



TechSoup Global Final Report October 2009

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Name of Project: Refurbished Computer Initiative (RCI)
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Start Date: October 2007 **End Date:** October 2009

I. Financial Summary

- Total Project Budget Spent: **\$500,000**
- CETF Grant Amount: \$500,000
- Percentage of Match Funds Raised against Goal: (\$3,687,169 Client Fees) 100%
- Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: (Total Outcomes/Total Budget) \$47

II. Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

The goal of this project was to scale TechSoup Global’s (TSG) Refurbished Computer Initiative (RCI) program over two years so that California non-profits and low-income individuals will have an ongoing resource for quality, affordable refurbished computers. A critical component of a larger “ecosystem” of technology access and support, RCI supplies factory-refurbished computers with a warranty at the lowest possible cost to nonprofits and their low-income clients.

Goals and Objectives Summary

All goals and objectives have been completed. In all but two cases, TSG exceeded targeted outcome levels for the objectives: RCI exceeded target overall product distribution by 112%, page views for the RCI website by 215%, and organizations ordering for the first time by 430%. However, as discussed in the Accomplishments and Lessons Learned sections below, RCI did not quite reach the 20% goal for distribution in California (distribution for California is estimated at 15% of total distribution) and the percentage of distributed donated equipment reached 5%, not the targeted 15%. Unfortunately, much of the donated equipment received was not of high enough quality to be suitable for distribution. (Attachment A provides a detail discussion of the Goals and Objectives.)

Project Outcomes Summary

Outcome Description	Actual	Goal	Percent Completed
Number of systems and computers donated	10,621	9,500	112%

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III. Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

The first project goal was to increase the distribution of quality refurbished computers to non-profits and low-income consumers in California at the lowest price of any provider.

- The overarching goal of the RCI program is to increase access to technology for non-profits and low-income individuals — with increased product distribution as a major indicator. Before this grant project, TSG distributed approximately 950 RCI products per year. The project aimed to diversify product stream and increase distribution level to 9,500 products over the two-year period. TSG surpassed that goal by distributing 10,621 RCI desktops, monitors, laptops, and printers over the project period, 112% of the target. RCI also came close to meeting the goal of 20% of all products distributed going to California-based non-profits and low-income individuals. RCI distributed 1,563 products in the State, 15% of the total number of products distributed.
- TSG was able to surpass product distribution goals through efforts in marketing and communications, content development, technical enhancements to the RCI website, and business development, including the establishment of partnerships with new product donors and increased coordination with the main product distribution partner, Redemtech. In collaboration with Redemtech, TSG made significant strides in RCI program areas ranging from high-level strategy about growing and improving the program to tactical discussions about managing inventory and developing processes to support workflows. Outcomes include better program scalability and improved management, meeting most growth goals, improved customer experience, and an increase in the breadth of offerings to meet the needs of customers.
- The TSG goal for distribution of donated products was 15% of the total number of products distributed. Through business development efforts, RCI established relationships with a number of new corporate donating partners, including Visa, Intel, and Charles Schwab (please see below for the full list). Unfortunately, the percentage of distributed donated products was only 5% over the two-year grant period. A large part of this discrepancy resulted from a low percentage of donated equipment that was of high enough quality to be used in the RCI program. The products that could not be used were either sold or recycled (at an additional cost to TSG). Please see the Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results section for a discussion of steps planned, to remedy the situation going forward.
- TSG secured the following seven new corporate donor partners over the project period, surpassing the target of four new partners:
 - A prominent Internet company: 362 desktops and monitors
 - Intel: 405 laptops
 - HMR: 100 desktops
 - Merit: 72 desktops
 - Visa: 300 laptops
 - Schwab: 20 desktops
 - Granger: final donation quantity not yet determined
- TSG was able to extend the reach of the RCI program in California through a variety of efforts, including a targeted marketing campaign that increased awareness of the program among organizations in the state. RCI also partnered with Technology Access Programs (TAPs) and Microsoft Authorized Resellers (MARs) working in California communities to increase product distribution and access to support for individuals in-state.
- As previously discussed within quarterly reports, a number of technical enhancements to allow the RCI program to scale operationally are being addressed as part of SOUP, which is currently underway and will be completed in 2010. Program improvements that have recently been implemented:
 - A home page redesign that has improved customer experience and navigation.
 - Improved site-wide search functionality, which has increased traffic to individual programs such as RCI.
 - Secure sign-on and registration, streamlining the customer experience and removing previous hurdles to client conversion.

