**October 29, 2019 Meeting - Seattle Community Technology Advisory Board**

Topics covered included: Tech Matching Fund update; Digital Equity and Community Voices: Understanding digital equity needs in our community

**This meeting was held:** October 29, 2019; 6:00-7:30 p.m., Impact Hub, 220 2nd Avenue South, Seattle, Washington 98104

**Attending:**

**Board Members:** Steven Maheshwary, Mark DeLoura, Torgie Madison, Rene Peters, Katie Crimmins

**Public:** Sean McClellan, Adam Owen, Stacey Wedlake, Kristen Hoffman, Kyra Arnette, Aric Skurdal, Eric Aker, Marisol Morales, Leslie Horton, Chris Kincaid, Bruce Wolcott (Bellevue College), Leili Slutz, Kris Everson, Jenn Fox (Foxbot), Gladis Clemente (Villa Communitaria), Michelle Merriweather (Urban League), Janet Arbogast (Literacy Source), Ritu Bahl (Computing Kids), Seattle Public Library staff: Kreg Hasegawa, Toby Thomas, Martin Sanchez, Britney Nitia Lee,

**Seattle IT Staff:** Tracye Cantrell, Jim Loter, David Keyes, Delia Burke, Brenda Tate, Seferiana Day, Cass Magnuski

**34 In Attendance**

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Welcome to the CTAB panel discussion on understanding digital equity needs in our community.  This is also our monthly CTAB meeting and we have to do some housekeeping first.  For our board members, can we get a motion to approve the October agenda and the minutes for the September meeting.

**Torgie Madison:**    I move to approve the October agenda and the minutes from the September meeting.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Do we have a second?

**Mark DeLoura:** I'll second.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Great. All in favor say 'aye.'  Any abstentions? Any 'nays?' Motion passes. We approve our October agenda and September minutes. All right, so that is kind of a nice segue. So, I wanted to thank you all for joining us tonight. We have a great panel lined up for you. But before we get into that, I wanted to give some more context to who we are and what we do, and why digital equity is of value to us.

When I mentioned that the Community Technology Advisory Board is focused on digital equity, one of the things that we're focused on is making recommendations to the City about who they should fund for the Technology Matching Fund. The Technology Matching Fund is a City of Seattle grant that provides fund to various community-based organizations based on their digital equity needs. So, whether that's getting access to broadband, getting access to teaching resources, getting access to actual technologies, or anything else related to historical hurdles to getting access to technology, that's what that grant is for. So, we're happy to participate in that review process. And in fact, the three organizations represented here tonight all have received funding from the Technology Matching Fund.

I see that Delia Burke has just walked in, so I don't want to put her on the spot, but we're just now talking about the Technology Matching Fund. I don't know if you want to talk a little bit about the timeline for the Technology Matching Fund?

**Delia Burke:**   Sure! Hi, everyone. We're just getting around to launching the Technology Matching Fund. Make sure you get the application. The deadline is January 13 of 2020. And we have a series of workshops coming up before the end of the year. So, if you're interested, I would encourage you to come to our workshops. It's a great opportunity to learn a little bit more about what the rules are, what  are some of the projects that we fund, and how your organization can work with us. I have some postcards here that have the workshop dates:

**Wednesday, Nov. 6, 5:30 – 7 p.m.**   
2100 Building, Community Room B, 2100 24th Ave S.

**Friday, Nov. 22, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.**   
Northgate Branch Library, 10548 5th Ave N.E.

**Saturday, Dec. 7, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.**   
Rainier Beach Branch Library, 9125 Rainier Ave S.

The Technology Matching Fund application and guidelines are available at [seattle.gov/tech/initiatives/digital-equity/technology-matching-fund](https://www.seattle.gov/tech/initiatives/digital-equity/technology-matching-fund). **The application deadline is** **Monday, Jan. 13, 2020,** **at 5 p.m.**

We are available to answer any questions and we're happy to talk you through project applications. Thanks!

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Thank you so much. As I mentioned, this is kind of a special CTAB meeting. It is technically a meeting for us. But normally, we hold our meetings on the second Tuesdays of every month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Like this, it's open to the public, so anyone can attend and get an insight into the discussion and the things that we're thinking about as it relates to technology policy. And that's at the Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750. You can also just Google CTAB and you will see our web site, our latest agenda, meeting minutes, to give you a flavor of what we're about.

