Learn How to Get Your Residents Online

Solution Session
from Digital Inclusion City Leadership Award Winners

By Google Fiber, Next Century Cities & National League of Cities
Moderated by Denise Linn of the Smart Chicago Collaborative
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#NLC15 | #DigitalInclusion

What is the Digital Divide & Why Should Cities Care?

★ **There is a "digital divide" in the US.** Around 25 percent of US households—or approximately 60 million Americans—don't have Internet in their homes. Why are they not connected? Cost, relevancy ("I don't know why I need the Internet"), skill, and lack of a device all contribute to the urban digital divide.

★ **Underserved and marginalized communities are less likely to be online.** Groups and households that are less likely to be online include African Americans, Hispanics, seniors and those with low income or low educational attainment.

★ **There can be high variance in connectivity across neighborhoods and census tracts within cities.** Cities have "digital deserts," or areas where low connectivity meet ow access to public computing of digital training resources.

★ In the 21st Century city government, effective programming in **education, economic development, job training, public safety, health and e-government services is conditioned on citizen connectivity.**

What is Digital Inclusion?

Digital Inclusion is the process of closing the Internet access and skill gaps in your community. In other words, digital inclusion programs aim to bridge or eliminate the digital divide.

Effective digital inclusion programs in cities often include some combination of the following:
  ★ Free, refurbished or low-cost devices to combat the device access barrier
  ★ Reduced price monthly Internet access to combat the cost barrier
  ★ Free Internet or computer training to combat the skill barrier
  ★ Awareness campaigns to combat the relevancy barrier

Trends and innovations in digital inclusion programming across the country include:
  ★ Cross-sector partnerships and collaborative models
  ★ Creative calls to action, community engagement
  ★ Mobile or responsive citywide programs
  ★ "Hybrid" digital training and connectivity programs

Digital Inclusion City Leadership Awards

To recognize standout cities and promising, innovative new programs, National League of Cities (NLC) and Next Century Cities (NCC) launched a nationwide Digital Inclusion City Award in partnership with Google Fiber.

Category #1: Leader in Digital Inclusion Best Practices
  ★ Philadelphia, PA for the KEYSPOT Program
  ★ Seattle, WA for the Technology Matching Fund Program
  ★ Davidson, NC for the Eliminate the Digital Divide (E2D) Program (most innovative)

Category #2: Most Promising New Plan or Program
  ★ Austin, TX for Unlocking the Connection
  ★ Chattanooga, TN for Tech Goes Home CHA
  ★ Washington, DC for the Mobile Tech Lab (most innovative)

Austin, TX

City of Austin Digital Inclusion Program

★ Austin Free-Net was established with **seed funding and support from the City in 1995** to help train people on how to navigate the City website.

★ It is now an independent (501c3) non-profit, and the City supports the fundamental capacity of the organization to achieve its mission through an annual contract.

★ **Austin Free-Net is the City's flagship digital inclusion organization** in Austin that provides:
  ○ Public Access Computers
  ○ One-on-one computer training
  ○ Digital Literacy Coalition Lead Agency

★ Austin Free-Net operates 11 public access labs (City-funded locations) supported with computers and trainers.

austinfree.net

Digital Inclusion
City of Austin

Grant for Technology Opportunities Program

★ GTOPS is a City of Austin **matching fund grant program** that began in 2001 supporting local organizations in their efforts to include all our citizens in an emerging digital society

★ GTOPs is currently funded at **$200,000 annually**

★ Grants between **$10,000 to $25,000** for capital and operating expenses and requires 1:1 matching funds (cash, in-kind and volunteer hours)

★ Since its inception, GTOPs funding of $1,865,000 has been a match to more than **$6.5 million** for community programs

GTOPs Goals:

★ Provide **public access** to computers and information technology, especially among underserved segments of our community

★ Provide information technology **literacy, education, and training**

★ Use information and communication technologies in **innovative ways to serve** the Austin community

★ Address the **2014 Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan Goals**
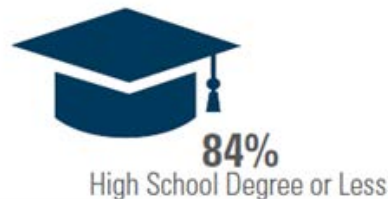
Residential Technology Usage Research

Austin Digital ASSESSMENT

★ The City will conduct **residential technology usage research** every 3 years.

★ The **Austin Digital Assessment** was conducted in 2014 by the City in partnership with the University of Texas.

Population of Austin Which Does Not Use the Internet

92 % Users
8 % (55,000 adults) Non Users

Who are the nonusers?

84% High School Degree or Less

65+ **18-65**
2/3 Working Age

Why do they not use the internet?

#1 Reason Expensive

1/2 had Privacy Concerns

42% had No One to Teach Them

2 in 5 Not Interested

City of Austin Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan

Vision

To ensure every Austin resident has an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology.

Purpose

To address access and adoption of digital technology, to serve as a guiding document for providing digital inclusion opportunities in effecting the City's goals to ensure all Austin residents are served.

DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

2014

- Business / Entrepreneur
- City Resources
- Community
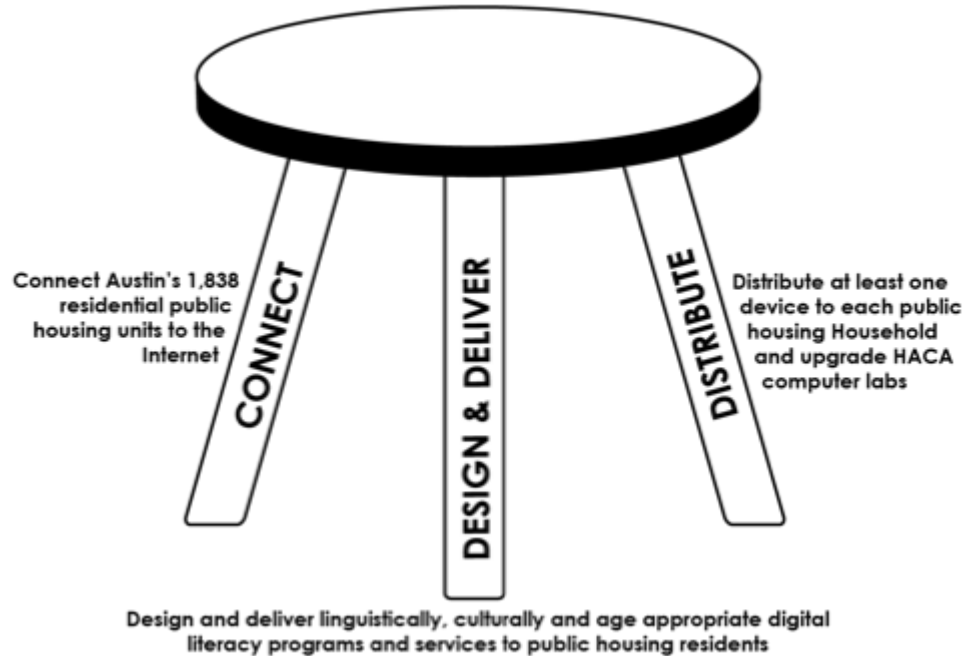- Community-Based Providers
- K-12 Education / Higher Education
- Non-Profit
- Public Health

Unlocking the Connection

★ Led by the Housing Authority of the City of Austin and its nonprofit Austin Pathways, Unlocking the Connection is a locally driven community-based effort to bring the benefits of Internet access to Austin's 4,300 public housing residents

★ 3 Critical Elements: access to free Internet, free refurbished devices, free technology training

★ **Evaluation cuts across all program elements** to ensure goals are met and best practices are documented.

Connect Austin's 1,838 residential public housing units to the Internet

CONNECT

DESIGN & DELIVER

DISTRIBUTE

Distribute at least one device to each public housing Household and upgrade HACA computer labs

Design and deliver linguistically, culturally and age appropriate digital literacy programs and services to public housing residents

Unlocking the Connection: "It Takes a Village"

- ★ No organization can solve the digital divide alone.

- ★ Support from entities with diverse strengths and insight.

- ★ Foundation funding kick-started efforts to secure training partners who provide digital inclusion services to HACA residents.

Mayor Adler at Austin's Meadowbrook Apartments

Austin and Unlocking the Connection was named Peer Mentor for HUD's ConnectHome initiative

Lessons Learned in Austin, TX

Recommendations from Unlocking the Connection:

★ **The greatest barrier is trust.** Starting slow helped us go fast. tried a variety of communications tools & methods to gain engagement. Human connection is the key to technology adoption.

★ Enlist the help of a resident. A person who can help champion the effort and provide personal testimonial is very powerful and compelling. Also peer mentoring can be very effective.

★ Leveraging free equipment and software exceeded Unlocking the Connection's expectations.

   ○ Make computers useful. We installed 32GB of free educational software that works offline.

   ○ Experiment with other equipment and software platforms to see what works best for a continuum of our residents.

Recommendations from the City of Austin:

★ Cities need to invest in digital inclusion. Cities need to dedicate funds and staff to support community digital inclusion efforts

★ Conduct residential technology usage research. Research helps us to understand residential technology needs and measure change

★ Engage diverse community stakeholders and advocates – The City can act as a convener to leverage collective assets, resources & knowledge

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Questions?

Resources for City Governments

Reports & Studies:
- ★ "A Data-Driven Digital Inclusion Strategy for Gigabit Cities"
- ★ Building Digital Communities: A Framework for Action

Toolkits, Checklists & Videos:
- ★ NTIA Broadband Adoption Toolkit
- ★ A Checklist for Cities working in Digital Inclusion
- ★ NTIA Webinar on City Broadband Surveys and Federal Data:

Join a Community of people doing this work! Visit
nextcenturycities.org/digital-inclusion-awards/
to fill out a form and receive updates