



**BCT PARTNERS**

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# Using Technology to Change Communities

**Presented by:**

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# Agenda

- I. Introduction
- II. Community Development  
Technology Environment
- III. Sample Community Initiatives
- IV. Conclusion



# Technology in the Nonprofit Sector

- Computers and Internet allow for greater speed and efficiency, but early adopters of emerging technologies are in the minority
- Financial and human resources are needed to access and use tech innovations
- Nonprofits often lack the capacity to choose from among new tech products and apply technology tools to their organization's problems

# Key Factors in the Dissemination of Community Development Technology

- Community Technology Intermediaries
- Innovation Champions
- Research on Tech Use
- Strong Communication Channels
- Policy and Program Supports
- Affordability, Low Complexity, High Maturity, High Relevance

# Innovative Technology Practice Areas

- **Neighborhood Information Systems** – combine data, maps, and data analysis into a single system, usually available online
- **Digital Inclusion Initiatives** – integrate different technologies into community building strategies
- **Internet-based Microenterprise Support** – enables greater numbers of entrepreneurs to access credit more efficiently
- **Electronic Advocacy** – integrate tech tools in advocacy campaigns aimed at policy change

# Neighborhood Information Systems

- Community Building Practice:  
geographic data analysis and use
- Successful Uses
  - *The Providence Plan*
  - *Center for Neighborhood Knowledge  
at University of California, Los Angeles*

# The Providence Plan

- Mission: Citywide and Neighborhood Revitalization
- Worked with Brown University to build a one-stop information system
- System holds historical data on health, properties, education and vital statistics
- Available via website
- TPP trains community organizations on how to use the data resources

# The Providence Plan

- Community Impact:
  - *Early warning system to predict & prevent housing abandonment*
  - *Neighborhood policing using weekly crime-mapping analysis to target efforts*
  - *Greater understanding, communication, and advocacy around prisoner reentry issues*



# Center for Neighborhood Knowledge at UCLA

- Mission: Nonprofit Capacity Building
- Launched Neighborhood Knowledge California (NKCA) in 2002.
  - *Statewide system aimed at promoting greater equity in banking, housing policy, and other metro issues*
  - *Assembles multiple databases into a web-based toolkit that can be used to document, analyze, and map demographic, housing, economic, financial and health indicators*
  - *More streamlined than desktop GIS, user-friendly*

# Center for Neighborhood Knowledge

- Community Impact:
  - *Online public, govt agencies, and community organizations have access to powerful data and mapping tools to support community building efforts statewide*
  - *Census and mortgage lending data; check-cashing establishments and brownfields*



# Digital Inclusion

- Community Building Practice:  
Technology Access & Training
- Successful Uses:
  - *East Baltimore Digital Village*
  - *Wireless Philadelphia (in planning)*



# East Baltimore Digital Village

- Vision: Technology as a Part of Everyday Living
- Partnered with Maryland Center for Arts and Technology
- Leveraged Fed Empowerment Zone designation and High-tech Focused Local Economic Development Strategy



# East Baltimore Digital Village

- 300 residents received an HP computer, all-in-one printer/fax/scanner, and 10 hours of computer training
- Provided computer and Internet access and training at locations throughout the city where residents were already accessing social services
- Provided 185 teachers in 6 schools with a laptop and training which could be integrated into classroom curriculum



# East Baltimore Digital Village

- Nearly 10% of community residents have benefited from the program
- Participating schools now exceed state standards for technology
- Website provides residents with info on childcare, employment and health



# Philadelphia Wireless

- Nonprofit organization working in partnership with EarthLink and city leadership to make wireless high-speed Internet access available citywide
- Collaborating with other nonprofits to link financial counseling & tax assistance; a prepaid debit card; and wireless Internet, computers & training



# Internet-based Microenterprise Support

- Developing Online Tools for Microentrepreneurs
- Successful projects:
  - *Count Me In*
  - *CircleLending*





# Count Me In

- Internet-based model for credit scoring and lending to women with poor credit
- Makes business loans of \$500 to \$10,000
- Users can apply for a loan, ask questions, take workshops, join discussion groups, and donate to CMI



# Count Me In

- Innovations
  - *Adapted a FICO credit-scoring model*
  - *Added a credit bureau report and CMI's own questions to supplement loan application*
  - *Created a credit-scoring model designed for lending to women*
  - *Streamlined application process by not asking for submission of complete business plan, etc.*

# Count Me In

- Community Impact
  - *Reduced cost of lending to this population. \$300 per loan vs. \$7000 employing face-to-face programs*
  - *Serves larger numbers of borrowers than most other microlending programs in the US*
  - *Statewide partnerships in 14 states*

# CircleLending

- For-profit business that merges informal and interpersonal lending with microenterprise development
- Web-enabled loan-servicing software created with help of MIT grad students
- Users can download free materials and purchase some products and services

# CircleLending

- Innovations
  - *Tailors repayment schedules for each client*
  - *Keeps costs low by using Automated Clearing House (ACH) system of direct debit/deposit*
  - *Allows clients to report payment information to Equifax to build credit history*



# Electronic Advocacy

- Community Building Practice:  
Policy Advocacy
- Successful Campaigns:
  - *Free the Schuylkill River Park*
  - *No on Proposition 54*



# Free the Schuylkill River Park

- Goal: to pressure large rail transport company to provide pedestrian access to park trail, currently blocked by freight trains
- Utilized Internet as central component for mobilizing constituents to pressure policy-makers and key decision-makers
- [www.citizenspeak.org](http://www.citizenspeak.org) – free electronic letter-writing tool, allows users to tailor prewritten letters



# Free Schuylkill River Park

- Technology Strategies
  - *Building an Online Constituency*
  - *Activating Viral Dissemination*
  - *Using Constituent Feedback to Refine Campaign Strategy*
  - *Coordinating Online and Offline Tactics*
  - *Empowering the Grassroots with Decision-Making Authority*





# No on Proposition 54

- Goal: To persuade CA voters to vote against Prop 54 (Racial Privacy Initiative) on Oct 2003 statewide ballot
- Framed unique messages to different constituency groups
- Started campaign early
- Landslide defeat



# Keep in Mind

- Include tech plan at beginning of your planning process, not after implementation
- Technology is a tool, not an end in itself
- Free or low-cost is just as good



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