With that being said, I'd love to jump into our panel. Just so you know, we're going to have a panel discussion around digital equity and the different perspectives from the respective organizations here. We're really honored to have our three panelists here representing tonight. At the end of the panel, we will have  Q&A if you are interested in asking questions of our panelists. You can either take a card over there and write your question down, or you can just stand up and volunteer your question. I will ask people to please hold your questions until the Q&A session.

So, without further ado, I'd love to introduce our panelists. We'll start at the very end with Janet Arbogast. Janet has worked in the field of adult education for over 15 years as an instructor, teacher trainer, curriculum developer, and program manager. She is the community partnership manager for Literacy Source. Literacy Source is a nonprofit community organization, based out of Lake City, that provides ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), adult basic education, citizenship, and GED prep classes, for low income adults.

And then we have Gladis Clemente, who works at the South Park Information and Resource Center, soon to be called Villa Comunitaria. Gladis is an adult education program coordinator. She has been coordinating the last few Technology Matching Fund projects that her program has received since 2017.

Last, but not least, we have Michelle Merriweather, who serves as the thirteenth president of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle. Since beginning her role in early 2018, she has expanded the vision and work of the organization to include those who are experiencing homelessness, as well as increasing the education, training, access and impact of her community to the tech sectors. In addition, she serves on the board of directors of the Downtown Seattle Association, the Alliance for Education, and as a commissioner for the inaugural Washington State Women's Commission.

Thank you all for being here  tonight. I really appreciate it. To kick things off, I know I've done a little bit of introduction, but I don't know if you guys would be able to just give a few sentences to the audience about your organization and what it does. Janet, we can start with you.

**Janet Arbogast:**   Thank you, everyone, for having us, and thank you, Steven. Literacy Source has been in existence for over 30 years. We provide adult basic education classes, which covers basic reading, writing, literacy for both native English speakers and non-native English speakers. We provide citizenship and GED prep. About one in six adults in both Seattle and the State of Washington, as well as nationally, are low-literacy. So, it's a pretty wide swath of folks that we serve, from a number of different countries and languages, as well as folks who were born and raised here. We offer private tutoring as well as small classes. We are also part of a handful of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that are funded in part by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, so our basic skills programs align with those similar classes, but because we are much smaller and we're a CBO, we are able to offer a different experience in  much more non-threatening, non-institutional format for a lot of folks who have, perhaps, not succeeded very well in the traditional system.

**Gladis Clemente:**  I just wanted you to know that English is my second language, so pardon my accent in my presentation. My name is Gladis Clemente. Thank you for having me.  We are at the South Park Information and Resource Center, a nonprofit organization. We are going to be Villa Comunitaria, which is Community Village in English. It was formed in 2005 to help our neighborhood. This organization was founded because we saw the needs that the South Park neighborhood was facing. I don't know if you know the community, but South Park has mostly Spanish speakers, Latino, and low-income, with families with children under 12 years old. We basically do human resources, services, referrals. We also help them to apply for citizenship. We also do food access programs, and we have another program that looks to empower the community to start their own businesses. Since 2017, we have coordinated the Technology Matching Fund programs.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    My name is Michelle Merriweather. I have the privilege of serving as CEO of the Urban League. The Urban League in Seattle will turn 90 next year, so we have been serving the Seattle community for almost 90 years through direct service to close the economic, empowerment, and achievement gaps for African-Americans in the under-served communities through direct service. We focus on three areas of work to create that parity: workforce development, education, training, and housing programs. And there's a lot of work that goes into all of those. I won't dive into all of them, but know that we have been serving this community for a very long time, with the goals of closing the wealth gap for African-Americans.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   To segue into that, this month is Digital Equity Month, and we just recently had Digital Equity week in early October, so we want to ask some questions about, potentially, some of the Technology Matching Fund grants that your organizations have received. Maybe, Michelle, if you can start us off, can you talk a little bit about a Technology Matching Fund project you've had? What were some of the needs that you saw and were able to address?

