory in **Appendix E**. Case management counseling will be offered at each site while enrollees are in training. Upon graduation, case management contacts will be made monthly for the first 6 months, and then semi-annually. Data on the corporate partnerships, volunteer hours, mentors, and outsourced contracts will be kept at the Ford Program

**Data Analysis:** the data forms, case files and pertinent documents will be reviewed monthly by the Evaluator contracted by the Ford Program for the ICTC Project. The Evaluator will issue a compiled report on a quarterly basis to the Board of Directors of the Ford Program. See copy of Evaluation Plan in **Appendix F**.

**Evaluator:** Mr. Jesus A. Sandoval holds the Masters degree in Social Work, with specialization in Administration and Planning of Human Services. His nearly 20 years of professional experience included the design and implementation of a similar project, the Youth Impact Centers, under a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Mr. Sandoval is available to bid in the competitive process for the evaluator contract. His resume is in **Appendix G**. Technical consultation on the effectiveness of the network technology has been offered on an in-kind basis by UTD School of Management, Communication & Learning Center.

**Resources for Evaluation:** A \$30,000 Evaluator contract is set aside in the project budget to support evaluation and monitoring activities. A Consultant from UTD's Communications & Learning Center is committed to the project with estimated in-kind value of \$20,000.

### **Significance**

**Innovative Aspects of ICTC:** A *4-Way Distance Learning Nexus* will be built through the new application of this technology, which will: 1) Link Dallas' entire Southern Sector through telecommunications technology not currently accessible to low income neighborhoods; 2) Link advanced technology with Basic and Intermediary Education training in Reading, Math & Science, for at-risk youth, welfare-to-work, and low-income residents of Southern Sector; 3) Link underserved urban youth from High Schools-to Community Colleges-to Universities, through distance learning equipment; and 4) Link Corporate America to urban residents from Instruction-to-Outsourced Work-to-Job and Career Placement.

Corporate America provides volunteers to plan and teach Business Education and Job Career Development programs, then hires urban residents educated and trained at the centers.

The ICTC's become self-sustaining through outsourced work from corporations and businesses, and are "owned" by the neighborhood and the host community based agency. Ford furnishes the equipment and software, along with the core program design, but the operations at each site are tailored to the needs and assets of the end-users and are flavored by the volunteers and corporate sponsors that align themselves with each site.

**ICTC as a Model Project:** the 4-Way Distance Learning Nexus described above can be applied in many urban settings across the country. The technology is available, and the model lends itself to adaptation by agencies currently engaged in employment training and economic development activities in low-income communities. The heart of the Project is the willingness of corporations and businesses to provide mentors, trainers, business expertise, contracts for outsourced work—and ultimately—employment opportunities for individuals who otherwise would be considered marginal to their labor force or business circles. Traditional education and employment programs often lack this direct connection to the business world, and as it is stated in the McKinsey Report, *"Effective job training requires real employment opportunities, and businesses will need to be active participants in workforce development programs to ensure the necessary relevance, rigor, and responsiveness."* The Ford Program is based on this premise, and has modeled the ICTC Project to reflect an amplified, advanced technology-enhanced version of this approach. The building blocks can be found in any community interested in building the capacity of its least utilized human resources.

### **Project Feasibility**

**Technical Approach:** Please refer to diagrams found in **Appendices A and B**. The Server Operations Center (SOC) will be housed at the Ford administrative offices. Six community sites, each sponsored by a nonprofit community agency, will contain 20 desktop computers, each with PC cameras. The cameras at each station will allow the user to be capable of interacting via IPTV video with classmates or instructors at any of the other centers of off-site. Instructors will normally be based at the SOC, where the main video camera will record the class for IPTV broadcast and for storage in the Ford videolibrary. The Distance Learning format will enable individualized instruction (asynchronous) at each of the ICTC sites. The instruction can be taught in interactive format, with instructors able to see students (and vice versa) on station monitors. Each of the colleges and UTD also have computer labs that can be accessed via the Internet an ISDN lines. Demonstrations can be scheduled with other TIIAP grantees. Chat rooms, on an intra-and internet basis will be available for students to interact with each other, or with instructors or mentors based at corporations or the colleges. Email accounts will be established for each ICTC, with temporary accounts for students while they are enrolled.

**Technical Alternatives and Scalability:** Initially, videoconferencing technology was considered for the ICTC project, but pro bono consultation with engineers from a local technology provider, indicated that IPTV could also provide superior broadcast quality. The engineers indicated that

IPTV webcasting, through the proposed configuration, would also be easily upgradeable to Internet 2 connectivity, once that avenue is available to the general public, with only minor equipment additions. New sites can be added (and interest has already been expressed) by adding groups of workstations connected via T1 line and properly configured to the network. The approximate start up cost per 20 station site is \$60,000. The SOC's two IPTV servers and Web server are limited only by the ability of project staff to schedule broadcasts.

