A Sample Successful Application

United Way of Midlands

Columbia, SC

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Fast Forward

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Total Budget Requested From

U.S. Department of Education Funds $ 643,780

Project Year 1 $ 225,603
Project Year 2 $ 217,158
Project Year 3 $ 201,018

Non-Federal Funds $ 340,300

Project Year 1 $ 109,650
Project Year 2 $ 117,725
Project Year 3 $ 112,925

ABSTRACT

United Way of the Midlands has been serving the Central Midlands of South Carolina for nearly 75 years. It was organized in Columbia in 1925 as the "Community Chest." In the mid-70s, areas served by United Way were expanded to include Richland, Lexington, Newberry and Fairfield counties and the name was changed to United Way of the Midlands. Its mission is to determine and respond to the critical human service needs of the community. United Way's mission can be broken down into a four-part process:

1. Determining community needs (Opportunities Assessment)
2. Prioritizing community needs (Prioritization)
3. Developing community resources (Campaign, other)
4. Distributing community resources (Allocation)

Fast Forward is a project that is reflective of what United Way of the Midlands is all about. In the target community, needs have been determined and prioritized. The funding of *Fast Forward* will enable United Way to provide resources needed to provide technology to a segment of the population that is presently ill-equipped to compete in the race to the technology-driven 21st century. The project will increase access to computers and technology for adults and children who are under-served in the inner city of Columbia, South Carolina. Individual impacts include, but are not limited to, increased self-sufficiency; increased job skills and improved access to employment opportunities; increased technological literacy; and enhanced community and social connections.

It has never been more relevant than it is today for our children (and their families) to have access to information technologies. This sentiment has been reiterated by South Carolina's newly elected governor, Jim Hodges, and the state's new superintendent of schools, Inez Tennenbaum. They have pledged their commitment to changing South Carolina's "disturbing" statistics; they have made education their number one priority.

United Way and its partners believe that *Fast Forward* has the elements of a successful program. It is comprehensive, intensive, family and community-oriented, and it has the right ingredients to change lives for the better for its program participants.

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MEETING THE PURPOSE OF THE AUTHORIZING STATUTE

With technological competency viewed as critical to success in the 21st century, increasing accessibility to technology and providing telecommunications and technology education programs are priorities for communities. The ESEA authorizing statute promotes the equalization of technology, particularly educational technology. Our proposal entitled *Fast Forward* will significantly "close" the ever-widening technology gap for economically and socially disadvantaged student populations and their families in a federally recognized Empowerment Zone/Developable Area within the City of Columbia, South Carolina (See Map in Appendix A).

Significant differences in technology accessibility exist by household income, educational level, race and ethnicity, and age and gender in the targeted area. Through the development of a technology center at Hand Middle School, *Fast Forward* will provide our participants equal access to educational technology, help them obtain job skills, and build their personal and community potential. A neighborhood technology center will allow both adults and children to learn and appropriately use technology in their daily lives. Even for those participants who have access to technology, a neighborhood technology center will provide them with additional technology applications (e.g., educational software and applications, Internet, scanners, digital cameras) in a learner-centered environment.

The significant collaboration evident in this project creates a unique model for demonstrating the educational effectiveness of technology in an economically distressed community. When ideas are supported by key community leaders and the community itself – and are part of a comprehensive plan for improvement, their chances of being widely adopted increase significantly. *Fast Forward* will be a model of a neighborhood technology center, and, as this proposal reflects, community leaders are stepping *forward* with active commitments and plans. *Fast Forward* will ultimately level the playing field for individuals who typically do not have technology access and will provide them with increased educational, social, and economic opportunities.

NEED FOR PROJECT

<u>Target Area Description</u>

South Carolina faces substantial challenges to improving student achievement because of such factors as low per capita income ($13,381) and a long history of poor educational attainment (only 68% of S.C. adults aged 25 and older are high school graduates). The latest *Kids Count* data (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1999) ranks South Carolina 45th overall among 50 states and the District of Columbia on the overall profile of child-well being. The target

population for a community technology center is located in Richland County, in the city of Columbia, which has a population of 118,410. This urban area has a racially diverse make up of 54% Caucasian, 44% African-American and 2% of other racial and ethnic groups. Nearly 16% of the city's population and 32% of the children live below the poverty level – they are the disadvantaged.   Amazingly, many of these individuals' dire circumstances are not visual. However, we encounter them daily – we see them on the streets, in our schools, in our workplaces and in our churches.   From an educational point of view, the majority of these low-income (or no income) individuals lag far behind others in computer/technology skills – skills that are critical to their competing in the present workplace and especially in the technology driven twenty-first century.

Hand Middle School and its surrounding community, the target area, are in Richland County District One, the third largest school district in South Carolina, located in the state's capital. Officially designated as an Empowerment Zone, Richland One serves 27,874 students through 31 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 7 high schools, and 7 special schools/alternative programs. The District's 197,292 residents are 89% urban and 79% African American. One in five adults aged 20

TABLE 1

Demographics for Target Area	
Characteristics (1990 Census Data)	**HAND**
Population of Attendance Zone	37,680
% population urban	99.6
% of single, female-head of household	35.2
% adults w/o high school diploma	16.5
% with residents no vehicle	12.1
Average daily membership	915
*% African American/Other	55
*% Caucasian	45
% students eligible for free/reduced lunch	54.4

or over have less than a high school education. Sixty-two percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch.   Because of these educational and economic woes, the community technology center project entitled *Fast Forward* is proposed.   Hand Middle School and its community is being targeted due their inner city nature and the large number of under-achieving student's enrolled and low adult education and achievement throughout its attendance zone. In Hand's attendance zone, the percentage of adults without a high school education and the economic statistics are dismal. TABLE 1 illustrates the demographic and social characteristics of target area.

