



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Riverside, CA, US

ORGANIZATION:
City of Riverside

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
<http://www.riversideca.gov>

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
SmartRiverside Digital Inclusion Project

CATEGORY:
Digital Access

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Bridge the Digital Divide: Riverside, California has a large population of disadvantaged and struggling residents (30,000+) who are not familiar with computer technology or have the same educational and career opportunities as those that do. Bridging this gap and creating equal education and job opportunities for all is of very high importance to Mayor Ron Loveridge, the Riverside City Council and other government, business and community leaders. The SmartRiverside Digital Inclusion Project provides free technology training, free Microsoft Office software, free internet access devices, and free wireless internet service to all low income families in the City of Riverside. In the early 1990's Charter Communications became the first to deliver a broadband service in Riverside. Later in the decade AT&T added DSL services to limited portions of the City. Efforts by others to deliver wireless broadband services in the early 2000s failed due to lack of funding and pricing models that did not attract usage. Through 2005, high speed internet was not offered by the major carriers. Their dollars and efforts were focused in nearby Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties. In 2006, CIO Steve Reneker in close collaboration with Mayor Ron Loveridge created SmartRiverside (Appendix A), a non-profit affiliate with a mission that included bridging the digital divide through digital inclusion as a means to higher education and economic prosperity for all in need. Leadership would come from the Mayor and CIO as Chairman and Executive Director respectively. City outsource partner ACS, a Xerox Company, would manage the Digital Inclusion Center and provide education and career opportunities employees who were sourced from Project Bride, the City's gang prevention program for at-risk youth. One of SmartRiverside Executive Director Steve Reneker's first major initiatives was to develop a request for proposal for a City wide WiFi initiative that would deliver free WiFi to all residents in Riverside and also provide a private network for City use. The contract was awarded to AT&T who expanded the network in 2008 and 2009 to cover 78% of the City's developed area. An anchor tenant model was chosen to allow AT&T to build out the network at no cost to the City and guarantee the City as the anchor tenant on the network. In 2010 AT&T transferred the wireless



network to the City who has contracted with US Internet (USI) to provide maintenance, enhance performance and improve customer service. USI will help the City expand the network by 1 mile or more (50 access points) every year.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

4300 families have received free technology training, software, internet access, and computers. Every month 100+ residents benefit in the same way. Two former at risk youth are now employees of ACS and pursuing degrees. Two have been hired by other companies. Two more are ready for their next career step.

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

Our Digital Inclusion class successfully concluded last night just before 8 pm as 28 of our LEP students and parents left the library with their own Wi Fi-capable home computers. The class learned how to set up their desktop computers, connect all of the cables and configure the Wi Fi network devices. We also proved that the library's electrical system is able to handle 28 extra computers. This was the first bilingual English and Spanish language computer class in the Smart Riverside Digital Inclusion program. I would like to thank my team teacher Norma Aviles and our bilingual assistants Sylvia Rubio and Esmeralda Cortez for not only translating and interpreting so much technical information into Spanish, but also connecting cables and helping to get 28 computers up and running. Also Holly Barnes was involved in many hours of preparation and planning to make this class a success. Willie Epps, one of the computer techs from Smart Riverside, stayed for most of the class last night. He was a huge help in troubleshooting and general PR for the Digital Inclusion program. We needed three power outlets for each computer -- 84 connections to the power grid !! Those of you who loaned extensions cords and power strips played a major part in making this all work - Jay Matsler, Scott Vollmer, Gary Pike, Bertrand Eckelhoefer, Briony Campbell, Sandy Robbins and Ben Savage. Finally, I am also appreciative for the help of Robert Cunard, Mike Simonson and Steve Lowery of Smart Riverside for making the connections that brought the Digital Inclusion Program to our campus. I was pleased to see coverage from our student newspaper, The Eagle's Quill, at this final class session. Thank you, Mary Ann Neal, Michael Baker and our TEQ staff for sending a reporter.