Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS AND SYSTEM SUPPORT

Purpose

Community technology programs are offered for youth, adults, seniors and individuals with disabilities. Community technology programs identify community needs and find innovative ways to bring technological resources to enhance the lives of program participants. In partnership with several other community-based organizations, community technology programs provide residents with free computer training and access at numerous locations, many of which are located in low- and moderate-income communities.

Description

Community technology programs operate in the Regional Services and Center Operations division, while the support for these programs operate in the Access to Community Resources and Programs (Access) division. There are currently six Computer Clubhouse programs (Bailey's, Gum Springs, James Lee, Mott, Reston and Willston), nine Computer Learning Center (CLC) technology programs (Cedar Ridge, Chantilly, Culmore, Herndon, Kingsley, Murraygate, Sacramento, Southgate, and Yorkville) that are operated by NCS or contracted for the provision of services and one Access Fairfax site. Community technology programs are located in neighborhoods with the greatest need including areas with the highest rates of participation in the free and reduced lunch program in Fairfax County (70 to 80 percent).

Computer Clubhouse and CLC programs provide a creative and safe out-of-school learning environment where young people from underserved communities work with staff and adult mentors to explore their own ideas, develop new skills, and build confidence in them through the use of technology. Youth in these programs are empowered by the opportunity to access a full range of resources through the use of technology. These technologically advanced facilities offer students access to state of the art technology including 3D printers, virtual reality software, programming in coding and web design, robotics, video editing, computer graphics and game design. The opportunity to learn these types of skills is extremely important to those living in Fairfax County. The contractors/non-profit organizations selected to operate some of the CLCs are well-connected to their identified communities and have the ability to utilize additional revenue streams via donations and grants only available to 501(c)(3) organizations, therefore leveraging additional resources that allow them to provide enhanced service delivery connected to other organizational outcomes.

The Access Fairfax program provides public access computers with internet capability that enables users to apply for benefits, make tax payments, apply for licenses and search for jobs. The center provides residents with a copier, fax, and telephones with access to Fairfax County's Interactive Voice Response phone system. The site also has a service counter providing local access for other County services. In addition Access Fairfax offers workspaces containing individual phones and computers with access to the Fairfax County Network via Citrix. County teleworking employees also have access to a printer, fax machine, copier, and general office supplies. Employees can schedule a workspace for a whole or part of a day, or drop in to check email or phone messages. Access Fairfax is a tool for "navigation," supporting prevention and wellness, strengthening the safety net and improving access through collaboration among residents, nonprofits, and the County government, helping users to embark on a clear path toward long-term stability.

Benefits

Safe learning environment: Participants in technology programs learn the skills and abilities necessary to navigate the 21st century. Community technology programs provide a safe learning environment in which participants are allowed to explore their own ideas, build confidence in themselves, and develop real world skills through the use of technology.

Lifelong learning: In support of and in collaboration with the FCPS Strategic Plan "Portrait of a Graduate," community technology program participants engage in a lifelong pursuit of knowledge by learning skills in communication, critical thinking, creativity, resiliency and development in in ethical and global citizenship. This collaborative approach has demonstrated reductions in achievement gaps as a result of the program's intense focus on developing college and career readiness. Equitable growth is the path to sustained economic prosperity in Fairfax County by creating pathways to good jobs, connecting younger generations with older ones.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: Youth technology programs focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). A standard competency in technology has become absolutely essential and the sooner students are introduced to different technologies, the sooner they are able to adapt to the constantly growing digital literacy curve. Having access to more digital tools such as 3D printers, robotics, and video editing open up the possibilities for students to achieve more advanced skills.

Technology for older adults: Community technology programs also assist older adults in staying connected to their communities and families. Community technology programs play a key role in the County's 50+ Action Plan with helping people stay in their homes as they age. Community technology programs provide introductory and advanced technology programming for the older adult population. As part of the intergenerational technology programming, youth driven projects are being developed that use innovative technological devices or applications to improve the lives of older adults and their caregivers, as well using 3D-technology grant funding to develop prosthetics for veterans.

Mandates

This Line of Business is not mandated.

Trends and Challenges

Access to technology: Access to quality technology equipment continues to be a challenge and this contributes to the oft-mentioned digital divide. Additionally, while households with Internet access has grown substantially over the last decade to 93.5 percent of all households, there remains a disproportionate gap for lower income households. Fourteen percent of households with incomes less than $55,000 do not have access to the Internet in the home. For households of the same income level, but having the presence of persons 65 and over in the home, that gap grows to 26 percent.

Technology changes and upgrades: With the movement to on-line textbooks in schools and many households that have more than one child needing to access computers, it can be challenging even if the house has a computer because of the needs of multiple people needing access at the same time. Technology changes and upgrades require constant investment by families to stay current.

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Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #167: Community Technology Programs and System Support			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	$1,070,451	$1,007,296	$1,051,671
Operating Expenses	1,135,295	1,202,743	1,171,115
Total Expenditures	$2,205,746	$2,210,039	$2,222,786
General Fund Revenue	$0	$0	$0
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	$2,205,746	$2,210,039	$2,222,786
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	15 / 15	16 / 16	16 / 16
Total Positions	15 / 15	16 / 16	16 / 16

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Computer Learning Center attendance	86,743	84,921	82,001	77,900	77,900
Computer Clubhouse attendance	NA	51,188	55,717	58,503	61,428
Access Fairfax attendance	18,775	24,017	32,227	33,838	35,530
Percent of satisfied technology participants	NA	NA	94%	95%	95%

Beginning in FY 2014, space challenges at the three CLC's (Computer Learning Centers) located on-site at Fairfax County Public School locations impacted the overall attendance for the CLC program. These challenges continued through FY 2015, and in FY 2016 these CLC sites were closed, with participation transitioning to existing school-age child care programs housed in the Department of Family Services.

Computer Clubhouse program attendance continues to increase largely due to increased outreach efforts and enhanced technology opportunities created with more advanced software and equipment. These technology offerings included coding, video editing, 3D printing, virtual reality applications, computer graphics and computer game design.

Access Fairfax continues to see significant increases in attendance, indicating a continued need for technology support during workday hours.

Customer satisfaction is projected to continue as service quality results indicate a high level of satisfaction with technology programs.