- Upcoming program improvements include an upgraded commerce server, bringing key enhancements that will allow further scale of the RCI program. The work done for SOUP, which affects all TechSoup web pages, including the RCI pages, has been informed by a universal design strategy for improved web accessibility, in compliance with Section 508 accessibility standards. Partly as a result of these efforts, TSG was recently awarded a 2009 California Digital Inclusion Award from the California Digital Inclusion Program. Past winners of the award include San Francisco State University, SeamlessWeb, Gap Inc, and The California State University.

The second project goal was to improve the integration of local refurbishing, training, and tech support resources throughout California.

- The RCI program has made great strides over the project period in not just increasing product distribution in California, but also partnering with organizations to provide technical support and training so that the products are distributed in an environment of knowledge that maximizes their impact. RCI has found this approach to be particularly important when distributing products to individuals, who generally lack the access to support and resources that organizations may have. TSG's goal was to initiate partnerships with five new TAPs working in California communities. Over the project period, RCI established relationships with the following organizations: One Economy; Single Mothers Outreach; Modest Needs Foundation; the Sacramento Mutual Housing Association; and the Great Valley Center.

The second project goal was to increase awareness of the benefits of refurbished computers, including both the price-performance characteristics and the environmental benefits.

- During the project period, TSG mainly raised awareness through new content that was posted on the RCI page in TechSoup.org's GreenTech section and on the TechSoup.org blog. Content posted on the site was cross-promoted on the TechSoup.org homepage, which reaches 300,000 unique users each month, and in the TechSoup By The Cup and New Product Alert email newsletters (circulations of 46,000 and 140,000, respectively). RCI created eight blog posts on topics ranging from the impact of refurbished computing use on nonprofit budgets to a comparison of low-cost new laptops to refurbished laptops. TSG also published articles on green technology resolutions and the viability of the secondary PC market.
- In addition to developing new articles and blog posts, RCI created new FAQs on the site and updated the return policy, both of which made it easier for potential and actual customers to learn about and use the RCI program to access refurbished products. TSG also created a new directory to help low-income families in California find low-cost computers, training, repairs, and Internet service providers: www.techsoup.org/greentech/cetf/index.cfm.
- Marketing and outreach efforts were prodigious over the project period, with millions of organizations and individuals receiving information on the benefits and availability of refurbished products through targeted email marketing and banner advertising on selected websites and the TechSoup.org website, TechSoup blog, and TechSoup email newsletters. As a result of the outreach efforts, TSG exceeded goals for the number of organizations ordering for the first time (800) and the total number of page views for the RCI section on TechSoup.org (120,000). RCI had 3,437 first-time orders during the grant period, which was 430% of the goal. Of these 3,434 organizations, 501 were located in California. TSG had 258,088 page views for the RCI site over the project period, 215% of the target.

The second project goal was to expand the RCI program to include other computing and office equipment needed by both individuals and nonprofits in California, such as printers and fax machines.

- Over the course of the grant period, TSG added more than 25 new computer products to the RCI catalog for a total of 29 refurbished computer products. TSG also added monitors to the RCI product offerings, distributing 309 monitors over the two-year grant period. In addition, TSG launched a partnership with Ikon to provide office-sized multi-function copy machines to the nonprofit and library communities. Each machine includes copy, print, scan, and fax functions as well as color or black-and-white-only output. To date, RCI has received requests for 56 such machines. In order to augment the offerings in this product category, TSG

continues to explore additional opportunities with both new and existing donating partners to make multi-function machines and stand-alone printers available through the RCI program.

Delineation of Deliverables and Outcomes Not Achieved and Explanation

All major deliverables of the grant have been met, save the goals of having 20% of all distributed products going to organizations or individuals in the State of California and 15% of all donated products sourced from corporate donations. As discussed on page 3, RCI was close to meeting the first goal with 15% of all products being distributed in California. RCI fell short of the second goal, with 5% of all products sources from corporate donations. The reason behind this discrepancy and the plan for addressing the issue in the future is discussed in the Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results section of this report.

Discussion of Other Positive Results from Project

A major output of this project has been the ability to bring refurbished products to individuals as well as 501(c)(3) organizations, which are the usual recipients of TechSoup Global's product donation programs. RCI was able to achieve this through managed partnerships with a number of Technology Access Programs that extended RCI's reach to serve low-income individuals and families in California. Through partnerships with One Economy, Single Mothers Outreach, Great Valley Center, the Sacramento Mutual Housing Association, and the Modest Needs Foundation TSG was able to deliver RCI products into the hands of individuals via one of four strategies:

