



KEYSPOT PROVIDES COMPUTER ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN PHILADELPHIA

Caitlin Renton | January 22, 2019

Are you looking to pursue a career in tech but need access to more resources to get started? To help you get going, Philly KEYSPOt offers free use of their computer labs which are located across Philadelphia.

KEYSPOT provides opportunities for access to and training in technology through public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

“It provides Philadelphia access to computers and technology which might not seem like a lot, but in a city with a 25 percent poverty rate, there is a lack of access to personal computers and access to high-speed internet,” said Farrah Parkes, Director of Digital Initiatives for the Office of Adult Education. “It’s important for folks to be able to access these services to help their kids with homework, search for jobs and do all the things that you and I take for granted (assuming you have your own personal computer).”

In fact, based on data from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), Philadelphia was ranked number 8 on the National Digital Inclusion Alliance’s Worst Connected Cities Of 2017 list.

How Philly KEYSPOt Got Its Start

KEYSPOT was created in 2010 through the Freedom Rings Partnership as a result of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The purpose of ARRA was not only to create new jobs after the Great Recession, but also to provide projects dealing with topics such as education in order to help the economy.

One of the projects that was created was ARRA’s Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) which provided funding to promote digital literacy and broadband access in Philadelphia. 80 KEYSPOt sites were created through the money that was provided by

BTOP. The money also went to digital literacy training and access to computers for individuals with little to no technological resources.

Years later when these funds ran out, the city of Philadelphia wanted to see the community continue to flourish, so they helped provide the funding for Philly KEYSPOt. The program now continues through the Office of Adult Education, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation.

Resources that KEYSPOt Provides

Most of the KEYSPOt computer labs offer training for individuals who need educational guidance with using the internet.

“A lot of folks who don’t have personal computers and didn’t have access to that education in school are not prepared for the kind of jobs where they need digital literacy skills, even basic digital literacy skills,” Parkes said. “Even if you’re applying for a job in a warehouse at Home Depot, you have to fill out the application online.”

The KEYSPOt sites also offer assistance with signing up online for internet services and with signing up online for Lifeline smartphone service. Lifeline is a government program that helps low income individuals get access to free smartphones and phone service.

There are currently 50 KEYSPOt sites located across Philly. 18 are operated by the Office of Parks and Recreation, 2 are operated by the Free Library of Philadelphia and 30 are non-profit sites.

“It’s a program that’s able to help parents, grandparents and children,” said Chelsea Reed, Communication Manager of the Office of Adult Education. “It’s really a city service for everyone.”

Find out how else you can benefit from KEYSPOt or read some of their stories on their blog.

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