Taking a Targeted Approach to Program Planning

A successful Neighborhood Networks center is a direct reflection of the community it serves. Therefore, the programs and services offered at a Neighborhood Networks center must be customized to meet its residents' needs. Because of this, no two Neighborhood Networks centers are the same.

Program Planning Begins with Residents

Just as each community is different, so too is each Neighborhood Networks center. To offer tailored programs and services that meet the needs of residents, many centers begin the program planning phase by conducting a resident survey. These surveys seek to identify resident needs, program and schedule priorities, spatial and equipment needs, and available resources. With this information in hand, a center can deliver programs customized for its residents.

At Centers Across the Country

Neighborhood Networks centers across the country offer a variety of programs, including:

- **Workforce development.** Providing classes and training that allow residents to achieve greater self-sufficiency is the primary goal of many Neighborhood Networks centers. To achieve this goal, many centers offer an array of workforce development programs to help residents identify their vocational skills, interests, and aptitudes; seek to understand and respond to changes in the world of work; set personal goals for achievement and progress; make decisions that allow them to pursue these goals; and take part in opportunities for professional growth and advancement. Workforce development programs and services being offered at Neighborhood Networks centers include:

  - Job-preparation programs designed to provide residents with basic job skills, such as computer literacy, keyboarding, word processing, graphics applications, spreadsheets, and databases.

  - Job-readiness programs that prepare residents for job interviews and professional settings. These include basic résumé writing and interviewing skills, proper workplace attire and behavior, time management, conflict resolution, problem solving, and communication skills classes.

  - Job-placement services that help residents find and obtain a job and provide references for residents who have acquired workforce skills at the center. Centers can also provide employment search and placement services.

  - Job-retention programs that help residents overcome the barriers that prevent them from retaining employment. Job-retention programs may include one-on-one counseling, support groups, childcare services, transportation assistance, and career planning.

- **Adult education.** Many centers provide opportunities for adults who are interested in furthering their education or enhancing their basic skills. Adult education often includes: General Educational Development (GED) classes; English as a Second Language (ESL) courses; adult basic education classes; and basic computer classes that introduce users to the keyboard, mouse, and basic applications that prepare them for more advanced computer training.

- **Computer training and public access.** Delivering technology access is a key component of Neighborhood Networks. To help people who are experiencing computer access for the first time

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achieve a degree of comfort, many centers offer some instruction aimed at equipping participants with basic computer skills. Computer training may include one-on-one training, regularly scheduled classes, or a combination of the two methods. Computer classes range from basic (i.e., computer literacy and keyboarding, etc.), to intermediate (i.e., word processing, e-mail, Internet, etc.), to advanced skill development classes that include graphics applications, spreadsheets, and databases. Many centers also offer public access and/or open lab time to provide members of the community with the opportunity to use technology to explore their own interests, develop new skills, and become familiar with computers.

■ **Afterschool programs.** Many Neighborhood Networks centers offer afterschool programs structured according to the age groups of young residents. Afterschool activities may include:

❏ Homework assistance, tutoring, mentoring, and other activities that offer academic enrichment.

❏ Internet access to improve computer skills, conduct research to complete homework assignments, and communicate with peers via e-mail.

❏ Multimedia publishing, such as designing personal Web pages, constructing family or neighborhood profiles, and creating project reports for school.

❏ Outlets for creative expression, such as composing music, creating digital art, and producing digital stories.

❏ Computer games that encourage children and young adults to learn more about technology.

■ **Senior services.** Classes and activities of interest to seniors might include computer literacy, Internet access, financial planning, small business development, outreach to family and friends, youth mentoring, research, and obtaining health information.

■ **Microenterprises.** Many centers help residents establish their own microenterprise. With the support and resources of a center, residents have established a variety of businesses, including preparing and distributing specialty food items, printing services, and producing a variety of publications.

For More Information

For more information on Neighborhood Networks, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at *www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org*, or call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312–2743. The hearing impaired may access the number via TTY by calling the Federal Information Relay Service at (800) 877–8339.