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HELPING MAKE ENTREPRENEURS "TECH SAVVY": THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUR FIELD GRANTEES

Introduction

In 2000, FIELD funded five microenterprise programs to develop innovative pilot projects to help microentrepreneurs grow their businesses. Within the microenterprise industry, it has become clear that many microbusinesses remain fairly small and marginal despite their owners' desire to increase their income-generating ability. Although microenterprise programs generally recognize the need to provide more services – beyond basic training and technical assistance or a simple loan – most have difficulty overcoming major obstacles such as costs, as well as time and place constraints of clients. Part of the solution to these problems is to offer services that clients really want, that have high demand and hold the promise of high impact on the businesses themselves. And part of the solution is to identify more efficient ways to deliver technical content. Not surprisingly, technology has emerged as a key strategy meeting both these requirements.

This *FIELD forum* presents the experiences of four grantees that currently are offering access to and using technology as a means to advance clients' businesses.¹ The four featured grantees are:

- Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN), Bethlehem, N.H.

- Goodwill Industries of North Georgia, BusinessNOW, Atlanta, Ga.
- Appalachian By Design (ABD), Lewisburg, W. Va.
- West Company, Ukiah, Calif.

Their experiences encompass a range of initiatives. Some have focused on encouraging microentrepreneurs to use computers, and to master a variety of software programs as well as the Internet. Others have focused on helping clients access more technical assistance, as well as increase and improve their marketing efforts. All of them have found that to serve growing businesses, they have had to grow themselves and expand their own technological competencies.

With their work still in progress, the grantees have not yet measured the effects of these projects on business sales and income to truly understand the effects of technology access. Still, there is anecdotal information that suggests its value and helps explain how to implement technology programs successfully. This *forum* summarizes the project's learning and suggests where interested practitioners can learn more.

¹ The fifth member of the Follow-Up Services Cluster, Women's Economic Ventures (WEV), is not included in this *forum*, because it does not have a technology program for clients. However, WEV is using the Mastermind model as a form of group coaching for clients. Information about that model is available from WEV at www.wevonline.org/Training/MasterMind.htm

WHAT PROGRAMS ARE DOING

WREN – Technology Center

Services offered: Access to computers, the Internet, scanners, printers, photocopier and a digital camera. Ninety different technology classes. Software includes:

- Microsoft Office
- Quickbooks
- Access
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Illustrator
- Paintshop Pro
- Front Page
- PowerPoint
- Outlook
- Outlook Express

WREN outsources to technology experts for more advanced classes in Photoshop, Excel and other programs.

WREN classes are most often one- to three-day courses, lasting two to three hours per day. All classes are located at the WREN Technology Center. Morning, afternoon, evening and weekend classes are offered. Classes are open to the public, but offered at a reduced rate to WREN members (membership is \$25 per year). There are no prerequisites for WREN classes.

WREN offers classes at low prices, with discounts for members. Classes for members cost \$10 per hour. Classes for non-members start at \$20 per hour.

BusinessNOW – The MicroBusiness Center (MBC)

Services offered: A full-service business center to help microentrepreneurs with their business strategy and development. The MBC offers the following hardware, software and services:

- 11 computers (Software includes: MSWORD 2000, Quickbooks, Access, PowerPoint & Publisher; CD Burner, Adobe Photoshop; MGI Photo Suite; MS Office Small Business Tools)

- Fax (local & long distance) and telephones
- Color copier and printer
- Laminating machine
- Electric hole puncher
- Velo-binding machine
- Scanner
- Zip drive
- Meeting space
- Basic computer assistance (currently this is done one-on-one, not in organized classes)
- Accounting and legal advising
- Digital camera
- Community resource information

BusinessNOW is located within Goodwill Industries of North Georgia, which hosts the BusinessNOW program. The MBC is offered to BusinessNOW graduates and the public. BusinessNOW graduates receive reduced entry into the MBC with a \$50 per year graduate support fee. The cost to the public is \$3 per visit. The cost for assistance from a CPA or attorney is \$5 per session for graduates. The MBC is open MW 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., TTH 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., FSAT 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Appalachian By Design (ABD)

Services offered: ABD uses video training and e-mail to enhance its ability to serve knitters in very remote areas.

