

SAMPLE BUSINESS PLAN FOR APPLICANTS OF THE ROSS NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS FUNDING CATEGORY

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A good business plan is one of the best ways developers of Neighborhood Networks Computer Technology Centers can ensure success. It is more than just a marketing tool; it fleshes out the mission and structure of the center. This plan is the first step in identifying the purpose, goals and objectives of the center. It is a tool that allows Neighborhood Network planners to THINK through their ideas, solidify their intentions and objectives, and work efficiently with a plan towards specific goals. Fewer errors are made because actions will be based upon research and analysis.

There is no single best format for a business plan. This one incorporates items and concepts from the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Business Plan, which has been used successfully by thousands of small businesses.

KEY POINTS WHEN DEVELOPING THIS PLAN:

The objective of this sample Neighborhood Network Business Plan is to provide guidance to those who are developing the computer learning centers so they may plan for sustainability beyond the 3-year term of the grant. It also provides a framework and means for evaluating results, best practices, and successful operations.

Individual center planners may find that this format needs to be modified to suit the needs of the center, PHA, and residents. This plan serves as only the minimum information needed. Your narrative will act as a supplement to this business plan. To begin your business plan, some good rules of thumb to follow when preparing the plan are:

- 1) **Plan from the start to be self sufficient.** Many centers, from the beginning, will rely on the HUD grant as well as the minimum 25% match requirement. The goal should be to progress from substantial reliance on federal grants and to self sustaining status within three years. HUD strongly encourages all centers to incorporate this goal into their NN Business Plan. The Business Plan is a road map to follow with goals and action steps to guide decision making. It also provides a way to communicate the center's operations, goals, and philosophy to personnel, residents, community partners, foundations, and other financial and business contacts.
- 2) **Are the residents involved in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of the computer learning center?** Resident involvement and "ownership" of the process is a necessity and key to the center's success. All plans should include a section describing resident involvement either as designers or operators as well as customers.