June 15, 2019

Seattle City Council

600 4th Ave

Seattle, WA 98104

Re: 2018 Technology Access and Adoption Study

We would like to first thank the City of Seattle and particularly Seattle Information Technology (IT) for producing such an insightful Technology Access and Adoption Study - one of the best in the country - and thank Seattle IT for facilitating this public review process.

These public comments were prepared by volunteers from the Community Technology Advisory Board (CTAB) Digital Equity Committee. These volunteers range from leaders of underserved communities, to University professors and students, to school district leaders, and community activists.

We reviewed and discussed the booklet, dashboard, and full technical report with a specific emphasis on representation is the study of community members whose primary language is other than English and people living with a disability, access of families with school-age children, and determining recommendations for next steps with the biggest impact. Some recurring themes emerged that we believe will benefit the City as a whole if we focus efforts in the short term:

* Community members whose primary language is other than English
* Community members living with disabilities
* Community members living in poverty
* Community members who are experiencing homelessness or who are insecurely housed
* Families with School Age Children
* Education of Residents

Our review will examine each of the above with comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,

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| **Digital Equity Committee Volunteers**  John Krull, Co-Chair  Karia Wong, Co-Chair  Dorene Corwell  Dan Mouton  Kristen Hoffman  Mary Christensen  Abbe Blank  Liz Gruchala-Gilbert  Richie Gamiño | **Community Technology Advisory Board**  Steven Maheshwary, CTAB Chair  Charlotte Lunday, CTAB Co-Vice Chair  Torgie Madison, CTAB Co-Vice Chair  Smriti Chandashekar, CTAB Member  Mark DeLoura, CTAB Member  John Krull, CTAB Education Member  Karia Wong, CTAB Member |

# Community members whose primary language is other than English:

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## Comments

The study received 244 responses from residents whose primary language is other than English which has a +/- confidence interval of 6.3% - the lowest among subgroups identified. There were only 29 responses for those whose primary language at home is Spanish and 65 for those whose primary language is Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin).

We know from reviewing Technology Matching Fund applications that there are many organizations trying to address digital equity needs with populations whose primary language is not English. This knowledge does not seem to match what we see in these survey results.

## Recommendations

* Evaluate data from survey for each language group.
* Conduct Focus Groups - Enlist the help of agencies currently working with populations for which English is not the primarily language to conduct the focus groups.
* In future studies, think about ways to get more responses from different language groups.

# Community members living with disabilities:

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## Comments

The study identified that respondents (435) with household members living with a disability are 3 times more likely not to have internet access. Results show that 15% of this group are without internet access and 43% have an income range below $25,000. 98144 has only 80% access.

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## Recommendations

* Conduct focus groups with households who report a member with a disability to look for root cause, trends, or correlations so this can be addressed.

Community members living in poverty:

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## Comments

25% of respondents who report living in poverty are without internet access. 99% of households with incomes $50K or more have internet access. Council District 2 (South Seattle) has the lowest rate of access with only 93% reporting in-home internet access, but examination of specific zip codes even more need in smaller areas. 98106, 98122, 98144 and 98126 have the highest need.

Households average $150 per month for internet access. Households with incomes under $25K still pay $91/month and with incomes from $25K-$50K pay $130/month.

45% of respondents in this category reported internet adequacy as being only somewhat adequate, rarely adequate, or not adequate.

Respondents, in general are not aware of inexpensive internet options.

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## Recommendations

* Focus initial efforts on zip codes with the highest need
* Promote programs from Comcast and Wave that have fixed internet access at $10/month. Include marketing and events.
* Correlate zip codes with low access to zip codes with low-cost broadband
* Investigate Low-income housing access and provide centralized, robust internet as part of the living arrangement.

# Community members who are experiencing homelessness or who are insecurely housed:

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## Comments

* The survey did not seem to be effective at reaching the segment of the population who are currently homeless or insecurely housed, as evidenced by the small total number of respondents (56).
* It’s difficult to determine from the survey if there are different needs between those who are chronically homeless and those for whom it may be short-term.
* It’s difficult to understand the data about “Devices used in household” and “Source of home internet” for this population.
* 43% of this population said the internet access was either Rarely or Not Adequate, which was much higher than for the total respondents (7%)
* This population relies heavily on smartphones or mobile phones (90%)

## Recommendations

* Verify or provide access to free, secure wi-fi for shelters and sanctioned tent or tiny house encampments in the city
* Conduct focus group with additional population sub-groups. Certain tent encampments, such as TC3, move about every three months, and may have a unique perspective on internet access availability and adequacy.
* In future, make sure language is sensitive to homeless community members

# Families with School Age Children:

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## Comments

Of 29,865 emails to Seattle Public Schools parents and guardians, 669 surveys were returned, a 2.2% response rate. 1454 households with school age children, 98% SPS, reporting as households with children aged 17 or younger responded as having internet access. However, 4% of residents rely solely on a cellular data plan for in-home internet access. 88% of Seattle Internet subscriptions are fixed broadband (Comcast, CenturyLink, Wave).

## Recommendations

* Conduct a follow-up survey with Seattle Public Schools in multiple languages to get broader input from the families of 53,000 students.
* Promote low cost broadband considering 4-12% are using cellular for broadband
* Include information about low-cost internet with school computer take home program
* Work with Seattle Public Schools to provide broadband to families in need.

# Education of Residents:

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## Comments

43% of residents in Seattle do not know the speed of their internet service. 54% of those living in poverty report barriers to using the internet more often. Only 4% of residents say that technology and the internet are not very important to them. 80% of residents are concerned about the safety and security of their personal information. Residents want technical support and skill building.

## Recommendations

* Publicize and train the community on types of access, quality of internet access, how to test it, and how to shop for services
* Publicize and offer events about low-cost internet
* Promote Seattle Public Library training programs
* Add more classes and information about safety and security
* Measure effectiveness of training and marketing programs