



Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods 2010 Final Report April 2010

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Name of Project: Beyond MySpace: Bridging the Digital Divide through the Arts
Grant Number: 1954952
Start Date: April 2008 **End Date:** March 2010

I. Financial Summary

- Total Project Budget Spent: \$560,013
- CETF Grant Amount: \$140,000
- Percentage of Match Funds Raised against Goal (\$287,013): 100%
- Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: \$712

II. Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

Venice Arts captured young people's curiosity and interests in the Internet, digital media, and technology to build quality programs that help them succeed academically and vocationally and engage them in critical thinking, learning and creativity. A central component to our strategy was BeyondMySpace.org, a web-based learning and social networking environment that allows youth to interact with others through their art and creativity. Use of this website and digital learning module mitigate factors of access, understanding, and relevance that may influence youth's interest in information and communication technologies.

Beyond MySpace harnesses children's interest in sites such as MySpace and You Tube, and uses this as a springboard to teach them to develop their own creative content (photography, film and multi-media) for the web, while encouraging them to interact with others through their art. The site has many interactive features and tools, based on the principles of Web 2.0, including download and upload features in a range of mediums. Entirely custom designed, Beyond MySpace, is tightly focused on providing individual learning experiences through progressive mastery of the online medium and digital media production. The site supports all digital media genres—text, image, sound, video, multi-media—and offers intelligent and intuitive ways for youth to manage and relate media of different genres. Youth may also engage in learning that is both peer-based and mentor/educator-based and will be able to interact with youth and artist mentors in any Venice Arts location regardless of neighborhood.

Goals and Objectives Summary

All goals and objectives included in the Grant Agreement have been completed. Venice Arts has achieved the following goals and objectives:

- Built a cadre of neighborhood champions to increase broadband use, assisted partners in building their technological and technology advocacy capacities.
- Contributed to innovation in the field of digital and interactive learning for youth by building an innovative, interactive website with arts-driven education curricula.
- Developed youth's creative, conceptual and technical skills with art and technology tools and resources.

Project Outcomes Summary

Venice Arts has achieved all expected outcomes as follows:

Outcome Description	Actual	Goal	Percent Completed
Number of youth that completed basic course work.	746	250	298%
Number of students improving in performance indicators.	746	250	298%
Number of adult students that completed basic course on Internet use.	40	40	100%
Accessibility plan completed and approved.	1	1	100%

III. Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

- Venice Arts has met and exceeded all projected outcomes as articulated in original proposal.
- Positive results from this project include: (1) a strong working partnership with the St. Francis Center; (2) the development and completion of the Beyond MySpace website with digital learning modules and an organizational tool to assist in program administration and development; and (3) successful tech-intensive workshops for low-income youth and adults.

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

Identify Major Challenges to Successful Implementation

- While the parent workshops were highly successful, the participants' level of literacy was extremely low. Participants learned: (1) the basics of computer hardware; (2) opening and closing applications; (3) using menu bars; (4) understanding the Internet; (5) using search engines; (6) creating email accounts and sending emails; (7) using Google and Google Translate; (8) creating folders and files; and (9) understanding the main differences between PC's and Macs. However, because of their low-literacy level, participants will need to practice the mentioned activities more and engage in a lengthier commitment to achieve the level of literacy that would support meaningful broadband use.
- Due to trying economic times, a partner organization whose main mission was to provide human services had to change its focus momentarily from the provision of Digital Literacy classes to the provision of basic human services such as food and clothing.

Discuss Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

- After assessing the low-literacy level of most adult participants, Venice Arts instructor modified the curriculum and started with very basic activities to accommodate the skills and comfort level of the participants.
- Venice Arts believes the program could have made faster and more significant progress if outside economic factors had been less unstable. Venice Arts instructor had to adapt to new class schedules and respect the fact partner organization could not be fully engaged or available at times. Even though the program had to slow down temporarily, it remained successful.

IV. Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson #1: Venice Arts will need to develop clear and concise assessment tools for adult participants so the organization can tailor the Digital Literacy training according to the needs and skills of the participants.

Lesson #2: Partner with organizations whose programs match the mission of Venice Arts' program. One of the main objectives in the Grant Agreement involved a partnership with the St. Francis Center, an organization whose main mission is to provide human services. Because of the challenging economic times and the extraordinary level of need in the area where the St. Francis Center is located, their priorities were to provide food, shelter and the basic necessities their clients required. It was clear the focus of the Beyond MySpace program was not the primary focus of the partnering institution during these trying economic times. For that reason, the program was temporarily at risk at the partner organization's site.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Expanding the Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

Venice Arts' Beyond MySpace site is fully replicable given funding. Venice Arts' software engineer has designed its infrastructure to allow for the creation of micro-sites that can feature any number of the functions and features that are currently shown on Beyond MySpace, including, studios, galleries, classes, projects, libraries, people and privilege levels. More functions include: (1) Creating (uploading work, making collections and projects); (2) Express (blogging and profiles); (3) Communication (messages sent within BMS and also texts and e-mail features); (4) Explore (following other students work and projects); and (5) Learn (tutorials, library and classes). The site is user-friendly, as it supports all formats of media with easy uploading features, and it supports a high level of interactivity, sharing, storytelling and communications across all our workshops. Participants from programs located anywhere in the state can post their work and receive feedback from peers and mentors online.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Venice Arts recommends that CETF reduce the amount of reporting required on each individual step of the work plan and move to progress towards outcomes with a narrative report regarding progress towards measurable objectives. The work plan, templates, trackers, and funder charts were more complex than most of our other funders. While most funders require timelines or work plans as part of the proposal, most ask for progress towards the overall objectives twice yearly. They do not generally ask for the progress on each line of the work plan. We found the reporting a little cumbersome for a small non-profit organization.

The CETF program officer was a pleasure to work with. It is challenging to make a fair recommendation in such an unusual year. It is clear that CETF staff and the peer organizations work exceedingly hard delivering programs. Venice Arts was very happy to be part of the team.

V. Grant Agreement Requirements

Purchased Equipment

The project purchased a total of \$5,016 in computers and related equipment to offer wireless connectivity at a partner organization and 2 additional workstations for the Venice Arts media lab.

Date	Description	Purpose	Amount	How it will be used.
04/11/2008	Web Server	St. Francis Center	\$139.99	It will continue to serve the St. Francis Center participants
07/01/2008	Wireless Router	St. Francis Center	\$126.48	It will continue to serve the St. Francis Center participants
09/11/2008	Computer	Venice: Equipping the digital lab	\$2,250	Will carry on serving youth in our tech media arts programs.
06/24/2009	Computer	Venice: Equipping the digital lab	\$2,500	Will carry on serving youth in our tech media arts programs.

CETF of Grant Funds

All of the CETF grants funds were expended.