Hand Middle School has a large diverse population. It serves students from Hendley Homes (one of Columbia's largest public housing communities), Epworth Children's Home (Methodist orphanage) and several group homes providing foster care services. Hand Middle School is located in an established residential neighborhood; it has serviced the needs of middle school-aged students since 1930. Hand is a true neighborhood school – one of only a few that is left. Almost the perfect picture, the three-story, red brick school building is surrounded by

dogwoods, Bradford pear trees, and azaleas. In this special setting, it is difficult to imagine that at " the little red school house" where 20% of the children reside in the Empowerment Zone.

     Student Achievement. Since the 1970s, when standardized testing spread throughout the country, South Carolina has consistently ranked among the bottom five states. During the 1980s, student performance on the BSAP tests improved in Richland School County -- between 1981 and 1990, the percentage of 8th grade students in the county who did not meet standards declined from 56.6 percent to 36.5 percent in math and from 49.1% to 25.2% in reading. However, during the 1990s, the trend began to change, with 42.1 percent not meeting the 8th grade math standards in 1997 and 31.7% in reading.

TABLE 2

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT Middle Schools – Richland School District One	
MAT-7: % students scoring below 50th National Percentile	
Richland School District One	38%
State Average	48%
BSAP: % meeting standard in math, reading & writing	
Richland School District One *Math *Reading	42.1% 31.7%
State's Average	54.5%

S.C. Education Profiles, 1997; *S.C. Kids Count*, 1998

     It has been suggested, according to some sources, that performance on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests (MAT-7) is low because there are a larger number of African Americans and poor children in the state's schools, both of whom tend to do poorly on standardized tests (TABLE 2). Indeed, available data indicate there is a strong relationship between poverty and test performance. For instance, in 1995, in 10 South Carolina school districts with the largest percent of free-lunch students, only 17 percent of their ninth grade students scored above the national average on the MAT-7. In contrast, in the 10 school districts with the smallest percent of free-lunch students, 61 percent of the students scored above the national average (*The State*, December 10, 1996). In Richland County the percentage of African Americans (22.4 percent) living below poverty is three times higher than Caucasians (7.3 percent). African Americans make up nearly half of the county's population and 55 percent of the student population at Hand Middle School, which has a free/reduced lunch rate of 54 percent. The fact is poverty cripples all children -- African-Americans happen to be the majority of those living in poverty. Strategically, *Fast Forward* is set to serve all those in need in its target population.

     Fast Forward is positioned to confront these poverty issues and provide the target population with the technology training necessary in persevering in a computer-powered society. The project partners recognize that in addressing issues in educational attainment and student readiness, it is necessary to treat the whole family. Hand Middle School currently provides

access to technology to its academically challenged students. *FAST FORWARD* expands this program – it will provide access to technology to students, senior citizens, feeder school students and others in the Hand neighborhood. According to Investor's Business Daily, only 1/10th of families with an income of $5,000 to $10,000 have computers. This statistic simple reflects what is most central and most important in supporting a household – shelter, food, clothing, etc. Computers are not important when families are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. Just having a computer in the home, however, does not mean that it will be used. Usage is determined by the knowledge of family members. A computer that is used only for word processing is no more useful than a typewriter. Training, education and experience are as much a part of the divide as economics. By making computers and computer training available to low-income families, *Fast Forward* promises to help ensure that youth and families in the target area are prepared for the technologically driven future.

TABLE 3

Hendley Homes Age & Number of Residents	
Age Range	**Number**
0-6	200
7-12	190
13-17	75
18 & Up	339
55-70	18
71 & Up	14
TOTAL	804

Survey of Residents, 3/8/99

Public Housing Community. Hendley Homes has 300 units with more that 800 residents (TABLE 3). Like most public housing residents, the percentage of female occupants (85.4%) is much higher than male occupants (34.4%). Unfortunately, the high female occupancy exposes the reality that 85.1% of these housing units have single females as head of household. (Two-parent families at Hendley make up only 3% of its housing population.)

In 1998, the poverty level was $13,650 for a family of three and $16,450 for a family of four. Though the poverty threshold is often criticized as an arbitrary number, according to Richland County's Kids Count 1998, many families in the target community live well below any poverty level established by state or federal programs. The average income for residents in Hendley Homes is $4,616. Only 9 percent of the residents are actual wage earners and 4.6 percent are with employers. Nearly 30 percent of its units (89) receive public assistance.

Poverty and the Single parent. Statistical data consistently indicate that single-parent families are most likely to be poor. According to S.C. Kids Count (1998), 17,102 children live with only one parent in Richland County. This is 29.1% of all children in the county, up from 24% in 1980 and 16.7% in 1970. Of the 29.1% of children living in single parent households, 14.4% are White and 42.9% are African American and "Other." S.C. Statistical Abstract (1997) indicates that of the 3,848 female householders in Richland County with children under 18, 36 percent live below poverty (TABLE 4). Clearly, absent mates is a major contributing factor to

TABLE 4

Number & Percentage of Female Householders, with no Husbands, and Children under 18 INCOME BELOW POVERTY		
COUNTY	TOTAL NO.	PERCENT
Richland	3,848	36%
Fairfield	420	44.4%
Lexington	1,117	26.2%
STATE	53,668	45.8%

Richland County and its neighboring counties
Source: *S.C. Statistical Abstract*

child poverty. (Children with absent fathers are also more likely to have emotional, academic, and behavioral problems according to *American Demographics*, July 1996.)