**Michelle Merriweather:**    For sure. I'm glad David Keyes is here. He helped us with our TMF grant. That was in 2016, I think. We started a program called Tele-University to support high school students, give them access and inspiration into the STEM fields. It's a college learning environment. It's their first entry into college life, six weeks during the summer. We bring kids from all over Seattle Public Schools and a few from beyond, to give them that college experience on the campus. We kind of take over the campus of Seattle Central for six weeks. They take some college courses. They take some STEM courses, coding classes, etc. Every Friday, we put them on buses and take them around to colleges, universities, corporations here in Seattle to get them excited about the opportunities, and so they can see people who look like them in these roles. They get to see what's behind the scenes at Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and what opportunities await them, and further than that, what skills they need to develop, be it a college degree, certifications, experiences that they need to have these jobs in the future. From start to finish, the kids learn to view learning about coding or STEM, other than their science classes. Most of them would be first generation college students. Most of them have never even set foot on UW's campus, or Seattle Central's, for that matter. By the end, they finish with some college credits, some high school credits. If they're deficient in some credits, they get a tutor, or direct learning in those credits. And then, some coding experience, and then, I think we put in some public speaking, as well.

It's not quite summer school, not quite work experience. It's just to incentivise them, show up every day, and engage. And also, we give them a fun experience. At the end of that six weeks, we ask them what they want to do. If they want to go to Wild Wings, we say, okay let's go, we're going to do that. We also had a great celebration at Washington Hall, and talked about their experiences, and had a mini-graduation. All in all, it's just fun. We still do it now. We learned a lot, too, in our very first year doing this at universities. They still get credit, retention, and making up high school classes. I can't remember what that's called.

It's about 100 high school kids, and it's  great time.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Gladis, can you talk a little bit about your Technology Matching Fund projects?

**Gladis Clemente:**   So far, we have implemented two, but the first one was named Ella. That means empowering Latina leaders. Brilliant! This project was launched with 20 women and offered literacy skills in English, technology, and leadership. This was a really great success because three of them are already staff members with our organization, Villa Comunitaria. And some of them have been doing their own projects. I don't know if you have heard about it, but Women and Driving focuses on women who do not drive since they arrived in the United States. They empower women to drive.

That's one. And the other one is MITA, which is cultural English technology ambassadors. That was in 2015. It empowered women to gain technology literacy skills. That was an eight-month program.

And then in 2017, we had [unintelligible]. It's not only focused on women. We extend to all genders, and we have been able to do CenterStone, formerly C.A.M.P. We provide classes in spring, winter, , summer, and we teach these classes in Spanish. Why do we teach these classes in Spanish? Because most of our community are Spanish speakers. I know they need to learn English, but it's really hard for them to fully learn in English. They know that Goodwill provides classes in English. I always hear their anecdotes that say we don't understand anything. We fill a need in the community. That's why. We have seniors, we have single moms, we have people who are eager to learn. They learn about Microsoft Office programs, as well as programs that help them to apply for jobs and become more self-sufficient, and imp[rove their business.

Another project that we are going to have and are already implementing, is the next level of technology literacy. The students said they want to learn more than they can get in just six weeks of workshops. They want the next level. We asked them what they want to learn. They said we want to learn what is taught in schools, so we are adapting the curriculum to include that, and also to include programs to teach them to apply for utility programs, how to pay the traffic tickets. They wanted to implement that this year.

**Janet Arbogast:**   Literacy Source has, over the years integrated digital technology into all of our classes. Where basic skills used to be considered previously to be reading, writing, math, speaking, digital skills are also a basic skill now. In order to get a job, obviously. I'm sure that this is a crowd that can understand all of this--to do the most basic thing, to get a job. And to communicate with your child's school. It's all done via email. It's all done online anymore. Whereas a lot of our folks that we work with used to previously get employment in the janitorial field or food service and things like that, where they did not necessarily need to have these skills, more and more, any job that you have, you need to log in. Instead of punching in, you log in now. So, for janitorial skills, they have their assignments that they get via a computer system, basically. So, there are a lot more things that a lot of jobs that people assume they could get if they did not have a level of education, that's no longer the case anymore. So, across the board, we've included it in our programming.

More specifically, we've also incorporated learning labs for people, where they learned specific skills, such as email, as opposed to -- they can do certain things that they can go online and learn a language, add a little bit more erudition about their class, if they'd like, but also just to search for something. They can learn to send an email. And then we also have tech tutoring, where a person can sign up for ten weeks with a tutor, which is a volunteer that we've trained. Those are first, specific goals that they might have. Very often, it might be for communicating with your child's teacher, or logging into the school system, or something like that. It might be applying for jobs, or something that they need to do online.

