City of Gainesville Policy Program
Preliminary Research & Analysis

TOPIC: **Digital Inclusion Initiative – City-Wide Strategies**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With increasing digital inequity across the United States, communities have begun strategizing digital inclusion efforts to overcome the digital divide. Digital inclusion strategies are focused around three main goals:

- **Provide Affordable and Accessible Broadband**
- **Provide Devices and Technical Support and Services**
- **Provide Relevant Content and Services for Digital Skills/Literacy Training**

Many cities have strategized these goals into actionable steps through Digital Inclusion Plans. These plans are vital to creating a sustainable, successful effort to address digital inequities. All cities who have implemented these plans used the following general process:

1) The City assesses the current landscape of the digital divide issue in the community.
2) City Commission directs city staff (perhaps by resolution) to work with community stakeholders in the creation of a digital inclusion strategic plan.
3) A Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan is created by developing strategic ideas through community engagement that address the three goals previously mentioned above.
4) The plan is implemented through a designated department or committee/board. This designated body creates a strategic work plan from the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan's framework that identifies actions the City can take and partnerships it can form.
5) The progress of the strategic plan is measured and evaluated.
6) The plan and its actionable steps are amended to best fit the City's needs and resources.

A few important aspects of this creation and implementation process:

- Community partnerships – These are vital to implementing the strategies as many community organizations are already working on these efforts. These community partners will alleviate the resources needed from cities to implement digital inclusion strategies. Also, they help cities address the issue of the Digital Divide in a more effective and efficient manner by pooling resources.
- Establishing a clear role for the City – The City may take one of two main roles with these community partnerships: resource provider or funder. As a resource provider, the City serves to provide staff, technology, or spaces to widen the influence of community partners currently working on the Digital Divide. As a funder, cities encourages the creation of innovative ideas and programs from those who want to work on Digital Inclusion strategies.

Since digital access efforts city-wide are in the beginning stages, the City of Gainesville has an opportunity to create a plan that will ensure sustainable, effective efforts working on this issue of digital equity for years to come. The City should consider the resource and time capability of creating and implementing this plan, strategies that would be best in addressing the above goals, and partners they would like to work with in the community.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The digital divide is the uneven distribution of the access to and use of digital technology and services in a community. This issue is prevalent throughout the United States. According to a report from Pew Research, 44% of adults with household incomes below $30,000 a year do not have broadband services and 46% do not have traditional computers. On the other hand, 64% of adults living in high-earning households have multiple devices to access their broadband services at home.[1]

This digital divide can be detrimental to a community educationally, economically, and sustainably. Below is a list of effects that it can have on a community:

- *Fiber deserts.* This is where infrastructure is only built in certain areas and it becomes difficult for areas without infrastructure to catch up and experience the same benefits. Thus, digital inequality is furthered.
- *Falling behind in education and digital literacy.* Those in communities that do not have access to digital services are falling behind in learning the skills that society is standardizing. This is disadvantageous to our students, who are required to use technology to learn. The homework gap is created as those without high-speed Internet at home are unable to complete assignments or stay involved in class. This discourages them from participating in school and can be damaging for their future academic career.

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[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/07/digital-divide-persists-even-as-lower-income-americans-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/

- *Reliance on smartphones.* With fewer options, many low-income Americans are relying more on smartphones, which is hard when performing tasks traditionally reserved for larger screens.[2]
- *Unequipped for the workforce.* As businesses and the workplace continue to adopt technology into their functions, many people are not able to compete for jobs because of their lack of digital skills. So, a community's economic development potential is impacted.[3]

There are a few causes behind the digital divide. First, underserving low-income areas often stems from underlying institutional and historical inequity in the community. This issue of the digital divide is only one aspect of inequity and thus they are symbiotic in nature, where inequity breeds digital access issues. Secondly, and in conjunction with inequity, many citizens, especially those in disadvantaged areas, do not have access to digital services like broadband. This means they are unable to use digital devices or build digital skills. Furthermore, even if they do have access to broadband, the type, speed, and continued service varies in quality.