- Video: ABD created videos for knitters who cannot attend knitting trainings or as a review for people who attend.
- E-mail: In addition to video, ABD uses e-mail as a way to streamline the order and knitting processes by e-mailing pat-terns and using e-mail to notify staff when orders are complete.

ABD has created two videos – a knitting training video and a video of its annual meeting. To date, the videos have been made available to approximately 14 people.

West Company

Services offered: West Company's Commerce Café consists of the following services:

- FYI packets (monthly business information newsletters)
- Business training/consulting
- Business development classes
- Networking nights
- Site visits
- Technology education (technology and e-commerce training have been incorporated into West Company's "Build a Better Business" workshop series. However, the need for more in-depth technology training for their clients has been identified.
- Members only Web site
- Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)

The Commerce Café Web site offers:

- Training in marketing, finance and management topics. On-line courses on business development, e-commerce, and other topics
- Links to the Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the Small Business Administration (SBA)
- A bulletin board to post questions and receive answers from experts
- Monthly technical assistance over telephone or e-mail to address business owners specific issues
- Technology training and coaching
- The e-commerce prep packet. A self-assessment questionnaire to determine if a business is ready for e-commerce.

West Company served 27 of its 200 clients during its first pilot year of the Commerce Café. West Company charges clients \$60 per year for all of the services they receive from the Commerce Café. As it continues to develop its Web site, West Company hopes to offer on-line services to more clients.

Technology programs as a business development strategy

Why should microenterprise programs offer basic and advanced technology services to their clients? First, microentrepreneurs are anxious to learn additional skills to help them to succeed in their business. In the new economy, the use of technology is inevitably an essential business skill. And, while traditional Community Technology Centers can offer excellent technology education courses, they do not offer this training in a business context. Microenterprise organizations can offer technology courses taught specifically for the business client, offering them tools to complement their growing business endeavors. At the microenterprise organizations highlighted in this *forum*, even the most basic training is done from a business perspective, which motivates microentrepreneurs who perceive the connection between adoption of new skills and financial gain.

Second, in rural areas, there are fewer services and they are often costly and limited. People must travel long distances or do not have any access to technology services in their area. For example, in rural New Hampshire, two colleges offer technology courses, but they are expensive, costing \$300 to \$600 per course. There also is one computer lab in a grammar school that offers more affordable classes, but on a more restricted schedule. WREN is more flexible, offering a wide selection of courses at different times throughout the week. The cost of classes for members ranges from \$20 to \$40 (\$10 per hour), and scholarships are available.

Third, clients have a previously developed relationship of trust with the microenterprise program, making them readier to seek additional assistance, especially on technology issues that can be intimidating. Users of BusinessNOW's MicroBusiness Center, for example, originally sought out the program's business training based on Goodwill's strong reputation for extended employment training and other services. Their business training

experience naturally led them to access other services. Similarly, at WREN, members are very involved with WREN through classes, business consulting and coaching services. It was a natural transition for members to access WREN's technology center as an outgrowth of the other services they received.

Finally, technology services may offer new avenues for fund-raising, not just for the service itself, but also for the overall program. Many funders seek programs that offer comprehensive technology services as a means to an end, rather than stand-alone technology programs. According to an article on NPower's² Web site entitled, "Five Tips for Crafting a Winning Technology Proposal":

Solid technology planning – which should be integrated into your organization's larger strategic planning effort – will ensure a correspondence between the technology initiatives you propose and what your organization most urgently needs to advance its mission [T]echnology projects not anchored in organizational mission and priorities too often run aground.

(http://www.imakeneews.com/npower/e_article000012404.cfm)

Offering technology services in a business context, even if in collaboration with a partner organization, may enable microenterprise organizations to receive funding from new sources.

