



City to Provide Public Computing Sites

Wilford Shamlin III | May 27, 2014

Most KEYSPOt public computing sites throughout Philadelphia will continue operating as normal, but more than two dozen sites, geared for residents who do not have home Internet service, will be scaled back due to cutbacks in funding, the head of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy said on Friday.

Judith Renyi, executive director of the commission, said she sees the KEYSPOt program as an important service, especially for out-of-work residents who need Internet access to find current job openings and a personal e-mail account to send a resume, schedule interviews and communicate with prospective employers. People who do not have basic computer skills don't have the means to access information that could lead to their next job.

"It means you are living on a different planet. It means you are excluded from the economy. It's very distressing to me, very troubling," Renyi said. "We're doing everything we can to help them keep their doors open. You just can't find a job in this economy anymore unless you have access to the Internet."

Since federal grant funding in support of establishing and operating 80 KEYSPOt sites ran dry in June, Mayor Michael Nutter's has proposed keeping spending flat, at \$624,095, for the fiscal year 2015, for the program that launched in 2011. Each site has staff trained to provide assistance.

If approved by the city council, the proposed budget for KEYSPOt is enough to keep up to 50 public computing sites open for 15 hours each week. Priority would go to public libraries, recreation centers, and non-profits that provide community service programs, Renyi said.

The remaining 30 KEYSPOt sites will also remain open but the current level of service may change based on access to private funding and no-cost technical support from Cognis IT.

"We have been fund-raising for sustainability of open access to as many KEYSPOts as we can manage," Renyi added.

According to the Mayor's Commission on Literacy, one of two adults lacks the computer skills needed to land a job and keep it. They also need a personal e-mail account and cell phone with data plan that allows web surfing without additional charges, Renyi said.

One of the city's homeless shelters opened a KEYSPOt, and people will stand in long queues, waiting for the computing site to open in the morning, Renyi said.

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