In the United States, the percentage of children growing up in female-headed households with no husband present has increased from 6 percent in 1950 to 24 percent in 1995. Single mothers make up an increasing share of families in every state and among all racial groups. In South Carolina, females head an astonishing 45.8 percent of households with children under 18 with no husbands. Children in single-parent families make up 72.8 percent of <u>all</u> Richland County's children living in poverty. Also, births to single mothers in the county have increased steadily over the past four decades. In 1996, 1,226 babies, 29.7 % of all babies, were born to single mothers. A decade earlier, in 1986, the percentage was 23.8 and in 1960 it was 10.4%. A defining line between Black and White is clearly apparent – 42.9% of African American and "Other" children and 14.4% of White children live in single-parent families.

The Midlands Homeless Consortium reports the number of homeless as 4,000-5,000 in the Central Midlands. Approximately 500 students in Richland School District One are homeless. (There are no figures for the number of people who live with other family members and friends.) Facing the Future Together, the Empowerment Application of the City of Columbia (and Sumter), gathered the following statistics about the Zone residents:

• 60 percent of all children in the Zone live in poverty	• minorities
•	• women (of these households, 64 percent have children under the age of 18)
•	•
• the Zone	•
• older have not earn a high school diploma	•
• college entrance exam scores (SAT)	

Family vs. work. Increasingly, parents must divide their time between children and employers. In order to meet family financial needs, most parents must work and thus have less time for family life. In the state's last census, 73.9 percent of mothers with children under 6 and 80.4 percent with children 6-17 were in the labor force. This has increased substantially from 1960 when only 33.9 percent of mothers with children under 6 were in the labor force. Parents who are able to work <u>are unable</u> to obtain quality, <u>affordable</u>, daycare. (S.C. Kids Count, 1998) In order to involve the whole family in the proposed project, childcare assistance is an essential service. Several of *Fast Forward*'s partners will offer childcare services ensuring that parents are able to take advantage of the project's technology training opportunities.

A <u>Needs at a Glance</u> chart summarizing the above needs assessment is included in Appendix B.

PROJECT DESIGN

<u>Local Planning Efforts</u>

The planning effort to develop *Fast Forward: A Neighborhood Technology Center* has been significant. *Fast Forward*'s commitment to serving its community is reflected in its selection of partners -- all of whom bring expertise and dedication to the project. The consortium is being spearheaded by the United Way of the Midlands, in collaboration with Richland County School District One (RCSD 1), Midlands Technical College (MTC), the Cooperative Ministry, the Shandon Cluster of Churches (Bethel AME, St. Joseph's Catholic, Shandon Methodist, and Shandon Presbyterian), and the City of Columbia (See Letters of Commitment in Appendix C).

The catalyst for the planning began when members of the consortium participated in the City of Columbia's Empowerment Zone (EZ) planning process in 1998. Lack of accessibility to technology was a key need identified in the EZ planning meetings. After the receipt of the EZ grant was announced, an expanded planning group engaged in a more detailed mapping process to identify community interests, needs, assets and strengths. They reviewed additional needs assessment data on the Hand community zone, including an annual parent/teacher/student survey conducted by RCSD 1 that highlights the tremendous need for technology-based programs:

Teachers Said:	*Students and Parents Said:*
Increase technology in education	Provide homework help
Provide homework help after-school	Offer instruction in computer technology
Increase accessibility to computers	Provide socialization activities

After a thorough examination of the issues raised in the needs assessment and research on emerging technology initiatives, the group felt that a neighborhood center focusing on

technology education would best serve the needs of both young children and adult residents. The addition of a comprehensive neighborhood-based technology center is a logical progression for the *Fast Forward* partners -- and specifically, for Hand Middle School.

Currently Hand Middle School provides adult and peer mentoring and volunteers services for approximately 100 students and after-school tutoring for 300 students scoring in the first and second quartiles of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT-7). The school also offers parent involvement activities, including a Parent-and Teacher Organization (PAT), a School Improvement Council (the school's governing policy-making body) and the Hand Educational Foundation. Hand has a computer-assisted learning lab used for remediation and a computer writing lab. Advanced computer students are assigned as helpers in the writing lab, and their duties include student and teacher tutoring, updating the school's web page and producing newsletters. Recently the district received *Richland Clicks!*, one of eighty-two (since 1995) Technology Innovation Challenge grants funded through the U. S. Department of Education to enhance curriculum through technology. While the district and Hand Middle School use technology as a tool to improve student achievement, technology has not been typically viewed as a way of involving parents in their children's education. With Hand Middle School parents, teachers, students and the community indicating not only the need but also a substantial interest in technology, *Fast Forward* is a move *forward* in the right direction for the Hand neighborhood zone.

During further planning meetings, the group prioritized four focus areas for the technology center: (1) early morning, after-school, and summer technology-based programming for children; (2) adult education and family literacy activities; (3) career instruction and job preparation training for adults; and (4) home access to computers and technology through a computer lending library and a portable computer lab.