And they have a very specific goal that they would work on for ten weeks. And at the end, they accomplish that, or narrowed it down into something that is doable in that time frame.

So, it is part of everything that we do, but we have drawn out these portions, and partnered with other organizations, because one of our specialties is teaching basic skills at a beginning level. Whereas, sometimes folks start out at a little bit too high of a level, we have worked with a lot of our partners to also provide trainings to help them learn some of the skills and curriculum.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Great. As all of you touched on, there are a number of very specific projects that you are focused on. I'm wondering--maybe we could start with you, Janet--how would you categorize some of the digital equity needs you see in the people that you serve. What are the prevailing problems? Is it access to technology, literacy, learning how to use devices. What are some of the problems that you see?

**Janet Arbogast:**   On a very basic level, it is access, actual devices, and relatively up-to-date devices. Oftentimes, because we work with low-income adults, they might have a computer, laptop, or something, that somebody gave them, but it's really old, or really out of date. Now, it's even more difficult to try to work with computer or laptop when it's out of date, whereas a new one is actually a lot easier. But, of course, the folks who have, perhaps, the most difficult time learning a skill are working with the most difficult equipment, essentially. So, that's a very frequent circumstance that we have. And then, access. While there are programs to offer low-cost internet service and things like that, it's still sometimes above and beyond what people are able to do in a given time in their lives. Again, there is also a learning curve to even how you hook that up. I think that it's not a given that you would just plug something in and it works, and you go from there. Even the most basic part of setting up, to complicate all of that is really the most basic issue of language and literacy. Oftentimes, any sort of a program or anything like that, there are pop-ups and things like that, and if you're not able to read, you don't have the problem solving ability to navigate that. So, whether that is a language issue or a literacy issue, it's sometimes both.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Thank you. Gladis, do you see the same things in your community?

**Gladis Clemente:**   Some of them, but as Janet said, I have had students that do not know how to read or write in Spanish. They come in from Guatemala, or another country, and they speak another language, not Spanish or English. So, it's really hard to find  strategy to teach them. But we should have tools to teach them. And also access. They have really old devices and they ask if we can help them to update. Usually, we have somebody to help them, but we have the laptops there that we provide, and they can take the laptops home to practice. They have them for eight weeks and then return it. And Seattle Public Schools also help us with those devices and they can take them home. Those are one way we work to fill those needs.

And there's that language barrier, as well, because there are many resources in English, and I have to translate. It is double work for me. It requires extra time to do that.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Michelle?

**Michelle Merriweather:**    Definitely access. We have set up a computer lab in our office to give access to our clients to do job search, learn basic skills, set up email addresses, etc. And the, because our clients are the full spectrum from youth to adults, it's jobs and internships to get that experience after our training. Along with some universities, we have Urban League tech classes at the end of six weeks. Now, we're going to make it eight weeks. They get their tech for AWS certification. Once they have their certifications, they want to know, what do we do now? They have limited experience, but for the last eight weeks, they have been focused on certification, so they have some, but they need opportunity. Folks willing to give them a chance. It's no secret that the technology sector is very under-represented when it comes to African-Americans and others. So just opportunity. We're a Workforce agency looking to partner with tech organizations to give folks a chance that may not have ll of the experience they need but are willing to learn. We'll go out to the client, and we'll prepare them for some things, but they need opportunities to get on-the-job experience.

And then, the full spectrum from not knowing anything to just needing opportunity.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Thank you. So, as you have outlined some of the issues that you're seeing now, are there successful outcomes that you're hoping to achieve, either now or in 2020. How does your organization measure success as it relates to the digital divide, or providing more digital equity?

**Michelle Merriweather:**    Last year, we set a goal of placing and training 2,020 people by the end of 2020. We're about halfway there now, thanks to Urban Tech and some of the university and other things that we do for teenagers and high school classes, and with our adult basic literacy skills and things like that. That is our goal. We can't do it alone, so partnerships, collaborations, folks who are interested in giving folks a chance, will help us get there faster, but again, we can't do it alone. Our tech partners and corporation tech should be willing to open their doors to folks and give them a shot.

**Gladis Clemente:**   So for outcomes, we usually do for each project where we measure the metrics from our surveys, so we see the beginning and the end of their work. I think that really successful outcomes is when I hear the stories about the participants. Short term, intermediate term, long term, I have met people in the supermarket who say, thanks to you, I have access to the internet, have opened an email account, and information. I have had women reach out to me and say they've gotten a promotion on their jobs because of the skills they learned in our class. She said, "I know now how to use Microsoft Office, platforms, and everything, so I got a promotion because of that."  Those are the really successful outcomes.

