



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission

**FROM:** John Speirs, Program Manager  
Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs

**DATE:** September 12, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Recommendations for 2019 Grant for Technology Opportunities Program

### **Purpose**

The City of Austin's Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan, as adopted by [Resolution No. 20141120-074](#), includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology; and the Office of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs is the lead office for implementation; and achieves initiatives referenced in the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan to promote device refurbishment programs to provide inexpensive devices to low-income residents and grant opportunities to keep devices and trainings up-to-date. The Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) is a grant administered by the Digital Inclusion Program directed at improving the community's ability to fully participate in the digital society to achieve the goals of the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan.

### **Analysis**

The purpose of this report is to review the Recommendations for the 2019 Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs). Consistent with the staff evaluation at the close of the annual grant cycle, surveys are conducted with applicants during the application phase of the process and second round (oral presentations). A survey of grant reviewers is generated to inform of potential process improvements for effective evaluation of the applications submitted. Additional analysis was conducted this year on the demographics of recipient organizations and an assessment of applying organization financial reporting. The Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) is a grant administered by the Digital Inclusion Program directed at improving the community's ability to fully participate in the digital society.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Item 1: Equity and Capacity Allocation**

This recommendation serves to address equity and opportunity for organizations who do not traditionally receive Grant for Technology Opportunities funding. The objective is to enable capacity building funds for organizations based on new criteria to evaluate the Organization Income Statement as a component of the application for GTOPs.

**1.A.** Organizations will be grouped within the following brackets per their response in the Organizational Income Statement (as of the most recent fiscal year end)

- \$0 - \$499,999
- \$500,000 - \$999,999
- \$1,000,000 - \$1,999,999
- \$2,000,000 and up

**1. B.** The GTOPs application will include additional criteria to indicate if the applicant has received GTOPs funding in the past.

**1.C.** Round 1: Review and Assessment

- The top scoring organizations for each GTOPs priority move on to the round 2 scoring;
- The top two scoring organizations with reported annual revenues as of the most recent fiscal year end of \$0-\$499,999 move on to round 2 scoring;
- The top two scoring organizations with reported annual revenues as of the most recent fiscal year end between \$500,000-\$999,999 move on to round 2 scoring;
- Of the remaining organizations, the highest scoring organizations move on to round 2 dependent on available slots.

**1.D.** Round 2: Review and Assessment

- The top two scoring organizations with reported annual revenues as of the most recent fiscal year end of \$0-\$499,999 are recommended for funding;
- The top two scoring organizations with reported annual revenues as of the most recent fiscal year end between \$500,000-\$999,999 are recommended for funding;
- The top 3 scoring organizations for each GTOPs priority area are recommended for funding;
- The remaining funds will be distributed to the remaining organizations based on score and available funds.

## **Item 2: Marketing Strategy**

**2.A.** This recommendation serves to develop marketing collateral to describe projects that would focus on each of the three focus areas of GTOPs (internet, devices, knowledge)

- Types of projects to message:
  - Computer refurbishment and distribution efforts
  - App and website development
  - Financial literacy and online access
- Advertise the grant review panel opportunity and GTOPs funding to various networks to increase the scope of distribution for the grant:
  - Citywide Public Information Network, Equity Action Team Network, One Voice of Central Texas, Digital Inclusion Newsletter and Austin Technology Alliance

### **Item 3: Changes to the Evaluation Criteria/Application**

This recommendation serves to address the evaluation criteria for program sustainability and address additional narrative fields for applicant organizations.

- Re-allocate the 5 points for sustainability on the current evaluation criteria and combine with the current “Alignment with GTOPs Goals” criteria.
  - Current
    - The program plan outlines a plan for sustainability of the program beyond the GTOPs grant. (5 pts)
  - Proposed
    - This program has demonstrated alignment with the GTOPs goals. (15 pts.)
- Eliminate unnecessary text fields in the application where document uploads are required.