**Applicant Qualifications:** The Ford Program is *dedicated to enhancing the knowledge and economic self-sufficiency of low-to-moderate income persons in urban areas*. It has a 3 year track record of providing innovative employment and training services throughout the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, utilizing the volunteer services of over 400 experts and trainers from major businesses, banks, law and accounting firms. In August 1998, the United States Treasury Dept. recognized the Ford Program as one of three outstanding private sector organizations in the U.S. serving small business owners in urban areas. The regional HUD office nominated Ford for the national "Best Practices Award" in recognition of its work at public housing units. Since December of 1996, 400 urban area entrepreneurs have been trained through Ford programs. In 1998, a new program Targeting at-risk youth trained 33 youth, and another new initiative projects to train 120-150 welfare recipients and low-to-moderate income residents through this Region's first Parent-At Risk Youth Training Academy.

**Applicant Team/Project Personnel:** Currently Ford has a full-time Executive Director, Ms. Jacqueline Varma, and contract services of an Administrative Assistant. Ms. Varma's resume is attached in **Appendix H**. The roster of the ICTC Partners from the community is found in **Appendix I**. The Ford Program also has an extensive AmeriCorp/VISTA grant; many of these volunteers will be utilized for Intake and Assessment and the Follow-Up in this Project. The Ford Program also has a Coalition Base of more than 400 corporate and professionals who volunteer to teach and mentor in programs.

**Project Partners:** Each of the Program Partners on the attached roster has identified: additional ICTC sites; the means to implementation – including prospective funding sources, contact resources for outsourced work, and pro bono instructors. Letters of Support and Agreements from the Partners are found in **Appendix J**.

**Budget, Implementation Schedule, Timeline:** The budget for this Project reflects substantial in-kind donations of services and resources by the Partners. Instruction will be conducted via pro bono instructors recruited from the business community. The bulk of TIIAP funds will be used for equipment and telecommunication leases, the addition of a Technology Project Coordinator, and Evaluation services. A copy of the Implementation Schedule with Timelines is found in **Appendix K**.

**Sustainability:** One of the end products for each site will be to develop contracts for outsourced work from corporations and businesses, to be completed by site participants. The Centers could also train employees for businesses under contract. Initial estimates of the revenues generated by these types of activities are found in the Profit and Loss Statement found in **Appendix L**. The P&L indicates that, with state-of-the art technology and training, the sites can become self-

sustaining, and generate profits for enhancement/expansion of services.

### **Community Involvement**

**Partnerships and Support from the Community:** the Dallas Chief of Police and Assistant Chiefs at each Police Subdivision are providing complete lists of all schools, subsidized apartments, churches, YMCA's, and Recreation Centers in a 5-mile radius of each ICTC site. The City of Dallas' Economic Development Dept. works closely with The Ford Program. Community Colleges will provide the critical components of distance learning and on-site instructors for GED and ESL instruction, and distance learning curriculum for GED and ESL Training and Computer Repair Training. The UTD School of Management will provide Distance Learning Instructors and curricula for tutoring in Math and Science, to improve SAT scores of at-risk youth in public schools in the Southern Sector, as well as college enrollment of low-income and welfare to work residents. Dallas Urban League, Santa Clara Church at Calumet, and Holy Cross Church are prepared to provide computer equipment and/or space, outreach, recruitment, and staff support for site management. The ICTC Partners have been meeting regularly since August of 1998 to plan the concept and develop the resources to fund it. **All equipment will be exclusively used for non-sectarian purposes.**

**Support for End Users:** At-risk youth will receive Intake and Assessment, Distance Learning and on-site instruction in math and science at least 4 hours per week. Computer repair and/or Cable Repair, as well as instruction in Retailing, Sales, Hospitality and Customer Service will also be offered. Case Management counseling will be provided during training, and VISTA volunteers will provide Follow-Up contacts and documentation. Welfare-to-Work and low-income residents will be offered a similar set of services, *plus* Remedial Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic Assistance, and Job Placement. All graduates will receive 5-Year Follow Up, which includes On-Site Co-Worker (Job) Mentors, Small Business and corporate Mentors, Weekly Case Management Contacts plus Monthly Counseling Sessions during the first 6 months after Job Placement.

**Privacy:** confidential case files will be kept on each site enrollee, in locked file cabinets. Site staff and volunteers will be oriented to case management privacy and confidentiality protocols.

### **Reducing Disparities**

**Documentation of Disparities:** see "Defining Specific Need/Problem" section above. The data compile through asset surveys, Intake and Assessment, and Case Management will be used to document the disparities of end users associated with the ICTC sites.

**Strategies for overcoming barriers:** locating Ford programs in distressed neighborhoods and bringing in the support from the Project Partners and corporate volunteers through distance learning are the principal strategies for reducing barriers to technology, education, and employment opportunities.

## **Documentation and Dissemination**

**Documentation and Dissemination Plan:** In addition to Evaluation methods, outlined above, the ICTC Project will develop a new interactive website for the Project to post findings, progress reports and newsletter items. Mountain View and Eastfield Community Colleges will also make their websites available for ICTC postings, as will UTD, and the Community Council of Greater Dallas. Newsletters will be mailed to organizations and community leaders on a quarterly basis. Media releases will be scheduled at the opening of each site. Articles will be prepared for the national publication of the VISTA program as well.