**Janet Arbogast:**   I would reiterate that, as well. Obviously, we as educational institutions, have tests, and we have a lot of reporting that we do along those lines. There are a lot of numbers and those sorts of things. But truly, the best outcomes that we have are people not being afraid of a computer in this regard. We serve people up through their 80s, a whole range of folks. And it's not uncommon that a lot of people have been truly afraid to touch it because they'll break it. Oftentimes, somebody has told them that, or a boss or somebody has said, "Whatever you do, don't touch that. Don't mess with that."  Sometimes, if they're kids, they don't want them to get into stuff. But they truly have a fear that if they press a button, something will happen and go wrong and be irreparable. So, a huge outcome for us with some people is simply the fact that they are comfortable turning on the computer, and it does something that they didn't expect, or maybe if they go somewhere they didn't think they were going to go, or something happens, and they don't panic. They know they haven't broken anything, and that it's okay and you can get out and try something again, or do it. And that's a huge factor, because obviously, then you can learn if you're not afraid of it. For so many people, that's a big factor to get over to begin with. And that takes a little bit of time and practice and just showing them that we all have that issue and sometimes things don't go as planned. Something pops up and we go from there. You fix it and you try some things and you don't always have the answer to. So, that's a huge success when people are able to do that.

And then, of course, everything is usually project-based with us, so when they're working with a tech tutor or something like that, as I mentioned that's  short-term goal, usually. There's usually a high level of success with that. I think that that's one of the beautiful things about working with technology. There's sort of an immediate satisfaction for people. When we have people who are working towards their GEDs, it's not an overnight process. It's going to take years, sometimes before they get to that point. When somebody is learning a language it takes years. You're never really going to have 100 percent fluency. You're going to improve, but you don't always see those results. With technology, it's something where you could go from not being able to send an email two hours ago, and now you've sent an email. You got something back from someone. Or maybe they've Skyped somebody and had their face pop up. Or to get something from  family member. It's very common that, especially for folks living abroad, for family members being able to send them pictures, and to not have to rely on another family member to open those up and show those to you or print them for you, to be able to get that information is truly a life-changing aspect. And then from there, it's much easier to develop skills as you get comfortable.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   It sounds like measures of success range from just being able to turn on a computer, have proficiency with Microsoft Office, or even have real economic opportunity like getting promoted or getting a job. So, outcomes range the gamut. Michelle, you said something that I wanted to touch on. You mentioned how community partnerships are really important to your organization. Do you want to talk about or elaborate on that? What are the community partnerships that have been really helpful for your organization, maybe as it relates to technology, or if there were partnerships that you wish you'd have.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    There are both. I think our tech community has certainly recognized the problem. And they're doing something about it. So, we've partnered with Comcast on the 2020 vision and training 2000 people by the end of 2020. Amazon has certainly stepped up and supported us with the AWS training. Microsoft is a big partner in the training sector and supported our kids. I think I'm forgetting somebody. Google has also been a great partner in the university and getting it off the ground. And so has the City of Seattle. Clearly, it's a floor, right? We've opened the door when we started the work. We have a long way to go before the gap is closed, or we get closer to closing it. With the next generation, I have no doubt that we'll get there.

As far as who I hope to partner with, I think this is Seattle. I promise you that we are truly competing against Silicon Valley these days with our technology. We probably, in some instances, surpass them in Aritifical Intelligence, and the list goes on. The opportunities are endless. We just need folks to open the door and start the conversation. I can take it from there. We just need to start the conversation and see what the opportunities are for our under-served and under-represented community.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   It makes sense. Gladis or Janet, would you like to weigh in on community partnerships you wish you had or that have been helpful?

**Gladis Clemente:**   So far, we have been cooperating with Seattle Public Libraries, as well. But I think we need more support in volunteering because our community is a little bit behind from other communities. So they need one on one. Usually, we have volunteers when we are providing these classes and workshops. But there are people who need one on one to provide support. It's hard to find volunteers. We've been working with volunteers from a number of organizations, but they are not fully committed. They just come one time and don't return. It's really hard to manage. Also the language barrier is another challenge that we have, because they can't communicate with a Spanish speaker. If people come in and want to learn Spanish, we can work with that.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Everyone gets something out of it.

