

# Board and Commission Council Committee Agenda Item Request

**Name of Board or Commission:** Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission

**Request Number:** 20221012-6

**Description of Item:**

Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan Update

Board or Commission Vote to refer item to Council: Motion to approve the Council Committee Agenda Request for staff to prioritize update of the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan made by Chair Pitts and seconded by Commissioner Apodaca, passed on a vote of 7-0.

Date of Approval of Request: 10/12/2022

**Attachments:**  Yes  No

If yes, please list the attachments: Council Committee Agenda Request passed by commission

**Attest:** Jesse Rodriguez

## MAYOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY

**Council Committee Assigned:**

- Audit and Finance Committee
- Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee
- Austin Watery Oversight Committee
- Public Health Committee
- Housing and Planning Committee
- Mobility Committee
- Public Safety Committee

Recommend a Fiscal Analysis be completed?

Recommend a Legal Analysis be completed?

Notes:

**Mayor Signature & Date:**



## COUNCIL COMMITTEE AGENDA REQUEST

### COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

#### RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 20221012-6 REGARDING: Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan Update

**WHEREAS**, our stated vision is for Austin to be a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its community members, and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all;

**WHEREAS**, the Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission (CTTC) was instrumental in the creation of the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan that Austin City Council unanimously adopted on November 20, 2014;

**WHEREAS**, the active management of Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan by the City Council, the office of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs (TARA), the CTTC, and Digital Empowerment Community of Austin (DECA) partners has identified the digital divide as historically rooted challenge to our stated vision which will require a substantial investment in both physical and digital infrastructure to bridge;

**WHEREAS**, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), a \$1.2 trillion investment in the U.S. Infrastructure, was passed into law in November 2021;

**WHEREAS**, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) issued Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for more than \$44 billion in federal funding to the following three programs, as part of the IIJA: (1) The Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD - \$42.5 billion); (2) The Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program (MMG - \$1 billion); and (3) The State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program (DEAP - \$60 million);

**WHEREAS**, the Texas Broadband Development Office (BDO) is the steward of state and federal dollars intended to close the digital divide, by increasing access to reliable, high-speed internet in the state; and by early October 2022, the BDO expects to have the process ready for accepting applications and distributing initial financial awards;

**WHEREAS**, the Texas Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar submitted Texas' LOI to participate in the BEAD Program and the BDO submitted Texas' application for the DEAP grants program to the NTIA on July 11, 2022;

**WHEREAS**, the Financial Services Department (FSD) has been engaged in managing and implementing the Digital Inclusion Strategic plan with various programs while also assessing and creating new Digital Inclusion solutions through TARA, the CTTC, and DECA partners to meet the

immediate needs of the community, while also assessing viable long term strategic and sustainable solutions to closing the Digital Divide in Austin;

**WHEREAS**, Comptroller Hegar sent a letter to the Texas Congressional Delegation expressing his concerns about the NTIA's Notice of Funding Opportunity for the BEAD program, which appears to indicate that states need to prioritize end-to-end fiber connectivity. Comptroller Hegar's main concern with this stipulation is that, in many rural areas of Texas, fiber technology is not financially feasible. Further, the NTIA's new rules run counter to Texas' — and the IJJA's — legislative intent of being technology-neutral with respect to broadband programs;

**WHEREAS**, these various listed funding opportunities have approaching deadlines when 5-year State plans must be submitted for federal funding, as well as related City of Austin coordinated plans for consideration by the TX BDO which may require additional Inter-Local Agreements (ILAs) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs);

**WHEREAS**, as stated in the October 3, 2022 Digital Inclusion Week 2022 Proclamation by Mayor Steve Adler, "The City of Austin is committed to connecting the unconnected and making investments in promoting digital equity and exploring partnerships with private sector companies, community-based organizations, research and educational institutions and other governmental agencies to address digital equity on a regional level;"

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

The CTTC recommends the City of Austin immediately prioritize the creation of the new Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan Steering Committee; the CTTC further recommends that the Steering Committee shall be comprised of government, business, educational, and research entities, consistent with the 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan, including but not limited to the CTTC and the following City of Austin Departments, Regional Entities, and Partners:

City Departments

- Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs (TARA)
- The Innovation Office
- The Equity Office
- Communications and Technology Management (CTM)
- Austin Public Library (APL)
- Austin Transportation Department (ATD)
- Public Information Office (PIO)
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)
- Public Safety

Regional Entities

- Travis County Broadband & Digital Equity Office
- Austin Energy
- CapMetro
- Williamson County
- Hays County

- Bastrop County

Education & Research Partners

- University of Texas at Austin (UT)
- Huston-Tillotson University (HT)
- Austin Community College (ACC)
- St. Edwards University
- Austin Independent School District
- Manor Independent School District
- Del Valle Independent School District
- Elgin Independent School District
- Pflugerville Independent School District
- Leander Independent School District
- Lake Travis Independent School District
- Round Rock Independent School District
- Cedar Park Independent School District
- Eanes Independent School District
- Bastrop Independent School District
- Hays Independent School District

Date of Approval: 10/12/2022

Record of the vote: Motion to approve the Council Committee Agenda Request for staff to prioritize update of the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan made by Chair Pitts and seconded by Commissioner Apodaca, passed on a vote of 7-0.

ATTEST:



Jesse Rodriguez

Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs

City of Austin