Community partners identified roles they could play and the resources they could contribute. Due to its significant volunteer base and management expertise, the United Way of the Midlands was selected as the lead entity for the group – and for this proposal. The partners reviewed other federal, state and local programs that could be merged or coordinated to maximize resources. After the grant has been awarded, planning group members will, as the project's Advisory Committee, maintain an active part in the development, implementation and evaluation of *Fast Forward*. The Advisory Committee will adopt policies and procedures, review programming issues to ensure the project meets the needs of the community residents, monitor progress, review and suggest program modifications, and assume a pivotal role in obtaining financial and other support to sustain the program.

Goals and Objectives

The ultimate goal of *Fast Forward* is to increase access to computers and technology for adults and children, particularly those under-served populations in the community. Both individual and community impacts will support the overall project goal. Individual impacts include increased self-sufficiency; increased job skills and improved access to employment opportunities; increased technological literacy; and enhanced community and social connections. Community impacts include building collaborations with other community agencies and reaching a more widespread population.

The following chart identifies specific objectives and measurements:

Objectives	Measurements
• To provide a year-round "open access" technology-based program for children and adults in the targeted neighborhood	• At least 300 adults in the community will receive an orientation to the use of technology annually. • At least 500 students will participate in the technology center annually.
• To provide telecommunications and technology education for individuals of all ages	• 90% of participating students will demonstrate basic computer skills. • At least 30% of the participants will be able to demonstrate use of the Internet. • At least 30% of the participating parents will exhibit basic computer skills.
• To provide a web-based program of "instruction" (tutorials) to help the participants manage the varied resources available on the web	• At least 60% of the participants will satisfactorily complete at least one library tutorial module.
• To provide specific technology-related courses for continuing education or degree credit for adult participants	• At least 75% of the adult participants will engage in at least one technology-based course (e.g., computer repair, information systems technology, introduction to computers, etc.).
• To provide adult literacy, GED classes, career skills training and other related programs for eligible adults	• Adult literacy, GED classes and career skills development programs will be provided year-round.
• To provide home access to technology through a computer lending library and a portable computer lab	• At least 30% of the adults/children will participate in the computer lending library and/or the portable computer lab.
• To promote the "School as the Center of the Community" concept within the targeted neighborhood	• The number of community agencies participating in school activities and programs will increase by 35% • The number of volunteers participating in school activities will increase by 35%

PROJECT SERVICES

Findings from the research of the planning group suggested the following precepts upon which this proposal is grounded: (1) improving the use of technology as a tool for involving students, parents, and the community is critical in ensuring lifelong learning opportunities; (2) low-income children and parents face significant barriers in gaining access to technology; and (3) economically disadvantaged families have difficulties in providing early morning, after-school, and summer supervision and enrichment activities for their children.

Initial Implementation

Upon notification of the Community Technology Center grant, the Advisory Committee (comprised of the initial planning group) will expand its membership to include parents and other community organizations. The Committee will review (and modify if necessary) the project implementation plans and will assign specific duties and tasks. Three staff members (a project director, a community liaison and an administrative assistant) will be hired by the United Way of the Midlands, the lead entity, in collaboration with the Advisory Committee. *It is the intention of the group to specifically recruit and hire a resident of the Empowerment Zone for at least one of the three positions*. Although all three positions will be hired and supervised by the United Way, the community liaison will be physically housed at Hand Middle School.

During the first six months of the project, the existing guidance area at Hand Middle School will be modified to function as the neighborhood technology center. The United Way of the Midlands will develop Memoranda of Agreement outlining specific roles and responsibilities with the partner organizations. The United Way will sub-contract with the district to purchase additional computers and software and install any additional wiring/infrastructure. Midlands Technical College will also negotiate with the United Way to provide instructors from the college and to develop web-based tutorials for students, parents, and the community. Childcare arrangements with the six participating churches will be finalized, and transportation issues will be worked out with local providers (e.g., church vans, bus tokens for public transportation). Once the project director and community liaison are hired, they will work with local businesses and non-profit organizations to develop a plan for providing meals/snacks for participants in the evening programs at the neighborhood technology center. The Advisory Committee will review the possibility of developing a sliding fee scale for program activities.

Fast Forward will not exclude any children or families in the neighborhood zone who wish to participate, but specific recruitment efforts will be targeted to socially and economically

disadvantaged youth and adults. Each year participants will be recruited through parent meetings, the City of Columbia's neighborhood association meetings, community forums, public housing community activities, and other neighborhood events. Flyers and brochures announcing the technology center will be distributed in well-frequented areas of the neighborhood, including the public housing community, churches, senior citizen centers, and other agencies and organizations. Local television stations, the district's cable television and the City of Columbia's channel 2 have agreed to contribute public service announcements. Community, regional and state newspapers will also publish articles about the programs, and agencies and organizations will commit space in their publications for project articles and updates. Midlands Technical College will use its teleconferencing capacity to host local, state, regional, and national teleconferences and will assist in promotions through its nationally recognized publications. Each of the participating agencies and organizations has committed to providing *Fast Forward* a "web" presence on their home pages.