Services entrepreneurs ask for most

Microentrepreneurs have a broad range of technology needs, including hardware and software, support in using them, access to technical information, communication and marketing. The FIELD grantees engaged in these pilots report that the list of most requested services includes:

- Basic Windows
- Quickbooks, bookkeeping, Excel
- Internet research
- Software/hardware (computers to use)
- Desktop publishing – graphic design (labels)

- Digital camera/scanner
- Web marketing
- Technical support
- Web Cam demos, video
- Teleclasses – ability to get technical, business consulting and other assistance over the telephone

As the grantees reflected on this list together at an October 2001 meeting, it became clear that these requests can be understood as representative of steps on a "technology ladder" or a continuum of sophistication with respect to the use of technology for personal and business needs. The steps begin at a very basic level and then incorporate the growing, more complex and varied ways that entrepreneurs use technology as they master it. The first two steps of the ladder represent the basic building blocks of technology use – having access to the equipment itself (processors, printers, scanners, modems, software, etc.) that enables microentrepreneurs to take advantage of the power of computers. The middle steps relate to building basic skills to use this equipment for communication, increased productivity and financial management. The highest steps represent those functions that help microentrepreneurs expand their range of contacts, their access to information, and their connection to markets.

The initial steps encompass basic skills and needs that are similar for large numbers of clients. The later steps reflect uses of the technology that are individual and specific to particular microbusiness needs.

When viewing this ladder, which includes examples of grantee program offerings, it is important to keep in mind that the levels of client experience are extremely varied. In addition, approaches to meeting client needs are not necessarily as linear as portrayed in the ladder. This visual, however, can help a program determine the best way to approach clients' technology needs.

² NPower's mission is to help other non-profits use technology to better serve their communities.



Below is a summary of how the FIELD grantees respond to client needs on the different “rungs” of the ladder.



Hardware access

Access to computers is essential for microentrepreneurs. However, even with donations and reduced costs, the costs of buying a computer remains prohibitive for

many microentrepreneurs. Often the computers accessible to microentrepreneurs are out-dated, and some are not powerful enough to access the Internet.

- Appalachian By Design offers computers to members who are willing to participate on its steering committee. These computers are often refurbished, but are powerful enough to access the Internet. The need for higher speed Internet connections is not as essential for the knitters, as they are not trying to compete with larger businesses. ABD also helps clients access low-rate loans for knitting machines. The new knitting machines, costing approximately \$2,200, allow clients to download patterns from their computers, which speeds the production process.
- Both BusinessNOW and WREN offer technology labs to their clients. (The labs have flexible hours and clients can spend extended time using equipment.)
- WREN also offers classes explaining how to buy a computer.

Software access

Businesses have a range of software needs. It is important to have updated software, and updating software regularly can become expensive.

- Software access is included with hardware access in the technology centers offered by BusinessNOW and WREN.

Computer/software training, basic literacy

Computer and software training is at the core of technology centers’ services. It is a challenge to serve a broad range of clients with needs ranging from how to use a mouse to advanced training in Photoshop. Programs must work hard to keep up with the needs of their more advanced clients while not forgetting the basic needs of those new to technology.

- ABD offers assistance to clients using knitting software on their knitting machines so that they can e-mail and download patterns.