The City of Gainesville has worked on the issue of the digital divide in the past. However, this has mainly been in public housing areas.[4] Recently, the City has been looking at providing municipal broadband for the community. This effort would be important in addressing the digital divide. Nevertheless, there has been no strategic plan to lay out a map of initiatives to help overcome this complex and debilitating issue in the community. Cost is a major factor in moving forward.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

I.   *Digital Inclusion Strategies*

Since the digital divide has become an increasingly important issue in communities around the United States, many cities have allocated resources to address and overcome the issue. The focus has been on **digital inclusion, which is the core concept that all individuals have an inherent right to access broadband connections and technology, as well as the skills and knowledge to properly leverage them.** These efforts include creating general strategies for digital inclusion, working with and supporting community partners, designating a taskforce to create and implement strategic actions, and creating new policies and programs internally and externally. Many cities have merged these efforts into strategic work plans generally referred to as Digital Inclusion Plans (sometimes Digital Equity Plans). These plans outline the visions and goals of the city for digital inclusion efforts and identifies initiatives and actions for each goal that the city is taking, will take, or could take to achieve them. These initiatives also highlight key community stakeholders that will be affected by or could help in their implementation. Along with these initiatives, the plans usually include a chosen indicator for measuring and evaluating the progress or success of the plan.

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[2] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/07/digital-divide-persists-even-as-lower-income-americans-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/
[3] https://www.brookings.edu/research/digitalization-and-the-american-workforce/
[4] Read more in the Digital Inclusion: Public Housing report

While a variety of cities have created or are working on creating digital inclusion plans, there are few that have already adopted them. These cities are Kansas City, MO;[5] Seattle, WA;[6] Austin, TX;[7] and Louisville, KY.[8] Please note that each of their plans have been linked in the footnotes below. Comparing these examples, the biggest difference in these cities' approaches to creating and implementing a plan is whether the focus on the digital divide is used as one aspect of a larger strategic goal or as separate new goal. Some of these plans (Kansas City and Louisville) are only one aspect of these cities' overall strategies toward becoming a Smart City or achieving the cities' other goals such as economic development, education, resiliency, etc. Others of the plans (Seattle and Austin) are designating these efforts as an entirely new strategic goal.

Roadmap for Creating the Digital Inclusion Plan
1) Assess the Issue of Digital Divide in the Community[9]
    a. Perform a Digital Assessment that tracks the current technologies available throughout the community, existing digital access issues and any current efforts underway.
    b. Community Engagement through forums, in-person interactions, surveys, etc.
        i. Engage with citizens of the community to learn the current viewpoints and ideas people have about their digital access, and
        ii. Engage with all stakeholders (nonprofits, businesses, telecommunication companies, departments, etc.) through forums and other public events.
    c. Create a digital assessment tool that tracks all of this.
2) City Commission directs city staff (perhaps by resolution) to work with community stakeholders in the creation of a digital inclusion strategic plan. Staff would recommend strategies that the commission thinks is necessary to be included in the plan.
3) Create a Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan
    a. Establish visions and goals using the digital assessment that will guide the creation of this plan.
    b. Layout strategic ideas that would address these goals:
        i. Identify community stakeholders who could or are addressing digital inclusion strategies;
        ii. Create a team of City staff and community stakeholders (nonprofits, major technological businesses, school board, academics, philanthropic foundations, etc.);
        iii. Have the team brainstorm and engage the community on ideas or ways the City could support new or existing digital inclusion strategies/resources available in the community (i.e. public access centers); and
        iv. Have the team organize and strategize these ideas based on the needs and resources currently in the community.

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[5] https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-manager-s-office/digital-equity-strategic-plan
[6] https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Tech/DigitalEquity_PhaseII.pdf
[7] http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Digital_Inclusion_Strategy_ADOPTED.pdf
[8] https://digitalinclusion.louisvilleky.gov/
[9] https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/bbusa_connectivity_with_purpose_digital_inclusion.pdf#contententarea

    c. City staff and the team write out the report.

    d. Have it reviewed by the City Manager and Commission for approval/adoption.

4) Implement the Plan

    a. Designate/create a department or a committee/board that will implement this plan;

    b. Have that team create a strategic work plan, using the strategic plan as a framework, that details deadlines, objectives, and specific steps and who will take ownership of each step;

    c. Work with community partners to implement these goals;

    d. Expand awareness of these strategies and programs so that the community understands the resources available to them.