**Janet Arbogast:**   For us, we have a number of partnerships and that is a strong part of our organization. Our primary location is Lake City, and that's where we base everything out of. However, we have about a dozen off-site classes where we do work with the Seattle Public Library, work with the City of Seattle, and have partnerships with organizations like ACRS, Neighborhood House, etc., where we do provide things within the community, and it's invaluable. I think that every organization,  we all have our strengths, and I think as a CEO of a nonprofit, funding is always an issue. So any way you can strengthen each other and think about longevity and sustainability by partnering with other people is always a plus.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Thank you. Kind of along the same line, Gladis, you mentioned that one of the things you really need for your organization is getting more volunteers. So, if I give you this audience, how can they help if they are willing to help out with your organization, especially as it relates to technology needs, what are the ways that volunteers in the local community can help out with your organization?

**Gladis Clemente:**   Well, we're about to start classes for the next cohort in January. It's the best time for people because usually we serve the community. Most of them work Monday to Friday, so sometimes we provide classes on Saturdays or Friday. We find that those are the best times to provide these classes. But before that, we need volunteers to update the software, the computers, the hard drives.

**Janet Arbogast:**   For volunteers, Literacy Source has a new volunteer orientation on the first Wednesday of every month. If any one would like to attend, there are daytime and evening sessions. You can sign up, but don't need to. It's at our Lake City location. We are always looking for volunteers for a number of project, both for tutors that can work with technology. But, as I mentioned, all of our classes involve technology. If it's a reading or language class, we have students who work on Chromebooks, or do different projects. It is something that we struggle with a lot of times because much of our volunteer base is retired. And so many of our volunteers actually have great skills and are willing to learn, but they struggle, themselves, with some of the technology. So, recently, that's been one of our projects, as well, training volunteers is just how to use Google Drive, for example, because our instructors store their lessons and materials, and different things like that on a Google Drive so that everyone can access them. So, helping tutors to be able to access those things easily and be comfortable with them so they can convey that comfort, as well, to the students. Volunteers are always appreciated.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    We have a very specific need right now. If you are AWS certified, we need tutors. Because again, we are putting people through these classes who don't have  lot of experience. And at the end of the class they would like to test to obtain certification so they have something to boost their resumes and experience. To get them through, we certainly need some help in that area. And then, in our other workforce development classes, literacy classes, volunteers are always helpful. We are looking for an IT person on our team. We're hiring, because we are coming up short in that area, as well.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Great! So there are ways to engage. Would you feel comfortable if we shared you contact details? Whatever you provide us, we can send it out to our mailing list.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    That would be great.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   I would like to conclude the panel, but I want to make sure that there are no lingering thoughts that you have maybe relating to technology needs, your community, digital equity in general. Are there any final comments, questions that you didn't ask and want to make sure you do ask?

**Janet Arbogast:**   I just want people to be aware that there is that need. I think that oftentimes there are a lot of tutorials out there, there are a lot of videos, and that sort of thing, that don't always acknowledge the fact that you need a lot of skills to even access the tutorial. Or to access that supposedly simple instructional thing, whether it's language or literacy. But that is very prohibitive, and even the very beginning, very basic level instructional materials are very difficult for many of our folks to navigate, whether it is language or many of our native English speakers have trouble navigating. I always put that out there, because I think there's a huge need to think of accessibility. It serves a lot of purposes, not just for the language and literacy, but for all sorts of learning disabilities, or for people who might have access issues. It never hurts to simplify whenever possible.

**Gladis Clemente:**   Also, I would mention to everybody here, in terms of equity, it's really important to show the community representation. When they told me they saw representation, and I asked for volunteers in the community. Another things we are also doing is we are training people from the community to become trainers. We are using the model Train the Trainers. We have had those programs in the past. Instructors came and never returned. We want to develop capacity to do that in the community.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    I would just say that we take a lot for granted. We have access to phones, and computers, and all of that. But there are lots of people who live in this high tech City who are very no-tech and low-tech. They don't have access to internet unless they are at school or are close to a library. But it consumes everything that we do. We just have to be aware, be mindful, and try to support, uplift, and train those who don't have access, or the education, or the means to connect in ways that we're all going to have to at some point. That is what is making the divide so great between the haves and the have-nots. Right now, it's technology and access to it. We can all be a part of the solution.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   I'm super grateful to you guys for being able to talk about your communities and especially about your digital equity needs. And I totally understand and agree with you that we recognize that there is a digital divide in Seattle. And I'm grateful that we have the opportunity to talk about it and put another spotlight on it. With that being said, I'd like to segue into the audience. We welcome any questions. If you filled out a question card, feel free to pass it up here. Or if you just want to ask a question, feel free.