WREN'S COURSE OFFERING FOR MAY 2001

COURSE	DAY	DATES	TIME	COST (MEMBER/ NON-MEMBER)
Merging Labels and Letters	Tues.	5/1	9 a.m.-12 p.m.	\$30M/\$45NM
Post Photos on the Web	Wed.	5/2	4-6:30 p.m.	\$25M/\$37NM
Windows Explorer in depth	Thurs.	5/3	9-11 a.m.	\$20M/\$30NM
Intro to Computers	Thurs.	5/3	5-8 p.m.	\$30M/\$45NM
Create a Business Card	Sat.	5/5	9-11 a.m.	\$20M/\$30NM
Intro to Microsoft Publisher	Tues.	5/8	1-4 p.m.	\$30M/\$45NM
Intro to Microsoft Windows	Thurs.	5/10	5-8 p.m.	\$30M/\$45NM
Intro to the Internet	Sat.	5/12	9-11 a.m.	\$30M/\$45NM
Advanced E-mail (MS Outlook)	Tues.	5/15	9-11 a.m.	\$20M/\$30NM
Create a Business Card	Wed.	5/16	1-3 p.m.	\$20M/\$30NM
Intro to Microsoft Access	Thurs.	5/17, 5/24, 5/31	9 a.m.-12 p.m.	\$90M/\$135NM
Intermediate Microsoft Excel	Fri.	5/18, 5/25	5-7 p.m.	\$40M/\$60NM
Intro to Microsoft Publisher	Mon.	5/21	1-4 p.m.	\$30M/\$45NM
Tips on Buying a Computer	Mon.	5/21	6:30-8:30 p.m.	\$20M/\$30NM
Intro to Microsoft Excel	Tues.	5/22, 5/29	9-11 a.m.	\$40M/\$60NM
Intro to Microsoft Word	Wed.	5/23, 5/30	6-8 p.m.	\$40M/\$60NM
Intro to Microsoft Windows	Sat.	5/26	9 a.m.-12 p.m.	\$30M/\$45NM

- WREN, West Company and BusinessNOW offer training to clients. WREN has a large offering of classes available to clients in the computer center. BusinessNOW and West Company do one-on-one training as needed, with WEST occasionally offering the training at the entrepreneur's home or business.

Connectivity

The challenge of connecting to technology can be summed up in two words: access and speed. For many microentrepreneurs, obtaining access itself is difficult, because of inferior hardware, monthly charges or limited availability in rural areas. For example, in northern New Hampshire, only 60 percent of residents have a home computer with access to the Internet. Many still access computers and the Internet through public libraries or

tech centers. And for many microentrepreneurs, even access to a dial-up connection is insufficient. In order to compete with larger companies, or even other small businesses, high-speed Internet access is needed to send large files, use Flash animation and/or post art work or other images.

- For WREN, connection speed is a big issue. TechLink-NH, a newly formed digital divide organization sheltered by WREN, recently received \$40,000 in seed funding from New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to offer high-speed Internet access. (Currently, the only high-speed option is to install a satellite, which costs about \$80 per month.)
- At BusinessNOW in Atlanta, high-speed Internet access is offered to clients on all computers.

Financial management – software programs for financial management

Financial management software is essential for any business today. And offering classes in how to use such software is essential to successful business development.

- WREN offers several classes in accounting software, with a focus on small business accounting packages.
- BusinessNOW offers access to accounting software and limited one-on-one training in how to use it. The services of an accountant are also offered through the MicroBusiness Center.
- West Company's Commerce Café uses its Web site to offer resources, including links to SCORE and the SBA, and finance training to members.

Using technology for communication, Internet research, industry research, market research and networking (e.g., on-line trade associations and communities, e-mail)

The Internet opens up a world of resources that microentrepreneurs would not otherwise have access to. Offering microentrepreneurs tools to access these resources helps broaden their understanding of their markets and allows them to communicate more efficiently with each other, as well as their programs.

- The Commerce Café's member directory is posted on West Company's Web site, which also spotlights one entrepreneur every month and offers a way to contact members. The Web site also hosts a calendar of upcoming events.
- Clients use the Internet connection at WREN to do industry research and communicate with others in their industry. Over 200 of WREN's members are listed on the on-line business directory maintained by the organization.
- Clients communicate with ABD staff via email to trouble-shoot, alert them when they have completed a knitting project and are ready to drop it off and pick up

more work, and to receive patterns via e-mail (for clients who have the proper knitting machine).

Marketing materials

It may seem basic, but access to software for the creation of brochures and business cards is a great asset to businesses – cutting costs and allowing entrepreneurs to create vital marketing tools.

- The most commonly used software at WREN includes Photoshop and Illustrator to create business cards, brochures, labels and other marketing materials. Creating such products typically is expensive. At WREN, entrepreneurs are able to create these items themselves and use WREN's lab and supplies to produce them. In addition, WREN offers classes in creating business cards and brochures.
- BusinessNOW clients also receive training in business card creation, and use the lab to produce these and other marketing materials.