5) Measure the Progress of the Plan

    a. Identify an evaluation system that should be used;

    b. Evaluate;

    c. Create annual reports on their progress or use a system where citizens can see the progress online (like Austin, TX);[10]

6) Amend the plan as needed.

II.   *The 3 Main Goals of Digital Inclusion Plans*

The main purpose of a Digital Inclusion Plan is to select the best strategies that fit a city's needs and resources to overcome the digital divide. **Digital inclusion plans tend to have three main goals that these strategies are categorized under: (1) Providing Affordable and Accessible Broadband; (2) Providing Devices and Technical Support and Services; and (3) Providing Relevant Content and Services for Digital Skills/Literacy Training.** These same tasks were emphasized in the research report "Digital Inclusion and Meaningful Broadband Adoption Initiatives" from the Benton Foundation that combined data from organizations and cities involved in the National Digital Inclusion Alliance to find the strategies and goals that are best to use to address digital inclusion[11]. All of these goals address the idea of helping people access digital services, become comfortable with using it, and gain the benefits that digital access provides. Below, each area is addressed by providing the most common options to achieve these goals and emphasizing a few case studies that may be of interest in considering for the City of Gainesville.

Goal 1: Providing Affordable and Accessible Broadband
Cost is the most significant barrier to adoption of digital technology. Past efforts to address unaffordable broadband have focused on residents' "willingness to pay." However, this is the wrong focus because many individuals and families who do not use technology are unable to afford Internet service as they must provide for other basic necessities. As the Internet increasingly becomes recognized as a necessity, it is important to help these families adopt digital technology. Cities need to understand the current cultural view of digital service as a budget priority in their community. In other words, they must focus on their citizens' "ability to pay".

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[10] http://austintexas.gov/page/digital-inclusion-strategic-plan

[11] https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/60001390097.pdf

On top of this, many low-income citizens do not prioritize digital access technology because good quality access is not available to them. Cities must address the access issue of affordable and high-speed broadband through infrastructure, competitive markets, and public access centers that citizens can use. Public access centers[12] are very important in all these initiatives as it provides a place where citizens can gain confidence in using these technologies and adopt it in their own homes. So, it is not only about the cost of broadband, but the equitable distribution of services.

Options for Strategies:
1) Crowdsourcing Internet speeds through partnerships, using data from free Internet speed tests to map areas with differing speeds and differing rates. This helps in understanding connectivity gaps and current resource capabilities in the area.[13]
2) Create/encourage a competitive market for Internet service providers (ISPs) through economic incentives, simplified permitting processes, making spare fiber optic network available, etc.[14]
3) Ensuring new buildings and developments have the infrastructure for providing broadband services and Internet access through developer and planner trainings and evaluations of building codes.[15]
4) Broadband/Wi-Fi City-Wide Infrastructure Partnerships.[16]
5) Making free public Wi-Fi available, especially in low access public areas.[17]
6) Expanding access to faster and more reliable connections at Community Centers, Schools, and Libraries through infrastructure investment and extending hours.[18]
7) Low-cost Internet available for qualifying residents and creating sign-up drives that city staff participates in when interacting with those residents.[19]
8) Wi-Fi Hot Spot Lending Programs – Most cities have a program where they loan residents or students Wi-Fi hotspots, small devices that provide users with Wi-Fi connection and Internet services). These are funded and provided through libraries or local community partnerships.[20]

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[12] Areas where the general public can access digital services and devices, such as libraries, schools, or facilities run by the government.

[13] Louisville, Kentucky - Speed Up Louisville; Kansas City, MO; San Jose, CA – Speed Up San Jose; Austin, TX – AustinConnect.Net/Austin Digital Assessment

[14] Seattle, WA – lease with Cascade Networks; San Jose, CA

[15] Seattle, WA

[16] Louisville, KY – Kentucky Wired Project; Kansas City, MO – Google Fiber; Seattle, WA – CenturyLink, Wave Broadband, Comcast; San Jose, CA – Small Cell Technology Project with Verizon, Mobility, T-Mobile, AT&T ; Austin, TX – Cisco's Wireless Mesh Network ; Chattanooga, TN – Electric Power Board of Chattanooga ; Raleigh, NC – Gig.U program

[17] Louisville, KY; Kansas City, MO; Seattle, WA – Microsoft/the Seattle Center; Charlotte, NC; San Jose – East Side Union High School District pilot program and Facebook's Terragraph technology project