**Question:**   Based on your experience in teaching a lot of different folks, what are some of the key skills that they are looking to gain? It sounds like a lot of the basic things, like Microsoft Office and all of that. Can you expand on that a little bit more?

**Michelle Merriweather:**    It's everything. Our clientele is so vast, and includes incarceration. We had a client who served over 20 years in prison. When he went in 20 years ago, a cell phone either didn't exist or was different. It's so vast. Turn the computer on. Microsoft Office is huge, because that is the separation between being successful on the job, and not being able to check email, set up a Linked In profile, getting an email address. You can't apply for a job these days if you don't have an email address. That is certainly the basics. And, for us, it's all the way up to tech training so they can actually get those jobs that pay a living wage in Seattle. For us, it's all of that.

**Gladis Clemente:**   All of that. But we have different levels: You have to start from scratch and turn on a computer, get an email address, use Microsoft Office. Right now they are learned Google Drive apps. Many of our students have businesses cleaning companies, construction. They want to improve their businesses like making a flyer, doing business cards, things like that.

**Janet Arbogast:**   We find that oftentimes, people don't know what they don't know at this level. It's not uncommon that people use the phrase, "I need to learn Excel,"  something like that. And we ask what they want to do. They say, "I just need to learn it." It's just because they've heard these terms or these words, or these things. They just say, "I need to learn computers." It's a very common phrase. And because they haven't used a computer, they don't really know what they can do on it, all of the different options, or what they really need to learn. So, it goes all the way up to those high level skills, but we start out, as I've said, with turning on a computer. Or, it's not uncommon to help somebody learn how to click a mouse, which is really hard. To teach somebody how to twitch is hard. Things like that, going all the way up to....

**Michelle Merriweather:**    Yes, teaching our seniors how to use a cellphone.

**Janet Arbogast:**   We're doing a smart phone workshop for our students, because most of them have a phone that somebody else has set up for them, and so they might have access to certain things, but somebody else did it for them. And they don't know how to log in, get to it, or do anything else with it if anything were to change.

**Question:**  Regarding privacy requests, how do I assume that I'm safe?

**Janet Arbogast:**   We include that in our classes. In our learning lab, we talk a lot about that and learning to not give information, and especially because a lot of our students, if they have not seen a lot of email, they don't have a good discriminating eye on thinking about spam and things like that. They maybe haven't set settings in certain ways or done things that prevent stuff from coming in, not clicking on certain things. And that's another fear issue. It's a fine line and we go through that.

**Question:**   When you look at nonprofits, are you identifying their learning styles or skills? [unintelligible]

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Just to repeat the question, the question was, as your clients come through, are you looking at their learning styles. Some people might learn differently by being more hands on; some people like to listen; some people like to watch. Does that impact your training?

**Gladis Clemente:**   Yes, definitely. We conduct a pre-survey on paper. Sometimes we use the computer to do the test, but some people don't even know how to use a mouse. So, we do the survey on paper and then we separate the groups according to who needs more support or less support.

**Janet Arbogast:**   We are a learning institution with the State Board of Colleges, so we have professional educators, and that's what they do. They're good at that. And also, we work with adults, and so we ask them. We have a lot of folks who speak different languages, and we try, ideally, to communicate in the native language whenever possible about things like that. And most people, as adults, if they have attended school, do have a sense of where their strengths lie, or what works for them.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    For most of our programs, yes. But for the Urban Tech program, they are required to take basic skills test, because certification takes a certain level of skill. That's the only one that requires a test to get into it. But, otherwise, we just ask them.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Are there any other questions?

**Question:**   I just want to thank you for the work that you do. I work in the nonprofit sector, so I know. My question is I am very concerned with the direction of tech companies and how they, in some cases, have abused the community. So, I'm wondering, is there [unintelligible]....

**Steven Maheshwary:**   I will reiterate the question for the sake of our minutes. The question was should communities hold tech companies accountable for their actions in community, and re there things they should be doing for community-based organizations?