Web marketing, e-mail marketing, e-commerce

Finally, developing a Web site to host a brochure or a portfolio, or to perform e-commerce transactions is a possible next step for microentrepreneurs.

- West Company's technology consultant trains clients in Web site development and e-commerce.
- WREN also offers classes in Web site development.

Building an effective technology program

Although the case for technology is apparent, building a technology program is not easy. Programs face considerable challenges in terms of financing the costs, acquiring the skills and resolving issues associated with access. Additionally, programs need to develop a strategy that enables them respond to client demand in a cost-effective way.

Finance

Technology programs are very expensive. Whether the program is designed as a drop-in center, such as BusinessNOW, or a training program, such as WREN's, computers, printers, modems, scanners and software are required for clients to use. In addition, this equipment must be constantly updated to keep it current. BusinessNOW's MicroBusiness Center, for example, contains 11 computers with Internet access, one copier, three telephones, one scanner, one zip drive and one laminator, which allows approximately 10 to 12 clients to be served daily. WREN has five computers with Internet access, a digital camera, a scanner and a copier serving on average, 15 to 20 clients per day.

Programs should anticipate buying more RAM or purchasing new computers every two-and-a-half years, and replacing software every year-and-a-half. It is easier for programs to get assistance or reduced costs for software than for hardware. For software, there are resources such as TechSoup (see resource list below), that offer software at deeply discounted prices, and programs can download software, or buy it online at discounted prices. In addition, it is easier to find software donors. As an alternative to buying new computers, some programs are considering refurbishing older computers. However, this involves finding partners or vol-

unteers capable of refurbishing computers or hiring skilled people to do this.

In addition to hardware and software purchases, technology program budgets include line items such as instructors, consultants and training. Among FIELD's grantees, costs for setting up the infrastructure for a technology program ranged from \$57,000 to \$65,000. The lower-end budget was supplemented with pro bono work. Annual operating budgets of approximately \$25,000 allowed programs to serve some 250 clients. Sources of funding for these programs included: FIELD, private foundations, corporate foundations, individual donors and state support.

Although microenterprise programs can expect clients to help pay for these services, their share has been limited to about 16 percent to 17 percent of the annual costs. (See box for detail on two programs.) At BusinessNOW, clients pay a daily usage fee of \$3, allowing them access to all the equipment and space to work for the day. At WREN, clients pay \$10 an hour for technology classes – a fee in keeping with costs of other services in the area. WREN's fees are significantly lower than those charged by nearby centers, and it offers scholarships so any member can take their classes.

When considering developing an independent technology center, programs with nearby Community Technology Centers should con-

COST PER CLIENT:

Below are two examples of the cost of offering technology access and training

BUSINESSNOW	WREN
Total number of unique MBC users for 2001: 295	Total number of unique Technology Center users for 2001: 256
Total 2001 expenses: \$65,435.00 (For this year, there were no direct development costs for the center)	The total 2001 expenses: \$56,523.00 (For this year, there were no direct development costs for the center)
MBC's cost per user: \$221.81	WREN's cost per user: \$220.79
Total client revenues: \$10,368	Total client revenues: \$9,504
Average cost recovery per user: \$35.15	Average cost recovery per user: \$37.13
Subsidy per user: \$186.66	Subsidy per user: \$183.66



sider partnering and sharing services. This can help both organizations with fund-raising, and lowers the risk of developing a new program from scratch.

Capacity

Technology programs depend on staff skilled in information technology, knowledgeable about business needs and adept at training and one-on-one technical assistance. These individuals are not easy to find, and when they are available, they can be expensive. But they are the cornerstones of effective programs. FIELD grantees emphasized that programs must have in-house capacity, or strongly developed partnerships, to successfully offer technology services to clients.

If an organization chooses to offer technology assistance in-house, a dedicated staff person should provide the technology training. It is not essential to find a perfect “techie”: an organization can train someone in-house, and technical skills can be developed through classes and training. It is better for the trainer to be a person who can relate to the clients than to be someone with technology skills but limited understanding of, and rapport with, program clients.