### **Item 4: GTOPs 2019 Application Timeline**

#### **Exhibits**

#### **-Timeline**

**-All applicant survey from Dec 2019**

**-Executive Summary of Post Presentation Survey from 2018**

**-Grant Reviewer Survey**

**-Organizational Income spreadsheet**



## GTOPs 2019 Overall Timeline

- **September 12, 2018 (Wednesday):** Presentation to the CTTC on the proposed changes to GTOPs 2019
- **September 13, 2018:** Newsletter release to advertise the opportunity of serving on the GTOPs 2019 grant review panel
- **September 24, 2018 (Monday):** Newsletter announcing the beginning of time frame to submit Letters of Interest, to open October 1. This newsletter item will plug the date of the community meeting as well (October 5).
- **October 5, 2018:** Community meeting to discuss the GTOPs 2019 goals and process
- **October 26, 2018:** Letters of Interest for GTOPs 2019 due
- **October 29 – November 2, 2018:** Staff review of Letters of Interest and communication with interested parties
- **November 2, 2018:** Grant Review Committee Applications Due
- **November 2 – November 13, 2018:** Staff review of grant reviewer applications and confirmation of availability and interest
- **November 5 – November 30, 2018:** Grant application window. Full and completed applications and certification of completion of the [Mandatory Online Orientation for GTOPs 2018](#) must be completed by **November 30**
- **November 14, 2018:** Grant Review Committee selected by the Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission at their November meeting
- **December 3 – 7, 2018:** Staff review of applications for completeness
- **December 10, 2018:** Grant Reviewer Binders generated

- **December 12, 2018:** Update to the Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission on GTOPs applications received
- **December 11, 2018:** Grant Review Committee Orientation (Tentative date, Located at DeWitty)
- **January 6, 2019:** Written Questions Due (from Reviewers)
- **January 14, 2019:** Written Responses Due (from Applicants)
- **January 20, 2019:** First Round of Scores Due
- **January 22, 2019:** Send first round scores to applicants
- **February 8, 2019:** Oral Presentations (Tentative date depending on location)
- **Week of February 11, 2019:** Final Deliberation (Tentative depending on location)
- **February 13, 2019:** Presentation of GTOPs recommended awards to Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission Regular Meeting.
- **February 15, 2019:** Send CTTC GTOPs Recommendations to executives for approval