**Janet Arbogast:**   I'd say we have had grants from organizations that actually have provided support and such. And we do get actually get a number of volunteers, that do come from the tech industry, which is always great. So, I feel like it's hard to generalize on such a large scale. But on an individual scale, and individual organizations and different departments, we have actually had support. I know it can always be expanded, and I think that as people become aware of these things a little bit more, I think people are starting to work on it, attack it differently. But I think there have been good faith efforts. And I think there has been some progress.

**Gladis Clemente:**   Right now, we have contacted some companies like Microsoft, where we get software at a really low price; sometimes donations. So, we have been getting some support, but we need more.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    No. Not enough. They are all great partners, but I don't think that we have even scratched the surface of their capacity to help with what our inequities are. And I think that they have realized that. I think that they are in a phase now of learning, as well. But it takes community voice to impact the movement and the speed at which they move. But the challenge in that is we don't know what we don't know. We as a nonprofit and community are starting to see more of that push back, because we are starting to see how to figure it out now, too. I think at some point, we'll get there, but it's a long road, unfortunately, and we're still all learning. The corporate sector as well as the community sector. And it's just the Urban League knocking on the door and saying it's not enough, that's not enough either. We all have to come together as  collective community and knock on the doors of the tech sector. And I would also say that those who are employees of the tech sector can use their voices inside of their organizations to call it out. Because that's how change happens, right? The folks on the inside have to be willing and motivated to move, as well. So, it's not enough but I believe we are certainly moving in that direction.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   Just to add my personal perspective, tech employees are often not the corporations that they belong to. I think we see a general outpouring of social good will, and interest from employees who want to be involved in the community, and they don't necessarily represent the policies or the ideas of the larger corporation overall. That's just one thing to keep in mind. Would you guys have time for one more question? I know we're over. Any last questions?

**Question:**  What is the one program or service that you wish that you could start offering, but you don't have the resources or the capacity?

**Steven Maheshwary:**   So the question was, what resource or program do you wish you could offer if you had more time or more money or more resources?

**Janet Arbogast:**   One resource is simply money. I think nonprofits operate on  very different scale than the private sector, as a lot of people know. So, trying to keep trained staff and things like that. The ability to expand programs. There are a lot of great ideas. Also having sustained funding. There is a lot of effort, obviously, in the grant world, and we have funding to our organization from a lot of different sources. But in terms of grants and such, oftentimes, there is sort of the new shiny thing. We'd love to have something new and innovative. So, you develop something new and innovative, but then your funding ends. And then the next grant needs something new and innovative. As opposed to sometimes the concept of, especially in education, there are some tried and true methods and strategies out there that are pretty good, but aren't always funded or able to grow. And it's not always too sexy to build on something that's already there and kind of beef it up a little bit and give it more backbone. Doesn't really have that excitement level that often is desired in terms of people wanting to see results or just talk about programs and such. That's the reality of how programs grow and strengthen, having long-term, sustained funding that they can count on, as much as you can count on funding for something, but where you can plan ahead a little bit, as opposed to a 12-month thing. We hired somebody to develop something or whatever, but there's not enough funding for them to keep their position. Those sort of things. It's something that's not unique to nonprofits, but if you're operating on a slim margin, it's difficult to get momentum oftentimes.

**Gladis Clemente:**   To me, it's important to make things sustainable, not when it's over it's over. I have been doing this since 2018, but 2019 was really hard to maintain our position. We had the lab. We had the people who want to learn, but we didn't have the salary to pay the instructor. We would like to provide the GED, also, because the community is asking for it. But we don't have the means to offer that.

**Michelle Merriweather:**    If I had the resources, I would like every student of color to have a computer, a laptop computer, and internet access at home. That way, the training and preparation for the jobs can begin. Being comfortable with computers and having access at home is probably where I would start.

**Steven Maheshwary:**   I would like to take this time to thank all of our panelists for coming in, answering all of the questions. I want to be respectful of our panelists' time. We are now moving into networking session, so you guys, and the panelists who can stay, if you want to ask and answer questions, comments, that sort of thing, feel free. We also have food in the back that's mostly uneaten. Sign up for our mailing list, if you haven't. And just as a reminder, CTAB meets next on November 12 from 6:00 to 8:00 in Room 2750 of the Municipal Tower.

**NETWORKING SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT 7:00**