Qualities that make a good technology instructor

FIELD grantees identified the following as the most important skills needed in an instructor:

- Practical business experience or previous educational experience
- Technical skills, including experience with computers and various software programs
- Communication skills, including speaking to the level of the non-technology expert and microbusiness person
- Teaching skills, including using multiple techniques (e.g., visual, verbal, written)
- Patience
- Enthusiasm

Client Demand

As illustrated in the technology ladder, clients have many different needs, and it is difficult to attend to all of them. In addition, as clients “step up” the ladder, their needs become more individualized, relating more and more directly to their specific business. Although the FIELD grantees offer one-on-one technical assistance, most have learned to maximize their services by offering group classes or open access to equipment with limited support. For example, WREN began its technology center by offering one-on-one assistance to clients on an as-needed basis. However, this was soon recognized as an inefficient, ineffective and costly form of assistance. Gradually WREN moved toward training courses, and now has extensive course offerings. However, the need for one-on-one assistance has not ended. Clients continue to make demands on the technology center manager. In response, WREN encourages class participation, and charges \$25 per hour fees (scholarships available) for advanced one-on-one, in-depth technical assistance.

It is interesting to note that BusinessNOW, which is in an early stage of developing its technology center, is not yet offering technology classes, and assistance is provided on an as-needed basis, just as WREN’s once was. The technology manager is inundated with questions from clients and has a difficult time managing her workload as a result. (BusinessNOW added an MBC assistant to help respond to users’ needs and requests. In addition, BusinessNOW is in the process of offering basic technology classes via a partner organization and/or a consultant.) Because this can cause burnout in technology staff, program managers are well advised to develop a program and cost structure that relies as much as possible on group settings, and reserves scarce technical assistance services for higher-end needs on the technology ladder.

Some final words on Web sites and e-commerce:

Many entrepreneurs have an “if we build it they will come” mentality about their Web sites. What they don’t realize is that they will need to do extensive on-line and off-line market research and marketing to bring business to the Web site they have created. Even microenterprise programs face this challenge. WREN, for example, has experienced difficulties with its own Web site, www.shophewrens.com/, where clients’ products are showcased. The intent was to save clients the expense and effort of building individual sites, and currently 30 members’ products are featured. Although the site receives 150 hits a day, only five sales have been made since the site was launched a year ago. WREN has noticed that when it receives major publicity, hits on the site increase. But the organization is still trying to determine why so few sales have been recorded and how to bring more purchasing customers to the site. This example shows how difficult it is to capture on-line sales, even when there is site traffic.

Finally, e-commerce is not for every business and can be expensive. West Company has developed a useful tool, “Are you Ready for E-commerce?” that assesses a client’s readiness for this marketing strategy. (This tool can be found on the FIELD Web site at www.fieldus.org/li/follow-up_news.html.) West Company’s technology assistance program places considerable emphasis on e-commerce for their clients’ businesses, but this emphasis includes an educational component aimed at helping clients understand the pros and cons of e-commerce before making an investment in this tool.

Resources for clients and organizations:

Technology services represent a new initiative for many microenterprise programs, and there is much yet to learn. The FIELD grantees are one resource, and there are others across the country that can serve as models.

In addition, there are many on-line resources that can help programs with technology programs. The table on page 11 contains resources recommended by WREN technology staff, who used many of them to build their program.

Additional Information

Additional information about FIELD’s Follow-Up Services cluster, can be found on the FIELD Web site at www.fieldus.org/li/follow-up.html. West Company’s e-commerce preparation tool can be found at www.fieldus.org/li/follow-up_news.html.

About FIELD

The Microenterprise Fund for Innovation, Effectiveness, Learning and Dissemination was a research and development organization dedicated to the expansion and sustainability of microenterprise development efforts, particularly those aimed at poor Americans. Its mission was to identify, develop and disseminate best practices, and to broadly educate policy makers, funders and others about microenterprise as an antipoverty intervention.