[18] Louisville, KY; Seattle, WA; San Jose, CA; Chattanooga/Hamilton County, TN

[19] Louisville, KY; Seattle, WA – Lifeline Discount Smart Phone Programs; Chattanooga, TN - Tech Goes Home

[20] Seattle, WA; Kansas City, MO – Hotspots for Learning/Mobile Beacon; Austin, TX – Austin Public Library

Case Studies

Crowdsourcing Internet Speeds:

Louisville, KY – Speed Up Louisville[21]

After Louisville hosted a local hackathon, a group of students came up with a measurement of Internet speeds within city boundaries. The City decided to expand this measurement and partnered with Civic Data Alliance, PowerUpLabs, and LVL1 to create Speed Up Louisville. This website helps residents and the city understand where high-quality Internet service is provided and where there are needs. It also provides full transparency about the Internet service quality throughout the community. It relies on citizens taking the free Internet service test to provide this data.

Broadband/Wi-Fi City-Wide Infrastructure Partnerships:

San Jose, CA – Small Cell Technology[22]

San Jose currently works with telecommunication companies that maintain antennas across the City and on City property (streetlights/traffic lights) that have "small cells." These cells have the ability to offer enhanced voice and data capacity citywide, improve emergency communication, capability, and deploy 5G broadband technology. San Jose would like to take advantage of this technological opportunity as well as the revenue that these small cells generate through usage fees to aid in their Digital Inclusion and Broadband Strategy. At this time, they are finalizing agreements with these telecommunication companies to provide them access to this technology and negotiate a usage fee that will be used to fund their Digital Inclusion Program Fund.[23]

Goal 2: Providing Devices and Technical Support and Services

Equally important to digital service access is the access to digital devices, like computers, smartphones, tablets, etc. This access must be both affordable as well as involve maintenance since many citizens are not technologically knowledgeable to understand device issues. Cities and community partners can help in providing these devices and maintenance services. Many cities have refurbishing programs where they recycle old computers. Not only is this a great way to reduce the price of devices for low-income residents, but also it is advantageous to the environment as electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world. On top of this, many public access centers and community partners provide technical support services so that residents have an understanding of how to use their devices and fix issues to build their digital confidence. Thus, this goal also helps address the importance of access to digital benefits and keeping up with the changing technology of the 21st century.

Options for Strategies:
1) Community partners or cities refurbish used laptops or devices that were donated from businesses, nonprofits, or individuals and providing those to local schools or low-income residents for free or reduced prices.[24]

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[21] http://poweruplabs.co/introducing-speed-up-louisville/
[22] http://www.sanjoseca.gov/smallcell
[23] https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/san-jose-digital-divide-inclusion-fund/548474/
[24] Louisville, KY; Kansas City, MO – Connecting For Good Refurbish Program; Seattle, WA – InterConnection and Free City Surplus Computers; Austin, TX – Goodwill and American Youth Works and PC Loan Program; Charlotte, NC – E2D's Re-Image Charlotte Program

2) Giveaway events that use refurbished devices or those donated by individuals, businesses, or community partners.[25]
3) Funding and expanded services for Public Access Computer Labs and Centers including multiple charging options and increased technology assistance.[26]
4) Providing financing options to low-income/assisted residents to obtain devices.[27]
5) A device checkout/provision program with the libraries.[28]
6) Technical Assistance.[29]

Case Studies

Refurbishment Programs:

Charlotte, NC - E2D's Re-Image Charlotte Program[30]

This program is through a nonprofit called E2D. Laptops are donated from local business and corporations, where they are refurbished by students in the local schools. These students are provided IT training and real workforce experience through this program. Also, around 1000 refurbished laptops are distributed to students throughout the district. This program is supported through investments by Google Fiber, Pennyappeal USA, Lowe's Corporate, and the Wells Fargo Foundation.

Device Checkout/Provision Program:

Louisville, KY – Job Seeker Pilot Program[31]

The Office of Performance Improvement and Innovation and the Louisville Free Public Library created the Job Seekers Program, where 15 participants in the Self-Sufficiency Program are given a Chromebook and unlimited data hotspots. These devices have allowed the participants to have access to digital services and use the full benefits of digital access.