**GTOPs 2018 All Applicant Survey**

Organization Name	How important do you think GTOPs funding is to your program? Will you be able to achieve your service goals without GTOPs funding?	Have you participated in Digital Empowerment Community of Austin meetings? Do you think it's been of help?	Are you currently collaborating with other groups on digital literacy?	Is there anything else you want to share with us about your experience thus far with the GTOPs 2018 process?
Applicant 1	Definitely important. We will not be able to achieve the scope of what we want without the funding. We have the curriculum and the programming but more funds and resources will allow them to reach more students and teachers.	Yes, its been great very beneficial.	Yes, Latinitas, Permanent Legacy, Google fiber	No.
Applicant 2	It is important, but we will be able to achieve our goals without it. We are lucky to have unrestricted funds, but they cant use it for other programs or to expand. The GTOPs grant is crucial for expanding capacity.	I attended the networking party and really loved spending time with other organizations that are working in this space. It helps to gain motivation from other organizations and their efforts. Arc leader was attending those meetings and found them very valuable.	Yes, we partner with ACC to teach college level digital media classes.	I appreciate the amount of direction and feedback in the LOI and application processes. As a grant writer it is ideal to have this much narrative an forth coming information about the process as a whole. I wish other grant applications were as informative.
Applicant 3	Very important, helps us get equipment and staff we need for programming. Without it we would have to scale back with what we can offer the community.	Yeah I have. They have been helpful. It would be interesting to make it a requirement for the application. It can be tough with everything else going on to get to some of the meetings. Making it mandatory would help increase motivation to attend those meetings.	Yes, AISD with their Creative learning initiative, KUT Radio with their Works defense project, Youthrise (non-profit), we've also partnered with many different COA venues, facilities, and programs.	Encourage the continued revamping of the application process, to make it a more user friendly application and reporting process. Many other models that are more user friendly. We really like the presentation and panel, it give us a chance to share our story.
Applicant 4	The grant is critical, we are depending on this and other grants, we apply for many grants throughout the year. We wont have the supplies or staff to do a high quality programming without this grant.	Have not, but would like more information on the DECA working groups. Please email us some information.	AFN, Dell, ASBE, Links, which is an African American civic involvement group. Black women in business, they have a network of volunteers we work with, UT Students, Black student association.	I started working with the Harvest Foundation around the time we applied for GTOPs so I was new to the process.
Applicant 5	It is important. Without funding we will do it, we will find a way to meet that need but the grant helps to accomplish those goals faster.	Yes and Yes. Connects us with the community as a whole and has been helpful.	Yes, workforce education with Monte cristo and work force solutions	The presentation process was a lot shorter than we thought it'd be, can't explain the program in depth with that amount of time, wish we had another 10 minutes. Q and A should be longer. Would have written our application a lot differently if we had know the time to present. Hard to share our story in that amount of time Hard to express who we are. We spent too much time going in depth and didn't have time to touch on everything we wanted to. We appreciate Jesse has as he has been very communicative throughout the whole process.
Applicant 6	It is crucial, many of those of us that are participating with DECA hungry for more, they could do a lot more with it. Won't die without it but it would make a dent. Help fund and increase staff and capacity.	Yes, we have a representative from our office that attends and will continue after her maternity leave. It is beneficial, listening to the community and prioritizing needs and creating an eco system. Cant work is silos, you need to partner	Yes, Con mi Madre for VR 360 storytelling and college tours, E4 Youth share trainings, space and staff. Public Library Ruiz and St. Johns branches, public housing, AISD, Boys and girls club. Originator, local tech companies, Facebook test prep group, google fiber, Local VR Companies to provide training and space. Texas girl stem collaborative.	All good. Can't wait til we get google chrome for the data reporting. They have had complications with the CTK system.
Applicant 7	Extremely important, not just the funding for the awareness. We will be successful without but the awareness piece is what they are seeking.	No on the participation or not yet anyway.	at the National level yes, can't tell you who. We own the curriculum for our program.	Delighted to have been a part of it. the communication back and forth has been great. Appreciate the opportunity.
Applicant 8	Very important. especially because next year is the first implementation of the program.	Yes we have, missed the x mas party. It is great to communicate with other organizations.	In terms of funding sources yes and with other non profits in the community.	Very the process has been very thorough