1. Computer fairs and distribution events: RCI computers were made available to low-income residents of various housing communities that One Economy worked with. RCI created flyers and materials for the events, which One Economy also helped distribute outside the events. RCI also had a presence at the events during which staff answered questions about the products and program. Order information was collected, and customers either picked up the products during RCI Distribution Day or, in a few cases, the machines were delivered to the recipients' homes.
2. Digital Connector program: RCI computers were purchased by One Economy and given out as graduation presents for students who completed their Digital Connectors program, which provides mentoring and computer skills training to low-income high school students. Computers went to Digital Connectors programs in: San Francisco's Chinatown, Mission District, and Visitation Valley; Pixley, California; and Palo Alto, California.
3. Grant and donor-funded support: Both Single Mothers Outreach and the Modest Needs Foundation received grant requests for support from low-income and disabled community members and used funding—either from individual donors or foundations—to purchase RCI computers to give to grantees along with computer training.
4. Other training programs: The Sacramento Mutual Housing Association purchased and distributed RCI computers to low-income graduates of their training program. This program, which is run out of a computer lab in a Sacramento housing development, is comprised of ESL classes, employment search support, and computer training.

However, one of the most positive results from this grant has been the program's impact on the individuals who received the equipment. The following are some comments they shared with RCI:

"We have purchased about a half dozen refurbished computers through Sample Organization and they have all worked marvelously. We use the computers for students in our classrooms. These students are affected by a profound disability with Autism where the majority of them are completely non-verbal. The computers enable them to work through graphic communication applications.... As a technologist in my prior career, I'm extremely grateful for the existence of TechSoup." — Pacific Autism Center for Education

"In the past year, we have purchased several refurbished computers and software. TechSoup has made it possible for SF Urban CHC to keep on moving! Because of the tremendous deals we get from TechSoup and our

very generous donors, we are able to continue offering our monthly workshops to first time homebuyers for free.”
— SF Urban CHC

“Our nonprofit, Youth Matters, was founded by a local high school graduate who realized the power of bringing education to remote areas in Ghana and bringing the youth of Ghana and Northern California together. The computers and software we have been able to get through Sample Organization have been invaluable in helping these groups of youth access educational opportunities and share their vastly different experiences.” — Youth Matters

“We are an Oakland-based nonprofit responsible for the Not In Our Town Project, a media and community engagement project that encourages community and school-based response to hate crimes and intolerance. We recently purchased several computers through TechSoup. This allowed us to expand our staff as we build NIOT.org, a new social networking site for people fighting hate crimes. The site features mapping technology that allows users see where hate crimes are happening, but more importantly, provides tools and resources for people to take action against hate and connect with others on the map.” — Not In Our Town

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

Identify Major Challenges to Successful Implementation

TechSoup Global faced two major challenges during the grant period; both concerned securing donated equipment: corporate donations and public sector donations.

- TSG’s goal was to raise the percentage of donated products to 15% of the total number of products distributed through RCI. Through business development efforts, RCI established relationships with a number of new corporate donating partners, including Visa, Intel, and Charles Schwab. Unfortunately, the percentage of distributed donated products was only 5% over the two-year grant period. A large part of this discrepancy resulted from a low percentage of donated equipment that was of high enough quality to be used in the RCI program. The products that could not be used were either sold or recycled (at an additional cost to TSG).
- Securing public sector computers was also problematic, despite concerted efforts on the part of TechSoup Global’s business development team.

Discuss Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

- In order to address the problem of unusable donated equipment, we refined and clarified standards for RCI equipment donations and made sure that they clearly communicated to potential donors, even if that meant turning down some donation opportunities. TSG feels strongly that this approach will streamline the overall RCI equipment acquisition and distribution process—ensuring that RCI continues to provide quality products to RCI clientele. Regarding donated public sector computers, RCI will continue to investigate options for securing these donations, and would welcome any assistance CETF might be able to offer.

IV. Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: In addition to the aforementioned lesson on the need to clearly articulate equipment standards to potential donors, TSG also learned how effective the outreach for the RCI program was.

Lesson 2: Going forward, RCI plans to create more campaigns like the “I’m a Nonprofit” initiative, to raise awareness of the program and to communicate development of the program as it expands. Outreach and awareness campaigns such as this, are a new part of RCI.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Expanding the Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

Recommendation 1: While the RCI program has grown immensely over the two-year grant program, some resources remain that TSG has yet to tap that could expand offerings to low-income families and organizations in California.

Recommendation 2: In particular, the program can benefit from donated equipment from the public sector. Although initial efforts in this regard have been less than successful, RCI plans to continue to explore this possibility.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Overall, TSG has been very happy with CETF's grant management.

Recommendation: For future projects, TSG would welcome more opportunities to meet with the CETF to discuss progress towards deliverables, receive feedback on performance, and explore additional opportunities for collaboration.

V. Grant Agreement Requirements

Purchased Equipment

None purchased.

Unspent CETF of Grant Funds

All of the CETF grants funds were expended.