Established to make a significant, strategic contribution to building the capacity of the microenterprise industry, FIELD made 33 grants to practitioner organizations pioneering promising approaches to key challenges facing the field today. Those grants were part of five demonstration projects, centered on the following research topics: Follow-up Services, Achieving Scale, Institutional Models for Microenterprise Development Programs, Business Financing Products for the Poor and Assessing the Effectiveness of Training and Technical Assistance.

FIELD also managed and evaluated two additional demonstration projects, both of which were funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Those demonstrations focused on: how microenterprise programs could serve women moving from welfare to self-employment, and techniques that could



help low-income entrepreneurs better market their goods and services.

Additional information about all of these demonstration projects is available by visiting FIELD's Web site: www.fieldus.org. In addition,

past editions of the FIELD forum have been devoted to most of these topics. They can be downloaded from the Web site or obtained by contacting FIELD using phone, fax or email.

RESOURCE	NEED MET
<p>TechSoup</p>	<p>Hardware Access: TechSoup has everything you need to know about assessing your hardware needs, how and where to purchase hardware, and possible hardware donation programs. You can find information to help plan the purchase of new hardware, or to assess your current hardware at: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=1&topic=Hardware</p> <p>Software Access: Partnering with Microsoft, TechSoup offers software to nonprofits at significantly reduced prices. TechSoup's Web site offers guides for choosing appropriate software and how to get it: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=2&topic=Software</p> <p>Training: Microenterprise programs have a tremendous need for training both for staff and clients. TechSoup offers several articles about setting up a training program, and customizing training for your organization: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=9&topic=Training</p> <p>Connectivity: An entire section of TechSoup's site is dedicated to Internet connections. It offers information on everything from the history of the Internet, to choosing the best way to connect to the Internet: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=4&topic=Internet%20Connections Included is an Internet Connectivity Assessment worksheet that helps organizations understand how to assess their Internet needs: http://www.techsoup.org/worksheetpage.cfm?worksheetid=24 Also included is a guide to modems: http://www.techsoup.org/articlepage.cfm?Articleid=110&topicid=1</p> <p>Communication and Networking: In the "Using the Internet section" of TechSoup's site, organizations can find a wealth of information about everything from search engine submission to list serves and on-line communities. This information can help organizations learn about available options and use this information to educate clients: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=4&topic=Internet%20Connections</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued on page 12)</i></p>

RESOURCE	NEED MET
TechSoup	<p>Web Marketing, E-mail marketing, E-commerce: For some businesses, the Internet can be an effective way to market products and advertise. TechSoup dedicates a section of its Web site to building and creating an organization's (or a business's) Web site: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=13&topic=Web%20Building</p> <p>In addition, extensive information is offered about effective search engine submission to market a Web site in the "Using the Internet" section: http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=5&topic=Using%20the%20Internet</p> <p>Finally, TechSoup offers worksheets on creating a Web site development plan.</p>
Find accounting software and not-for-profit	<p>Financial Management: For information on choosing accounting software, visit: http://www.findaccountingsoftware.com or http://www.not-for-profit.org/accountants.htm (this site offers accounting information for nonprofits)</p>
Geocities	<p>Communication and Networking The Economic TeleDevelopment Forum offers an excellent on-line resource that includes information on free collaboration software and services that allow businesses and organizations to establish and host on-line dialogues (e.g., virtual meetings and forums). http://www.geocities.com/dhdeans/collabor.html</p>
Web site building tools	<p>There are several options for Web site development. Both TechSoup (http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=13&topic=Web%20Building&tag=hp073) and webmonkey http://www.webmonkey.com offer reference tools for where and how to build a Web site. TechSoup also offers helpful information about Web hosting services.</p>
NPower	<p>Fund-raising Resources: NPower offers information that helps organizations with fund-raising for technology programs. http://www.npower.org/resourcesandlinks/TechFundraising/TechnologyFundraisingResources.htm</p>
Foundation Center	<p>Fund-raising Resources: The Foundation Center offers information on technology funding sources. http://fdncenter.org/</p>