

CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY

ARRA FUNDED ACTIVITY UPDATE

Community Computer Centers

In early 2010 the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) was awarded \$698,924 through a competitive grant from the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which allocated over \$124 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds for public computer centers across the US. These funds allowed CHA to reopen and expand three public computer centers that are open to approximately 10,000 low-income public housing residents and voucher holders.

Just over a year ago, CHA was forced to temporarily shut down these centers as a result of funding cuts. However, thanks to the federal stimulus funding, the three computer centers will not only be reopened, but expanded to provide more residents with access to broadband technology, computer courses, job training and literacy programs.

Programs Benefited:

Gateways Program: **135 adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students** will work on their computer skills to develop their command of the English language.

Cambridge Employment Program: **65 adults** will be coached to develop resumes, engage in career mapping exercises, and conduct effective job searches.

Strictly Computers: **110 adult students** will be trained in MS Office suite products (Excel, Word, etc) and the use of basic internet skills, such as the use of e-mail and search engines. In addition, **80 residents** who lack broadband access at their homes will utilize the Open Lab times offered during specific morning, evening and weekend hours.

The Work Force: **140 teens** will benefit from the Computer Centers in their efforts to research colleges, potential career paths and job opportunities. Also, Work Force staff will incorporate the use of the computer centers in their Test Prep courses and the Summer Literacy Camp, which reinforces reading skills in 7th and 8th graders.

Parents ROCK (Reading on Computers with Kids): **29 young children** between 4 and 8 years old and their parents will use computers to cultivate competencies related to literacy at home, thus assisting in their success at school and family stability.

Project Outcomes:

- Replace 24 workstations and add 16 new ones at the centers
- Serve an expected over 200 new users per week
- Reinstate CHA's educational programs, including workforce skills training, test preparation, literacy, and English as a Second Language courses
- **Save 15 jobs** of previously laid off employees due to budget cuts and **create an additional 11 jobs** for new employees
- Create partnerships with local service providers to enhance the service delivery for low-income households. Partners include: Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge Office of Workforce Development, Cambridge Community Learning Center, Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs, Cambridge Agenda for Children, City of Cambridge, and North Shore Consulting and Development, Inc.
- **Leveraged a total of \$541,444** in addition to the ARRA competitive grant

| Key Facts | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| ARRA Funds | \$698,924 |
| Leverage | \$541,444 |
| Residents Served | Approx. 600/year |
| New Users per Week | 275 |
| Jobs created | 11 |
| Jobs saved | 15 |