The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Status:
Laureate

Year:
2013

Organization Name:
Technology Works!

Organization URL:
www.theamaracenter.com

Project Name:
Public Computer Center

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:
Mobile Access

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

Struggling with rates of poverty, unemployment, high-school dropouts, disability, and persons lacking health care more acute than the national averages, Rabun County, Georgia, benefits greatly from the kind of enhanced services made possible by high-speed broadband access. The county's challenging terrain makes it difficult to deploy broadband services to many households and businesses. Professional Resources Management of Rabun (Mountain Lakes Medical Center) proposed to deploy two public computer centers in Rabun County to improve workforce development, education, and health care services. Two Public Computer Centers were opened comprising a total of 30 workstations and equipped with teleconferencing capabilities. Technology Works! @ Rabun

Employment Center is a partnership with Mountain Lakes Medical Center, the Georgia Department of Labor, North Georgia Technical College and the Development Authority of Rabun County. This center is designed to provide technology, education and employment opportunities. Technology Works! @ The Amara Center located on the campus of Mountain Lakes Medical Center offers classes in health education to the public, while launching a telehealth initiative via videoconferencing to allow health care providers to interact and share information with peers statewide. The two Public Computer Centers increased public access to computers, Internet and Wireless services for a total of 100 hours per week. In addition Basic Computer classes and other introductory computer skills classes are offered free of charge.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

Technology Works! @ Rabun Employment Center opened in March 2012 followed by Technology Works! @ The Amara Center in July 2012. Technology Works! @ The Amara Center also houses a 143 seat lecture theatre and a classroom. Each lab and classroom is equipped with teleconferencing equipment which is available for the public's use.

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

Yes.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

"I am very thankful for Technology Works! I have a young family of six and had been unemployed and looking for a position for almost a year, when I found out about Technology Works. Due to their excellent staff, facility and services, I was able to apply for multiple positions and thankfully ended up obtaining an Executive Level Position with the Federal Government. Lisa Prickett and Alex were fantastic and were extremely helpful in walking me through the process of applying for positions. The facility and computers were amazing and were so helpful, as I had no access to Internet, printers, faxes, or copy machines. Technology Works! has given me and my family a new lease on life and an ability to provide for our family again. We are so thankful for these services and in our opinion are vital to the community with the economy in its current state and so

many people without jobs!" stated Ken Atkins, a grateful user of Technology Works! Attached is a video clip with Ken's testimony regarding the use of the public computer center and how it assisted him in finding employment: https://cloud.ensemblevideo.com/ensemble/app/sites/index.aspx?destinationID=br37_2IBN0ibIT7LRPRQWg&contentID=J4v7TwNTLUmrXDBKElGZ9Q&pageIndex=1&pageSize=10

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

Technology Works! is a best practice which could be duplicated in many areas. The key to success is collaboration between agencies and government entities for the betterment of the community in which they live. Mountain Lakes Medical Center obtained a BTOP grant and worked with the Rabun County Development Authority, North Georgia Technical College and the Georgia Department of Labor to create a facility that encourages education and employment opportunities and makes those resources easily available to this North Georgia mountain community. By housing these entities in one location our citizens are able to take advantage of all that is offered. Technology Works!@ Rabun Employment Center-Public Computer Center is staffed for 50 hours per week allowing clients to receive the help they may need while using the computer lab for checking email, researching employment opportunities, and general computer use. In addition, our second location, Technology Works! @ The Amara Center, offers an additional 40 hours per week for individuals to use the computers and wireless Internet.

If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)

Funding for Technology Works! Public Computer Centers and teleconferencing equipment was made available through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). This program provided funding for Public Computer Centers and is designed to establish new public computer facilities or upgrade existing ones that provide broadband access to the general public or to specific vulnerable populations, such as low-income individuals, the unemployed, seniors, children, minorities, and people with disabilities. In the long term, these Recovery Act investments will help bridge the digital divide, improve access to education and healthcare services, and boost economic development for communities held back by limited or no access to broadband, communities that would otherwise be left behind. For example, the investments made in broadband infrastructure, public computer centers, and sustainable adoption will: provide job training to the unemployed or under-employed, help school children access the materials they

need to learn, allow rural doctors to connect to more specialized medical centers, and allow small businesses to offer their services to national and international markets. Since Technology Works!@Rabun County Employment Center opened in March and Technology Works!@The Amara Center opened in July, we have had 8,420 users who received 16,019 hours of computer use and instruction.