Goal 3: Providing Relevant Content and Services for Digital Skills/Literacy Training

Access is not useful without proper understanding and knowledge on how to use digital services. Citizens must be able to understand and use the full benefits of digital access. To that end, digital literacy is "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."[32] As digital skills become necessary in all careers and basic functions of life, digital skills/literacy training programs having increased amongst cities, schools, and businesses.

There are a multitude of digital literacy programs that differ based on the audience and the purpose of their training. The purposes of digital literacy programs range widely from learning basic computer

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[25] Louisville, KY

[26] Seattle, WA – Boys and Girls Club

[27] Seattle, WA – Discount Smart Phone Lifeline Program; San Jose, CA; Charlotte, NC – Mecklenburg Kinship Care Program with Goodwill and the County

[28] Louisville, KY – Job Seeker Program; San Jose, CA

[29] Austin, TX - Hotline

[30] http://www.charlottedigitalinclusionalliance.org/playbook.html

[31] https://projects.lsvll.io/projects/digital-inclusion/

[32] https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/60001390097.pdf

skills (i.e. emails and creating documents) to creating software to coding for business or technology use. While there are programs for all types of people, they are usually aimed at four groups: families, employees/business, students/youth, and seniors. Programs use a variety of teaching approaches including classes of 20 to 30 people, long-term programs, one-on-one/personalized training, or mobile model training to meet students in the community. Both Seattle, WA, and San Jose, CA, have recognized the importance of creating a digital literacy framework focusing on the needs of those in the community that identifies existing resources and curricula that would be best for those different purposes and audiences. This way they could invest in those programs that are needed most and assist current trainers in developing programs that recognize the needs of community.

It should be emphasized that digital literacy programs could not be implemented without the creation of public access centers, like libraries or computer labs. Overall, this goal is focused on supporting those in the community with resources to take advantage and succeed in the digitally-focused society of the 21st century.

Options for Strategies:
1) Create a Chief Digital Literacy Officer or framework to inventory and understand the digital literacy programs that are available or needed in the community.[33]
2) Create programs that prepare trainers and volunteers implementing the digital literacy programs.[34]
3) Offer programs that use diverse languages and are designed for those that need accessibility/disability assistance.[35]
4) Offer programs focused on employee/business/non-profits digital skills.[36]
5) Offer programs for families/guardians to learn digital skills to help children in school.[37]
6) Work with community partners to create long-term programs where people (mainly students) can learn specific coding and software curriculum and get digital device or access discounts in return for participation.[38]
7) Investing in programs offered at Library/Public Access Centers (computer labs and community centers).[39]

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[33] San Jose, CA; Seattle, WA

[34] Kansas City, MO – Tech Coaches; Seattle, WA – Train the Trainer Program; Raleigh, NC – Digital Ambassadors; Charlotte, NC – Digital Charlotte

[35] Austin, TX – Austin FreeNet, City-wide Contract, SkillPoint Alliance; San Jose, CA

[36] Louisville, KY – Google Fiber/Grow with Google's Applied Digital Skills platform; Kansas City, MO; Seattle, WA; San Jose, CA – HandsOn Tech from Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits and Nonprofit Boot Camp from Social Media for Non-profits; Chattanooga, TN – Covalence Coding School; Charlotte, NC– Broadband Certification and Goodwill Industries Technology Curriculum

[37] Seattle, WA; Charlotte, NC – Parent University

[38] Louisville, KY – Code Louisville Initiative; Austin, TX; Raleigh, NC – Digital Connectors; Chattanooga, TN – Tech Goes Home: Charlotte, NC - TechCharlotte

[39] Louisville, KY – Lynda.com; Seattle, WA – West Seattle Senior Center/Technology Matching Grant Fund; San Jose, CA; Raleigh, NC – Adult Education Classes

8) Creating or partnering with nonprofits/community businesses to create centers at these Public Access Centers or other facilities that provide both training and experiences for high-tech events (i.e. hackathons).[40]
9) Partner with local colleges to provide classes.[41]
10) Create Mobile Community Access Hubs that bring these programs to those who are unable to travel to public access centers.[42]

Case Studies
Long-term Curriculum Programs:
Raleigh, NC – Digital Connectors Program[43]
The Digital Connectors Program is nationally renowned and provided by a partnership between the City of Raleigh and Comcast. This 9-month program is offered through the City's Housing and Neighborhoods Department to train 15 youths ages 14-18 in technology and leadership skills. It provides youth opportunities to develop professional life skills, participate in open data projects, explore workplace careers, and serve their community as they refurbish computers and become digital literacy trainers in the community. Upon completion of the program, students receive a laptop computer and a $500 dollar stipend.

