

# DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT KANSANS

## PUBLIC PROPOSALS- SECOND ROUND



**Application Title:** Omni Circle Group - Central Park Community Tech Hub

**Organization Name:** Omni Circle Group

### Project Executive Summary

#### Goals of the proposed project:

The proposed Community Tech Hub will provide a centralized resource for digital literacy and technology access in the economically distressed Central Park neighborhood of Topeka. Central Park residents face substantial challenges related to digital equity, including limited affordable broadband access and insufficient opportunities to develop essential digital skills. These barriers prevent many individuals and families from participating fully in today's digital economy.

The Tech Hub aims to bridge these gaps by offering free access to technology, bilingual digital literacy training, and culturally relevant resources. Integrated into Omni Circle's existing programs, it will expand opportunities for underserved residents to access online services, educational tools, and economic resources.

Key objectives include:

- Training 200 residents annually in essential digital literacy skills.
- Connecting 50 Spanish-speaking residents annually to bilingual workshops and resources.
- Increasing broadband access and device usage among Central Park households by 20% within two years.

The Hub will deliver immediate benefits, such as increased connectivity and job readiness, while fostering long-term economic growth by empowering residents with the skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven society.

#### Needs addressed by the proposed project:

Central Park faces a critical digital divide that limits residents' access to essential services, education, and job opportunities. Over a fifth of households lack internet access, leaving many families unable to participate in virtual learning, telehealth, or remote work. Low-income and Spanish-speaking residents are particularly affected, as they often encounter additional barriers such as affordability and language accessibility.

The Community Tech Hub will address these issues by equipping residents with the tools, skills, and support needed to succeed in a digital world. For individuals without home internet, the Hub will provide free access to Wi-Fi, computers, and software. Bilingual digital literacy workshops will ensure Spanish-speaking residents can fully benefit from these resources, while personalized assistance will help families enroll in affordable broadband programs and learn to use technology effectively.

This project will meet urgent needs while building lasting capacity for the community. Residents will gain skills to access vital online services, apply for jobs, and manage finances, reducing systemic barriers to economic and social mobility. By addressing both the immediate lack of access and the underlying skill gaps, the Tech Hub will play a vital role in creating a more inclusive and equitable future for Central Park.

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### **Service partners involved in the proposed project:**

The Community Tech Hub will engage new and existing partners to provide digital access and skill-building resources for Central Park residents.

If awarded the grant, Cox Communications, PCs for People, TechSoup, and TCALC (Topeka Center for Advanced Learning & Careers) will be critical new partners in expanding the Hub's services. Cox Communications will connect eligible residents to affordable internet plans, such as ConnectAssist and Connect2Compete, and collaborate through their Cox Access Partner Program (CAPP) to subsidize internet services and devices. PCs for People will supply affordable, refurbished computers and Wi-Fi hotspots, while TechSoup will provide low-cost, internet-connected (5G) tablets via their T-Mobile partnership. TCALC will partner to deliver youth-focused digital literacy workshops and career readiness training, equipping the next generation with critical digital skills.

Omni Circle already collaborates with NetWork Kansas, Microsoft's Nonprofit Tech Acceleration (NTA) program, and the Kansas Department of Commerce. This grant will enable us to strengthen these partnerships and expand their impact. NetWork Kansas will help integrate entrepreneurial resources into the Hub, supporting small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. The Kansas Department of Commerce and NetWork Kansas will provide technical resources and assist in publicizing the Hub's services to a broader audience. Through Microsoft NTA, Omni Circle will continue to access digital tools and technology that enhance our ability to serve historically underrepresented communities.

This combination of new and expanded partnerships will ensure the Tech Hub is a comprehensive, sustainable solution for advancing digital equity in Central Park.

### **Community and/or stakeholders involved in the proposed project:**

The primary stakeholders for the Community Tech Hub are the residents of the Central Park neighborhood and the broader Topeka community, particularly underserved populations including low-income households, Spanish-speaking individuals, and small business owners. These groups face significant barriers to digital access and literacy, making them the key beneficiaries of the Hub's services. Community engagement will include outreach to Central Park residents through Omni Circle's existing programs, ensuring alignment with the needs of the neighborhood. Spanish-speaking residents will have access to bilingual workshops, tailored resources, and culturally relevant support to help bridge language barriers in digital equity.

Local entrepreneurs and aspiring business owners, another critical stakeholder group, will benefit from the integration of the Tech Hub with Omni Circle's entrepreneurial support programs. The Hub will provide access to digital tools, training, and resources necessary for business growth, connecting them to broader opportunities for economic advancement.

Educational institutions such as TCALC (Topeka Center for Advanced Learning & Careers) will partner in engaging youth, offering career-readiness training, and fostering digital skills development for students. Additional stakeholders include local nonprofits and service providers, such as NetWork Kansas and the Kansas Department of Commerce Office of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, who will help publicize the Hub's services and provide technical assistance. Together, these stakeholders share a vested interest in creating a more digitally inclusive and economically resilient Central Park community, ensuring the Hub's success through their engagement and participation.

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### Intended impact of the proposed project:

The Community Tech Hub aims to significantly reduce the digital divide in the Central Park neighborhood and greater Topeka by providing equitable access to technology, digital literacy training, and resources. The project will empower residents to fully participate in today's digital economy, improve employability, support small business growth, and increase access to essential services like telehealth and virtual learning.

Key intended outcomes include:

- **Improved Digital Literacy:** Training at least 200 residents annually in essential digital skills, enabling them to access job opportunities, manage personal finances, and navigate online services confidently.
- **Enhanced Economic Opportunities:** Supporting at least 50 Spanish-speaking residents annually through bilingual workshops, enabling them to overcome language barriers and access tools for economic advancement.
- **Increased Technology Access:** Providing free Wi-Fi, loanable devices, and technology resources to ensure underserved households can connect to the digital world.
- **Support for Entrepreneurs:** Integrating digital tools and resources into existing entrepreneurial programs, helping local small business owners and startups thrive in a technology-driven marketplace.

In the short term, the Hub will address immediate needs for digital access and skill-building. In the long term, it will foster economic resilience, educational growth, and greater community connectivity. By empowering residents with the tools and knowledge to succeed in a digital society, the Tech Hub will create lasting, transformative change for Central Park and beyond, advancing equity and opportunity for all.

### Total amount requested in DOCK 2.0 funding:

\$191,250.00 USD



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