Applicant 9	Its extremely important. The actual programming hours will be able to be supported but with the grant they can continue to purchase equipment to expand materials.	Yes, they are helpful, the networking and making connections is really helpful. It brings awareness to different programs, helps folks realize who is in this sphere and in the community.	Yes, AISD Campbell elementary, KLRU, Alamo drafthouse.	Pleasant surprise to have extra time for presentation. In depth moment with having more time for questions. There were little changes with this years process but they were all improvements.
Applicant 10	It is critical and yes, they can achieve them but much slower. The grant is critical to speed.	Yes, very beneficial building relationships with the City and with other non-profits. Helps us get a better understanding how to leverage funding on a national level.	Yes, through the digital inclusion initiative, Foundation communities, AFN. capital Idea	It's been great.
Applicant 11	The grant is important and it will be difficult without it	Have participated on a small level yes. Has it helped, don't know.	Work with AISD, AIGA, graphic artist guild, working with several media companies that produce videos, bring in professional media artists as instructors. They gain experience by working with students with disabilities, which helps them expand their teaching abilities.	Very good process, a lot of communication which is appreciated .
Applicant 12	We wont be able to provide scholarships, yes they can provide summer camp but they won't reach to as many girls. Want more funding, providing these type of experiences is meaningful to girls.	I have, they have been useful. Girtstart programming is tangential. It is good to see other programming, and it's relevant to Digital Inclusion's goals and strategic plan.	Yes, Boys and girls club, Institution of Higher Ed, and AISD.	Fair and open. The review panel was funny.
Applicant 13	Incredibly important, they will pursue and secure alternative funding, and they intend to continue the program no matter the outcome of the grant application.	We have in the past, we have a new staff member that is in the position that would fill that role. The have been beneficial, good to know what other organizations are doing and that they're doing similar work.	Yes, Google, with their patch program. Girls are educated about digital literacy and the digital divide, HACA to provide digital literacy, Blocksmob, Microsoft. Acxiom. equity now. We have a lot of corporate partners, but do have non-profit connections as well.	It's been great , Jess has been very responsive. He provides emails and information, clear expectations, and they have known when to expect certain information and scores. The process is very smooth.
Applicant 14	It is very important. We would still continue with our mission, but the grant allows us to refine the program and reach stretch goals, it helps with Comptia costs and internship programs around IT which are hard to find.	Yes and Yes	Yes, including COA, Digital Inclusion Program, PC Community loan program. they also donate computers to other non-profits.	I think that building these kinds of hand on service opportunities, where students get to practice real life skills and real life experiences is a great opportunity and GTOPS has helped do that. Builders get to experience building a real house with there youthbuild program and GTOPs allows them to replicate that experience and opportunity but within the IT sphere. Out in a community lab, you have an impact on the community and increase digital access, you know you are making a difference and it makes it meaningful.
Applicant 15	Gtops is very helpful this year because there is a deficit in our budget and it would help the organization, of course they will achieve their goals but it will be harder with the deficit.	I did participate and helped give feedback on how the it can help their organization.	No but they would like to.	Made it really easy and useful. Its getting better every year, I started applying for GTOPs in 2012 and it's changed, GTOPS is growing every year just like us. We are growing together.
Applicant 16	It is pretty critical and it is a new endeavor for us, on a scale one to ten it is very high, not many other funding programs for tech programming that aren't provided by a tech firm. We are committed to doing the programming so we will make it work, develop new ways to find funding without the GTOPS funding.	We haven't they were not aware, but are interested.	Just the ones the proposed girlstart, latinitas.	Great experience so far. The performance forms can be hard to work with. Change the project timeline form so you an give a longer response, text box was too small.



## 2018 GTOPs Post-Presentation Interviews

The goal of this document is to provide high level summaries to all of the answers received during the GTOPs post-presentation interview process. While some details may be left to the raw question responses, the general feedback for each question should be captured in this document.

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- 1. How important do you think GTOPs funding is to your program? Will you be able to achieve your service goals without GTOPs funding?*

All of the applying organizations that presented stated GTOPs funding as crucial to their organization's program. Most organizations expressed that they will be able to achieve their goals and meet the need without the funding (a couple organizations stated they were applying for other grants as well) but that there would be challenges. Many stated that the GTOPs funding would help with purchasing more program materials and equipment, increasing program capacity, heightening outreach efforts, compensating staff time, providing scholarships, and faster program implementation.

### *Gaps in Process / What does this mean for Digital Inclusion?*

This grant is crucial to almost all of the applying organizations and with a 200 percent program deficit of around \$400,000, there is an obvious need for more financial support. One organization even stated that this is one of the only grants for technology that isn't administered by a tech company. GTOPs could address this issue by providing information to the applying organizations about other grant opportunities.

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- 2. Have you participated in Digital Empowerment Community of Austin meetings? Do you think it's been of help?*

About three quarters of the organizations stated that yes, they have attended DECA meetings and that they have helpful, with things like bringing awareness to their organization, connecting



and networking with other organizations, and increasing their own awareness of different organizations and programming.

There were multiple organizations that stated they had not heard of DECA and or the meetings but that they would like to know more about it. There was one organization that had stated they attended DECA events, not regularly, but wasn't sure if they have been of help throughout the GTOP's process.

### *Gaps in Process / What does this mean for Digital Inclusion?*

Although most of the organizations have contributed to DECA, there are some that haven't and even one organization that questioned the value of the meetings. To address these issues,

- DECA should focus on outreach within the network of nonprofits with tech programming.
  - Ensuring DECA participants and members are getting value from the meetings. (If not, how can we increase the value?)
  - Promote engagement opportunities with DECA throughout the GTOPs process.
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### *3. Are you currently collaborating with other groups on digital literacy?*

All but one organization stated that they did collaborate with other groups on digital literacy. Many of the 'other groups' that were mentioned were Austin area non-profits, national non-profits, the City, education institutions like ACC and AISD, as well as private sector entities like Google and Dell. Most organizations stated that they were collaborating with local non-profits, some of which that were mentioned had been or are currently GTOPs recipients.