Investing/Offering Programs at Public Access Centers:
Seattle, WA – West Seattle Senior Center Classes[44]
At the West Seattle Senior Center, there are monthly computer classes offered to those members. These classes are funded through the City of Seattle's Technology Matching Fund grant and are provided instructors from The Seattle Public Library. The classes teach seniors in the community a range of skills from computer basics to newer technology skills such as using GPS, creating grocery lists on-line, and listening to podcasts. It has helped this segment of the community become connected to digital services, friends, and family.

Mobile Community Access Hubs
San Jose, CA – Bridging the Digital Divide Program from People Acting in Community Together[45]
This $200,000 program is funded by the Knight Foundation, which invests in cities where the Knight brothers once published newspapers as journalists. The group People Acting in Community Together (PACT) is a non-partisan, community-based, non-profit organization that uses volunteers to train low-income residents to use the Internet and online tools to address community challenges. They provide this training by establishing mobile community access hubs that break down the barrier of

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[40] Louisville, KY – PNC Gigabit Experience Center; Kansas City, MO – KC Digital Media Lab; Austin Texas – Austin FreeNet; Chattanooga – Enterprise Center
[41] Kansas City, MO; Charlotte, NC
[42] San Jose – Bridging the Digital Divide from People Acting in Community Together
[43] https://www.raleighnc.gov/community/content/HousingNeighborhoods/Articles/DigitalInclusionPrograms.html
[44] https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Tech/DigitalEquity/2018%20Digital%20Equity%20Annual%20Report.pdf
[45] https://knightfoundation.org/press/releases/six-silicon-valley-community-2013/

digital literacy training access by going directly to those residents in the community who request services.

III.   *Community Alliances/Partnerships*

In a report from Power Up: The Campaign for Digital Inclusion, researchers found the most successful digital inclusion programs are those "that have been inclusive in their approach to engage community partners."[46] Partnerships with the private sector and non-profits strengthen the sustainability of initiatives and allow digital inclusion activities to be far-reaching and effective. The use of community partners can be easily seen in the previous section, where almost every strategy involved a city working with those partners in the community.

General Stakeholders
Research has revealed a trend of specific types of organizations or national organizations that aid in digital inclusion efforts. Below is a list of these types of partners:

- County, State, and Federal government entities
- Government Departments
  - Transportation
  - Health
  - Housing Authority
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Economic Development
  - Human Services
  - Information Technology
- School Board/School System
- Public Libraries
- Social service agencies
- Local Churches
- Nonprofits
  - Volunteer groups
  - Youth/community centers
  - Goodwill's Neighborhood Association
  - Tech Goes Home[47]
- Businesses
  - Google Fiber (ex. Kansas City, MO)
  - Banks
  - Consultants
  - Coding/software developers

- Facebook
- Telecommunication Companies (Verizon, Spectrum, Sprint/T-Mobile, Wave, Comcast)
- Online Digital Literacy Programs (Lynda.com)
- Healthcare Providers
- Philanthropic Foundations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Universities/Local Colleges
- National digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)
- Nationwide Projects/Programs:
  - Gig.U
  - Digital Connectors
  - Americorp Vistas (ex. Louisville, KY)
  - The Federal Communications Commission's Lifeline Program (ex. Seattle, WA)
  - The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Broadband USA program[48]

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[46] http://www.digitalaccess.org/pdf/White_Paper.pdf
[47] https://www.techgoeshome.org/
[48] https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/ntia common-content/how-we-can-help

Digital Inclusion Coalition/Networks
In some cities, partnerships are so vital that coalitions/networks have formed. Exemplary networks include Kansas City, MO – Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion; Seattle, WA – Digital Equity Network; Austin, TX – Digital Empowerment of Austin; Charlotte, NC – Charlotte Digital Inclusion Alliance. These networks contain a mix of stakeholders in the community including nonprofits, businesses, educational institutions and City/County governments. Their purpose is to bring together and leverage community resources to make their cities digitally inclusive.