Program Areas

Our collaborating partners will be key to providing the focus activities for the neighborhood technology center:

- Early morning, after-school and summer technology-based programming will begin operation in the spring of Year One. The early-bird morning program will operate five days a week (7:00 – 8:00 am) and the after-school program will run four days a week (3:30-6:00 pm) during each school semester. The summer program will be offered five hours each day for five weeks during the summer. RCSD 1 will provide bus transportation, and Hand Middle School will provide the technology instruction. The early bird, after-school and summer activities will use technology as a tool for engaging students in academic and enrichment activities. Students will participate in a variety of interdisciplinary and multi-media activities involving the computer and related technology tools, including the scanner, digital camera, data projector, etc. They will learn publishing and presentation software such as Powerpoint and Publisher and will gain familiarity with spreadsheet and database development. Students will contribute community service hours by developing projects such as neighborhood newsletters, menus for restaurants and flyers for community groups. Programs that are centered on interdisciplinary instruction through the use of technology resources provide an innovative, comprehensive and "real life" approach to learning (The Learning Connection, 1996).

- The adult education and family literacy component will be provided by the school district and Midlands Technical College starting in the spring of Year One. The school district will

offer classes on GED preparation and literacy education two nights a week (6:30-9:00 p.m.). The district's Richland Clicks! Grant program will provide a six-hour "After Hours" program for parents each semester and during the summer beginning in Year Two. Volunteers from the churches in the Shandon Cluster of Churches will provide childcare for participants at Shandon Presbyterian Church located only one block from the school. The district will provide additional training to the childcare volunteers in such topics as working with high-risk children, effective discipline strategies, etc. Depending upon the needs and interests of the adult participants, general educational programs such as career assessment and resume preparation will be offered during the summer months by Midlands Technical College instructors.

- Midlands Technical College (MTC) will offer <u>career instruction and job preparation training for adults beginning in Year Two.</u> Faculty from the college will teach two courses: computer repair and information systems technology – both programs leading to the Associate Degree. These courses will be offered two nights a week year-round. Additionally, MTC's continuing education instructors will provide "topical" courses (e.g., graphic design, presentation development, introduction to computers, PowerPoint and Excel) depending upon the needs of the participants each session. Volunteers from the neighborhood churches will provide childcare. The Midlands Technical College Library staff will develop web-based "tutorials" to instruct adults and students in how to effectively manage the vast array of Internet resources. Six-eight tutorials tentatively titled "Taming the Technology Beast" will be developed to help parents and children successfully navigate the Internet. Additionally, special Saturday seminars dealing with such issues as "Monitoring Internet Access" and "Introduction to Web Page Design" will be taught by Midlands Technical College, consultants, and volunteers during the first year to promote *Fast Forward*.

- During Year Two, technology will reach into the homes of the economically distressed residents through <u>a computer lending library and a portable computer lab.</u> The Cooperative Ministry, a key partner, will provide desktop computers for the lending library, and laptops funded through this grant will also be on-loan to families who do not have computers at home. All participants will be required to take an introductory computer training conducted by the school district and/or project staff prior to the loan agreement. A technology van, used by the district and funded through the Technology Challenge grant called *Richland Clicks*!, will provide access to computer technology in targeted neighborhoods.

Summary Chart: *Fast Forward* Collaborating Partners	
United Way of the Midlands	• Serve as lead fiscal and administrative entity • Hire and provide supervision of all project personnel

Summary Chart: *Fast Forward* Collaborating Partners	
	• Provide facilities, equipment, and supplies • Coordinate Memoranda of Agreement among partners • Work with churches to obtain additional project support • Staff the Advisory Committee • Coordinate all project reports and evaluations • Provide mentors and tutors
Richland County School District 1	• Provide adult literacy and GED instruction and parent training • Provide technology instruction • Provide trainers for childcare instructors • Participate on the Advisory Committee • Provide transportation for students • Provide coordination with the *Richland Clicks!* technology van
Hand Middle School	• Provide space for Neighborhood Technology Center • Provide supervision of Community Liaison • Provide maintenance of technology center • Provide technology instruction • Manage the early bird, after-school and summer technology programs and evening courses • Participate on the Advisory Committee
The Cooperative Ministry	• Provide computers for computer lending library • Serve on Advisory Committee • Provide assistance to targeted families as needed in the areas of food, clothing, and furniture
Shandon Cluster of Churches (Shandon Presbyterian, Shandon Methodist, St. Joseph's Catholic, Bethel AME)	• Provide childcare for participants in Technology Center • Provide scholarship funds (if appropriate) to participants for adult education and other courses • Provide transportation • Provide mentors and tutors • Work with Advisory Committee to obtain project sustainability
The City of Columbia	• Provide employee mentors/tutors for children • Provide assistance with transportation (bus tokens, etc.) • Assist in media promotions • Work with project staff to develop Technology Center model for expansion into Empowerment Zone resource centers • Serve on the Advisory Committee
Midlands Technical College	• Provide degree courses (e.g., Computer Repair, Information Systems Technology • Provide continuing education (topical) courses in technology • Provide career development and other job acquisition skills training • Provide faculty for Computer Repair and Info. Systems courses • Provide assistance with media promotions/marketing • Host annual teleconference (s) • Provide tutors and mentors from faculty, staff, students and alumni where appropriate • Serve on the Advisory Committee

PROJECT PERSONNEL

The United Way of the Midlands is the applicant and the administrative entity representing a consortium of community-based organizations and Richland County School District One (RCSD 1). RCSD 1 is located in a recently recognized Empowerment Zone in Columbia, SC. A solid organizational structure is critical to the success of our program (See Organizational Chart in Appendix D). Mike Gray, the United Way's Vice-President for Resource Development, will be the project's principal investigator and will provide general project oversight. He will be the lead staff person to oversee all contracts, and all reports from the sub-contracting entities (RCSD 1, Midlands Technical College) will be sent to him for accountability purposes.

