**File #:** 21-0562, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to approve the City of Long Beach Digital Inclusion Initiative's Digital Inclusion Roadmap to ensure that everyone in Long Beach has equitable access and use of computer literacy training, the Internet, technology devices, and other digital inclusion resources.  (Citywide)

On January 23, 2018, the City Council directed the City Manager to work with the Technology and Innovation Department (TI), Office of Civic Innovation (i-team), Library Services Department (LS), Office of Equity, and community stakeholders on a Digital Inclusion Master Plan. The agenda item included several recommendations to address the expansion of network infrastructure, economic development, and the preparation of a Digital Inclusion Roadmap (Roadmap) to provide Internet access to the community.

On March 19, 2019, the City Council approved one-times of $40,000 in TI from the First Council District Priority Funds to support the development of the Roadmap.

The Roadmap is one element of the City's overarching Digital Inclusion Initiative (Initiative) that strives to ensure that everyone has equitable access and use of digital inclusion resources and services regardless of background, neighborhood, or identity. The Initiative complements the 10-year Blueprint for Economic Development (Blueprint) adopted by the City Council that offers several strategies for creating equitable economic opportunities for workers, investors, and entrepreneurs; as well as the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative Initial Report that was adopted by the City Council on August 11, 2020.  Specifically, the Initiative provides a roadmap for implementing multiple City Council-directed plans to increase access to information, services, and economic opportunities for low-income households.

The Technology and Innovation Commission (Commission) has been a critical partner in the development of the Roadmap including studying the digital divide in 2018 and making recommendations to advance digital inclusion in Long Beach in 2019, which were used to inform the Roadmap development process.  The Commission reviewed and voted unanimously to approve the Roadmap on April 28, 2021.

The City has received ample recognition for advancing digital inclusion efforts. In 2020, City staff received the Charles Benton Digital Equity Champion Award presented by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA). This national award recognizes outstanding leadership and dedication in advancing digital equity. The City was also recognized as a 2020 Digital Inclusion Trailblazer by the NDIA. This is a national honor roll of local government initiatives that promote digital literacy and Broadband access for underserved residents. This is the

third time the City has received this national distinction. The following section provides an overview of the Roadmap development process directed by the City Council, which incorporates the priorities of the City Council to promote equity and inclusion.

*Roadmap Development Process*

City staff officially kicked off the Roadmap development process in August 2019. The foundation of the Roadmap includes a vision statement, goals, objectives, and community-prioritized strategies for advancing digital inclusion in Long Beach through an equity lens and collective impact approach. The focal point of this development process included co-creating the Roadmap in collaboration with community members most impacted by the digital divide in Long Beach and cross-sector partners.

City staff convened a 50-person multidisciplinary Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Committee (Committee) from August 2019 through October 2020 who provided strategic guidance, vision, and oversight over the Roadmap development. To ensure a neutral, unbiased development process, City staff contracted with McCormick L.A. (a marketing and public relations firm) to facilitate stakeholder engagement. The Committee included community ambassadors and cross-sector partners who reflected on the entire spectrum of digital inclusion. These cross-sector partners included City departments, community-based organizations, digital inclusion nonprofits, funders, Internet services providers, K-12/higher education institutions, Long Beach Housing Authority, private technology companies, Long Beach Public Library, and Pacific Gateway. Collectively, the Committee developed a common agenda, engaged in asset mapping, developed a shared measurement system, and refined strategies.

Pueblo Planning (a social justice urban planning firm) was hired in October 2019 to develop and implement community engagement activities for the Roadmap. To engage community members most impacted by the digital divide in Long Beach, City staff and Pueblo Planning collaborated with four local trusted community partners (e.g., Centro CHA, Long Beach Forward, United Cambodian Community, YMCA of Greater Long Beach). These four community partners were also compensated for their partnership with the City.

The community engagement process acknowledged that historically marginalized communities are typically left out of government decision-making because of institutional and systemic racism and oppression. Community members were able to use art-making and storytelling as a way for them to share their lived experiences, knowledge, and vision for digital inclusion. More than 170 Long Beach community members were engaged through community pop-ups, workshops, interviews, and a survey. These community members reflected the diversity of Long Beach. The following communities were prioritized during the community engagement activities for the Roadmap (e.g. Asian/Pacific Islanders, Black/African-Americans, Latinx, LBGTQ, older adults, people with different abilities, small business owners and youth).

*Roadmap Key Components*

The Roadmap includes nine goals, ten objectives, and dozens of strategies within three key focus areas to address the entire spectrum of digital inclusion:

Capacity
·      Leadership and capacity building
·      Multilingual computer literacy training and support
·      Technology jobs and internship opportunities
·      Job preparedness and computer literacy skills development

Connectivity
·      High-speed, quality in-home Internet services and support
·      Quality cell phone data plans
·      Citywide fiber network infrastructure
·      City-provided public Wi-Fi

Technology
·      Quality, Internet-enabled computers and support
·      Free City-provided community computer labs and support

*Next Steps*

The community members and cross-sector partners shared expertise, wisdom, and lived experiences for addressing the digital divide in Long Beach. Some of these community-prioritized strategies included providing one-on-one tutoring for computer/Internet trainings and administering free high-quality Internet services and computers. Once the City Council has approved the Roadmap, City staff will kick-off an equity focused implementation process. This includes distributing the final Roadmap to the community and cross-sector partners, establishing an Implementation Committee, and identifying funding, personnel, and data collection and reporting structures to implement the strategies.

EQUITY LENS

An equity lens was and will continue to be integrated into the planning, development, implementation, evaluation, and governance of the Roadmap. For example, the robust community engagement process used as part of this process intentionally uplifted community members as experts in digital inclusion through power-sharing.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Erin Weesner-McKinley on May 4, 2021 and by Budget Management Officer Rhutu Amin Gharib on May 10, 2021.

City Council action on this matter is not time sensitive.

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommendation for the City Council to approve the Roadmap report. The Roadmap is a strategic plan and policy document that outlines the City's course of action for advancing digital equity and inclusion. The strategies included in the Roadmap provide specific priorities for the City to implement in collaboration with the community and cross-sector partners over the next few years.

At this time, there is no additional funding requested for the implementation of the Roadmap. City staff will bring implementation items forward for approval to the City Council on an individual basis once implementation costs and funding sources have been identified. The Technology and Innovation Department, in partnership with the Economic Development Department, have requested resources in the Proposed FY 22 Budget process to assist with the implementation of the Roadmap. There is no local job impact associated with this recommended action.

Approve recommendation.

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