Coalitions/networks usually form organically as a city engages stakeholders to assess their digital divide issues during the first phase of creating a Digital Inclusion Plan. However, some networks form at the request of the city. This was seen in Charlotte where the Charlotte Digital Inclusion Alliance created a digital inclusion strategy playbook that is used by the city and county. Partners find it beneficial to combine their resources and create a comprehensive plan to address the digital divide. Many times after digital inclusion plans are in place and programs are implemented, these networks lead the implementation of the digital inclusion plan. Cities may ultimately transfer these responsibilities and support only funding and resources for these networks to function.

Role of the City
City government serves as a building block for creating a community conversation about the digital divide. In doing so, it helps partners who are working on digital inclusion to be engaged in city-wide efforts. Cities carry two roles main roles in their partnerships in the community. These roles support the efforts of their partners:
1) Providing Resources:
   Cities are able to provide a number of resources to community partners who may not have adequate access to properly trained staff, facilities, or technology. Many times these partners only have the ability to serve small percentages of the community. However, with City resources, community organizations can expand their programs throughout underserved areas and have a wider impact on the community. In this way, the City is not responsible for the creation or maintenance of the program. Instead, it is responsible for promoting these organizations in the community.
2) Providing Funds:
   Not only do cities provide physical resources, but they also provide funds to these organizations. These funds are generally called Digital Inclusion Funds that support community programs and partners. Below are a few examples of these funds[49]:

   Seattle, WA – Technology Matching Funds
   In 2018, the City of Seattle provided over $1.4 million in contracts with community agencies to provide technology access and digital literacy services. This was mostly through its Technology Matching Fund program. This program provides up to $25,000 matching funds to qualifying non-profit organizations. It was established in 1997 by designating $100,000 in cable funds to invest

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[49] https://nextcenturycities.org/municipal-funding-programs-help-bridge-the-digital-divide-and-build-community-connections/

in community projects that would close the digital divide. That fund has grown to $320,000 and funds roughly 12 organizations each year.

Austin, TX – Grant for Technology Opportunities
Similarly, in 2001, the City of Austin created a grant program to support smaller grassroots organizations doing digital inclusion work. The grant awards $10,000-$25,000 in matching funds to 7-9 program per year. The fund is open-ended in the opportunities it will provide, which allows it to stay current and ensure the community has access to emerging technologies.

PRELIMINARY COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Benefits of Adopting a Digital Inclusion Plan or Strategies:
- It is an opportunity to address the digital divide.
- It works towards the city's strategic goals of Inequity, Community Resilience, and becoming a Smart City.
- It could build connections for the City with community partners, including UF.
- It makes the area more innovative and competitive for economic development by providing career training and local school education on digital skills.
- Refurbishment programs are environmentally friendly as they recycle e-waste.

Costs of Adopting a Digital Inclusion Plan or Strategies:
- Creating and implementing the plan or strategies involves long-term planning and expends resources and time of City Staff.
  - Libraries are often already under-resourced and overburdened
- Once implemented, the programs and partnerships must be maintained to work, which may be difficult if efforts are not prioritized.
- There may be a lack of current community resources/programs that could partner with the City.
- The success of strategies is dependent on how partnerships are formed.
- If the City partners with national companies or partners not based in Gainesville, communication and cooperation issues may arise.
- There is a potential financial cost if the City becomes a funding partner.

PRELIMINARY AND ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

For a list of community stakeholders with potential partnerships, refer to section III of the preliminary findings.

RECOMMENDED POINTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH/DISCUSSION

- Is this a project that the City would like to put into place?
- Would these initiatives be their own comprehensive digital inclusion plan or one part of a larger strategic plan towards becoming a Smart City?
- Does the City have the capability of creating a long-term plan like this?

- Which strategies are the Commission and the City most interested in investing time and resources for?
- Are there current partners in the community working on this or willing to work with the City on this? If so, which ones should the City be working with now and how will the City create long-lasting connections with them?
- Would the City want to help create an alliance coalition/network?
- What will be the role of the City in these efforts and partnerships?
- Is the City of Gainesville able to provide a digital inclusion fund?
- Which department would be in charge of this?
- Should pilot projects be started in public housing areas first? (see Digital Inclusion: Public Housing Report)