A Project Director, a Community Liaison and an Administrative Assistant will be hired through the grant (See Job Descriptions in Appendix E). The United Way of the Midlands wills actively recruit qualified committed and diverse staff with appropriate experience and excellent communication skills to interact positively with students, parents, teachers and the community. The *Fast Forward* Advisory Committee will provide input into the selection of project personnel. The Project Director hired by the United Way of the Midlands will report to the Vice-President for Resource Development. The Community Liaison and the Administrative Assistant will report to the project director.

Jeanne Stiglbauer, principal at Hand Middle School, will provide day-to-day supervision of the Community Liaison housed at the school and Shane Phillips, the technology teacher at Hand Middle, will oversee technology maintenance of the neighborhood technology center (See Resumes in Appendix F).

The *Fast Forward* Advisory Committee will provide input to this project. The committee will enhance partnerships among key stakeholders and insure that the technology-based programs and activities are appropriate and meet the needs of the community. The Advisory Committee will also work to obtain on-going support for the project to insure its future sustainability.

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

Grantee Capacity

The United Way of the Midlands has successfully managed numerous federal, state and local grants, as well as private and corporate funds. The United Way, with a current budget of

almost $10 million, has a functioning accounting system that provides for the following: accurate, current and complete disclosure of the financial results of each federally-funded program; records that identify adequately the source and application of funds for federally-sponsored activities; effective control over and accountability for all funds, property, and other assets; comparison of outlays with budget amounts; written procedures for determining the reasonableness allocation and allowability of costs; and accounting records supported by source documentation.

Institutionalization and Sustainability

The United Way and collaborating *Fast Forward* partners are confident that the US Department of Education funds will be a sound and effective investment in the community. It is our goal to ensure that the practices and improvements developed through *Fast Forward* will be integrated into institutional operations and continued after the grant has expired.

The United Way of the Midlands has had great success in integrating prior grant programs into the mainstream of the agency's activities because the projects were vitally needed, enthusiastically welcomed and closely aligned with the United Way's strategic plan. The United Way has a vital Development program whose commitment is to increase the available financial resources to support the mission and vision of the agency through active identification, solicitation, procurement and management of public and private funding. Additionally, the City of Columbia will use the *Fast Forward* program as a technology center model for future Empowerment Zone resource centers. The Hand Middle School parent organizations, including the Hand Educational Foundation, a nonprofit entity affiliated with Hand Middle School, will work to increase its support. The *Fast Forward* Advisory Committee will also review the implementation of a sliding scale fee for certain program activities. As evidenced in the decreasing federal funds requested in Years 2 and 3 of the budget, all partners are committed to maintaining the project's goals.

Fast Forward will not be an example of technology looking for an application. Instead, we will use existing technology foundations to strengthen and expand the use of educational technology in the community. In the current age of accountability, early success and careful planning are critical if initiatives are going to be maintained by resource poor non-profits and local and state governments. South Carolina has a long history of poor educational attainment and low family income that must be improved if our families are to succeed in a technological world. We will build upon the technology-rich opportunities outlined in *Fast Forward* to connect students, parents, schools, the workplace, and the community at-large.

EVALUATION

Routine evaluation procedures have been incorporated into *Fast Forward* to assess both formative and summative measures. The evaluation plan focuses on the grant's major components: early morning, after-school, and summer technology-based programming for children; adult education and family literacy activities; career instruction and job preparation training for adults; and home access to computers and technology through a computer lending library and a portable computer lab.

Annually, an evaluation report will integrate the findings of the program and summarize the project performance. The report will address such global questions as: 1) Were program procedures carried out with fidelity to the management plan in a timely fashion? 2) Were qualified staff hired and properly oriented to the project? 3) Were the components effective in their day-to-day operations? 4) Did program partners fulfill their commitments? and 5) What was the impact on the students? The parents? The community?

A major qualitative concern in any program is implementation success – program feasibility or failure. To enhance the likelihood of successful implementation, we will conduct a process/formative evaluation utilizing techniques developed by Windsor, et al, 1994 and Wandersman, 1994. By combining outcome measures with an understanding of the process that produced the outcomes, evaluation can shed light both on the extent of impact and on how the change occurred (Schorr, 1997). Upon notice of the grant award, the United Way of the Midlands will distribute a Request for Proposals for an outside evaluator. With assistance from *Fast Forward*'s Advisory Committee, the evaluator will first develop a project model linking the project's objectives and activities with its proposed outcomes. Milestones for completion of each item will be developed. The evaluator will track achievement of the milestones, at least monthly, and review with the project staff the milestone activity.

Evaluation is usually effective if measures are put into place prior to any project-based activity. Measures can then be incorporated into routine reporting requirements from the moment the project is launched, guiding the project continuously and consistently. To be useful to other communities across the nation, however, we will be able to demonstrate participant improvements in a generalizeable manner. The results of the evaluation will supplement a summative evaluation conducted annually by the United Way to determine achievement of its strategic plan.

The evaluation instruments will include the following:

- a parent/community satisfaction survey of the accessibility of *Fast Forward* resources and the technological support provided by project staff;

- a statistical report of the number of students, parents and other community members who use the center's resources;

- documentation of the adults participating in adult education, GED, career preparation, and specific technology courses;

- number of adults who complete a course of study through the district's adult education programs and/or Midlands Technical College;

- student attendance records at early bird, after-school and summer programs;

- satisfaction measures for each community partner;

- evidence of collaboration with community agencies and organizations as highlighted in Memoranda of Agreements; and

- direct observation of the project activities.