### *Gaps in Process / What does this mean for Digital Inclusion?*

There were only a few organizations that did little to no collaborating with other groups on digital literacy. The organization that was not currently collaborating did mention that they have an interest to.

To address this and to foster further collaboration on digital literacy, the Digital Inclusion program can increase awareness of DECA to the applicants and implement opportunities for those organizations to network, share best practices, discuss challenges, successes, and goals, to help create an environment where natural partnerships can form.

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### *4. Is there anything else you want to share with us about your experience thus far with the GTOPs 2018 process?*

Most of the organizations made a positive statement about their experience with the GTOPs process. Common responses referred to the process as smooth, fair, open and that Jesse's communication, responsiveness, and assistance had helped greatly. Some also noted that the GTOPs application and reporting process has improved every year.

Some organizations stated that the performance forms were hard to work with and that the presentation process was a lot shorter than they had originally thought, and that they wished there was more time to present and that the Q and A time allotment should be longer.

### *Gaps in Process / What does this mean for Digital Inclusion?*

The GTOPs process improvements and changes that were made this year did not go unnoticed based on these responses. Continuing to improve the easiness and efficiency of the process will likely lead to continued positive feedback.

There was one organization that had nothing they wanted to share about the process and a few others that stated conflicts they had with the application and presentation process. To address these issues, we should continue to refine the GTOPs process and provide valuable feedback opportunities to GTOPs applicants.

## 2018 Grant Review Panel Survey

Name	What worked well?	What didn't work well?	What could be improved in the future?	Satisfied?
Reviewer 1	The way the parts of the process were broken down provided solid deadlines to generate informed analysis.	Being new to the process, I was just feeling my way through it. I don't know what would have necessarily helped with this, especially since members had various levels of experience with grant writing and evaluation. Perhaps an example of a past grant could be provided, (if permissible) -- along some of the types of questions that were asked before the first round of scoring.	There was discussion about allocating some funds to continuation of programs and some exclusively to support seed funding. There was an additional interest in creating categories within the grant awards that acknowledged the relative sizes of the organizations.	
Reviewer 2	The diverse perspectives of the grant reviewers worked well.	The amount of time between being selected, reviewing the applications and scoring the grantees applications.	The lack of parity that exists between larger grant applicants competing against smaller grant applicants.	
Reviewer 3	The entire process worked well! The entire GTOPS staff was exceptionally informative and responsive, very personable and professional.	I honestly can't think of anything that didn't work well. My only suggestion would be to create two different categories for applicants to differentiate the emerging organizations from developed organizations and perhaps funding purposes, i.e. operational costs, programmatic costs, research and development, etc.	I believe the funding stratification posited above would improve the ability to make a more equitable finding distribution. (Yes is my answer for the following question. The drop down menu isn't giving me options.)	

<b>Distribution of GTOs 2018 Applicants by Organizational Annual Income</b>	
Applicant 1	\$43,647
Applicant 2	\$64,389
Applicant 3	\$119,000
Applicant 4	\$144,000
Applicant 5	\$361,000
Applicant 6	\$494,000
Applicant 7	\$515,388
Applicant 8	\$550,000
Applicant 9	\$719,275
Applicant 10	\$741,608
Applicant 11	\$770,666
Applicant 12	\$990,000
Applicant 13	\$1,006,200
Applicant 14	\$1,094,030
Applicant 15	\$1,200,000
Applicant 16	\$1,200,000
Applicant 17	\$1,404,000
Applicant 18	\$1,700,000
Applicant 19	\$1,932,000
Applicant 20	\$2,000,000
Applicant 21	\$2,200,000
Applicant 22	\$3,800,000
Applicant 23	\$5,011,200
Applicant 24	\$5,767,052
Applicant 25	\$7,000,000
Applicant 26	\$7,900,000
Applicant 27	\$9,942,000
Applicant 28	\$21,600,000