CONCLUSION

It lies within our reach to change the futures of the disadvantaged, especially, the future of our youth. The children who today are at risk of growing into underskilled, undereducated adults, unable to help their own children to realize the American dream can, instead, become productive participants in a twenty-first century America whose aspirations they can pass on to their children. The cycle of the disadvantaged that has appeared so intractable can be broken. (Schorr, Within Our Reach, 1989) With *Fast Forward*, we have the historic opportunity to help reverse the growing polarization between the haves and have-nots.

Fast Forward has the elements of a successful program. It is comprehensive, intensive, family and community-oriented and will be supported by a staff with the time and skills to develop relationships of respect and collaboration with participants. The United Way of the Midlands and its partners are confident that, through *Fast Forward*, they have the right ingredients that will change lives for the better for program participants.

It has never been more important than it is today for our children to not only have knowledge of information technologies, but also to have access to it – it is vital that our young acquire high skills that will prepare them to take their rightful places in the workplace. South Carolina's Governor, Jim Hodges and Superintendent of Schools, Inez Tennenbaum are committed to changing the state's disturbing statistics, and they have made education the number one priority in South Carolina. Community leaders and individuals in the community are expressing the same commitment and dedication -- the development of *Fast Forward* is the result of their interest and resolute to attack debilitating social and economic distresses in our community.

MAP OF THE TARGET

AREA

(not attached)

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Needs at a Glance

TARGET POPULATION & COUNTY DATA

- Low per capita income is $ 13,381

- Only 68% of S.C. adults aged 25 and older are high school graduates

- South Carolina is 45th overall among 50 states and the District of Columbia on the profile of child-well being

- Nearly 16% of the city's population and 32% of the children live below the poverty level

- 35.2% of house holds are headed by single females in Richland County

- 16.5% adults w/o high school diploma is target population

- 12.1% with residents no vehicle in target population

- 54.4% students eligible for free/reduced lunch at Hand Middle School

- 85.1% of the housing units at Hendley Homes have single females as head of household

- The average income for residents in Hendley Homes is $4,616

- In South Carolina, females head an astonishing 45.8 percent of households with children under 18 with no husband

- Children in single-parent families make up 72.8 percent of all Richland County's children living in poverty

- In 1996, 1,226 babies, 29.7% of all babies, were born to single mothers in Richland County

- 42.9% of African American and "Other" children and 14.4 of White children live in single-parent families in Richland County

- Approximately 500 students in Richland School District One are homeless.

- 73.9 percent of mothers with children under 6 and 80.4 percent with children 6-17 were in the labor force in Richland County

EMPOWERMENT ZONE STATISTICS

- 60 percent of all children in the Zone live in poverty

- 40 percent of residents live below the poverty level

- 63 percent of all public house in Columbia is in the Zone

- 47 percent of the Zone residents who are 25 and older have not earned a high school diploma

- More than 90 percent of Zone residents are minorities

- More than 50 percent of the households are led by women (of these households, 64 percent have children under the age of 18)

- The per capita income is less than $7,000

- 81 percent of the housing units are rental

- 9.2 percent unemployment rate

- Zone schools rank last among the 50 states on college entrance exam scores (SAT)

LETTERS OF COMMITMENT

(not attached)

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

FAST FORWARD

"A Neighborhood Technology Center"

- United Way of the Midlands

- Cooperative Ministries
College

- Midlands Technical

- Columbia Police Department
1

- Richland School District

*Partners working
together to change
futures*

- City of Columbia

- Hand Middle School

- Bethel AME Church
Church
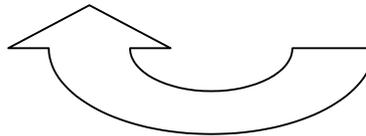
- Shandon Presbyterian

- School District GED & Literacy Program
Church

- Shandon Methodist

JOB

DESCRIPTIONS

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Essential Job Functions:

- Serve as the principal coordinator for project activities with ultimate responsibility to ensure that all project activities outlined are accomplished.
- Accountable and responsible for planning, organizing and directing the implementation and operations of programs.
- Responsible for hiring all staff and negotiating contract services.
- Directly supervise Community Liaison and Administrative Assistant.
- Provide liaison with and oversight of evaluation contract.
- With the Community Programs Liaison, serves as staff to the advisory committee.
- Develop, monitor and oversee budget.
- Direct and supervise all public relations with assistance from district/other agency public relations divisions.
- Maintain relationship and coordination with all funding sources and responsible for submitting reports to funding source.
- Supervise project staff to ensure that activities are carried out in a professional and timely manner.
- Manage the project budget.
- Coordinate with other district staff and programs to integrate project activities with district operations.
- Research and investigate opportunities for resource development and project expansion.
- Disseminate project information to other communities throughout the state and nation.
- Coordinate all required reports.

Minimum Qualifications

A Masters degree in Education or related field with preferred five-ten years experience, of which at least five (5) must have been in Administration, and/or Education or combination thereof.

COMMUNITY LIAISON

Essential Job Functions:

- Maintain primary program oversight of all programs which are provided by organizations partnering with the district, including the City of Columbia, Cooperative Ministries, the Shandon Cluster of Churches, Midlands Technical College, Richland County School District On, and other agencies and organizations in the Midlands.

- Regularly monitor these initiatives and provide monthly progress reports to the project director and advisory committee.

- Manage agreements among community organizations.

- Develop new community partnerships with program initiatives.

- Works cooperatively with school and community agencies" personnel regarding in the needs of particular students.

- Consults with other disciplines on the student issues and assists in locating resources to meet the environmental needs of students and their families; makes appropriate referrals.

Minimum Qualifications:

A Masters Degree in education, counseling, social work other social sciences and four (4) years experience, of which at least one (1) must have been in administrative, coordination , or similar position.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Essential Job Functions:

- Responsible for all administrative support.

- Handle all typing, word processing, mailing, copying, and scheduling.

- Handle project-related correspondence, reports, notices and recommendations.

- Act as office receptionist – answering the telephone, greeting, announcing or routing visitors.

- Responsible for recording minutes at appropriate meetings.

- Responsible for ordering and maintaining office supplies, stationery and software.

- Monitor and maintain the program budget, supply inventory, calendar, and daily activity log.

- Maintain any data necessary for the project.

- Work closely with project staff, school personnel, business, and the community at-large in the daily operations of the project.

- Maintains up-to-date-financial records on project expenditures.

Minimum Qualifications:

Graduation from an accredited high school including or supplemented by course in typing, bookkeeping and general commercial subjects. Or an equivalent combination of experience and training which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities. Three years' progressively responsible office management preferred.

RESUMES

(This section would have key personnel's resumes)

ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

(not attached)

EQUITABLE

ACCESS

EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Every effort will be made at the Neighborhood Technology Center to insure that targeted students, their families, and community members have equitable access and participation in proposed services. We recognize that just extending the number of house Hand Middle School is open and offering the services is not enough. At a minimum, we must (1) insure adequate outreach to student and their families; (2) develop programs that are culturally appropriate and meet identified needs; (3) offer an environment that is safe and fun and technology-based; (4) distribute sufficient information about programs offered in a manner appropriate to the community; (5) engage individuals, attending to variations in learning styles; and (6) remove barriers such as transportation and childcare.

Families will be notified of the program benefits, and interest surveys will be distributed to students, their parents and community members to guide the development of curriculum and calendars to insure their on-going appropriateness applicability. Community volunteers will offer childcare at all evening programs.

We recognize the importance of hiring individuals who reflect the demographic composition of the target communities and have an inherent understanding of the issues faced by the target populations. In addition, staff must demonstrate their enthusiasm and ability to serve the population's needs, Every effort will be made to insure sensitivity to cultural diversity as well as attainment of professional skills.

The programs will assist in addressing the specific needs of people with disabilities as they arise (e.g., interpreters), and participants who has limited English proficiency will be provided one-on-one assistance.

BUDGET FORMS

&

NARRATIVE

(Not attached)

MANAGEMENT PLAN

FAST FORWARD: A NEIGBHORHOOD TECHNOLOGY CENTER
PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN (YEARS 1-3)

Task	Person (s) Responsible	Year One Month												Year Two Quarter				Year Three Quarter			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. Expand and convene Advisory Committee to begin detailed implementation planning, including design of spring/summer programs	United Way; Adv. Comm.	X	X																		
2. Issue RFP for Evaluator	United Way	X	X																		
3. Execute sub-contracts with partners (Midlands Tech, RCSD 1) and finalize Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs)	United Way	X	X																		
4. Compete wiring/infrastructure for Center	RCSD 1;		X																		
5. Advertise and hire project staff	United Way; Adv. Comm	X	X																		
6. Execute contract with evaluator and begin project monitoring (on-going)	United Way		X																		
7. Conduct meeting with evaluator, staff and Advisory Committee	Evaluator; Adv. Comm.; Staff		X	X																	
8. Conduct training for staff	United Way; RCSD I		X	X				X						X				X			
9. Conduct training for volunteers	RCSD 1; United Way; Staff			X	X																
10. Develop guidelines and procedures for transportation, childcare, etc.	Staff-, Advisory Committee; United Way; Churches	X	X	X																	
11. Conduct publicity campaign in coordination with partners (create flyers and brochures); coordinate visibility on web pages	Staff; Advisory Committee		X	X																	
12. Recruit student participants	United Way; Hand Middle			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
13. Recruit adult participants for special Saturday seminars	Staff, Adv. Comm.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
14. Recruit volunteers for childcare	Churches			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
15. Develop evening courses	MTC			X				X						X				X			
16. Develop tutorial modules	MTC Library				X	X															

Task	Person (s) Responsible	Year One Month												Year Two Quarter				Year Three Quarter			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
17. Evaluate spring programs	Evaluator; Staff-, Adv. Comm.								X												
18. Develop curricula and schedule for summer programs	Staff, Adv. Comm.								X	X	X										
19. Implement summer programming	Staff-, Volunteers; Adv. Comm.											X	X	X			X	X			X
20. Determine feasibility of sponsoring evening family meals and scholarships for participants	Staff, Adv. Comm.												X	X	X						
2 1. Present Project at internal and external meetings and conferences	Staff													X				X			
22. Evaluate continuation/sustainability and expansion strategies	United Way; Adv. Comm.; Staff														X			X	X	X	X
23. Host teleconference (annually)	Staff												X				X				X
24. Promote program regionally/nationally	Staff												X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
25. Evaluation and feedback (on-going)	Staff-, Evaluator	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X