

Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Summit 2023 Summary Report

**Nehemiah Pitts III, Chairman
Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission (CTTC)
City of Austin**

Agenda

1. Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Summit Historical Framing

2. Call(s) to Action: Public Comment, Collaboration, & Education

3. Thank yous & Acknowledgements

4. Next Steps

1. Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Summit Overview

Digital Inclusion - Stakeholder Summit 2023 - Summary Report

The **All Together For Digital Inclusion - Stakeholder Summit 2023** successfully convened in the aftermath of significant federal funding (\$3.3 Billion) being released to Texas for broadband infrastructure and equitable access, as well as the creation of the Broadband Infrastructure Fund in the Texas Constitution in November of 2023. The Summit aimed to educate participants about the Digital Divide, spotlight various organizations committed to achieving Digital Inclusion in Central Texas, and instigate a call to action for collaboration, partnership, and public comment in response to the recently released Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program 5-year plan draft and the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP).

Held on Friday, December 1st, at the Austin Public Library Special Events Center downtown, the inaugural Summit achieved these goals by assembling a diverse group of representative stakeholders, including community leaders, public officials, digital inclusion practitioners, governmental and NGO leaders, city service providers, internet services providers, nonprofit entities, distinguished researchers, technology experts, and industry thought leaders—all rallying under the theme...





Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge, with respect, that the land we are on is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Tonkawa, Lipan Apache, Ysleta del sur Pueblo, Texas Band of Yaqui Indians, Coahuiltecan, and other indigenous peoples not explicitly stated. It is important to understand the long history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to acknowledge our place within that history.

Adapted from the Climate Equity Plan and the research of Celine Rendon and Tane Ward

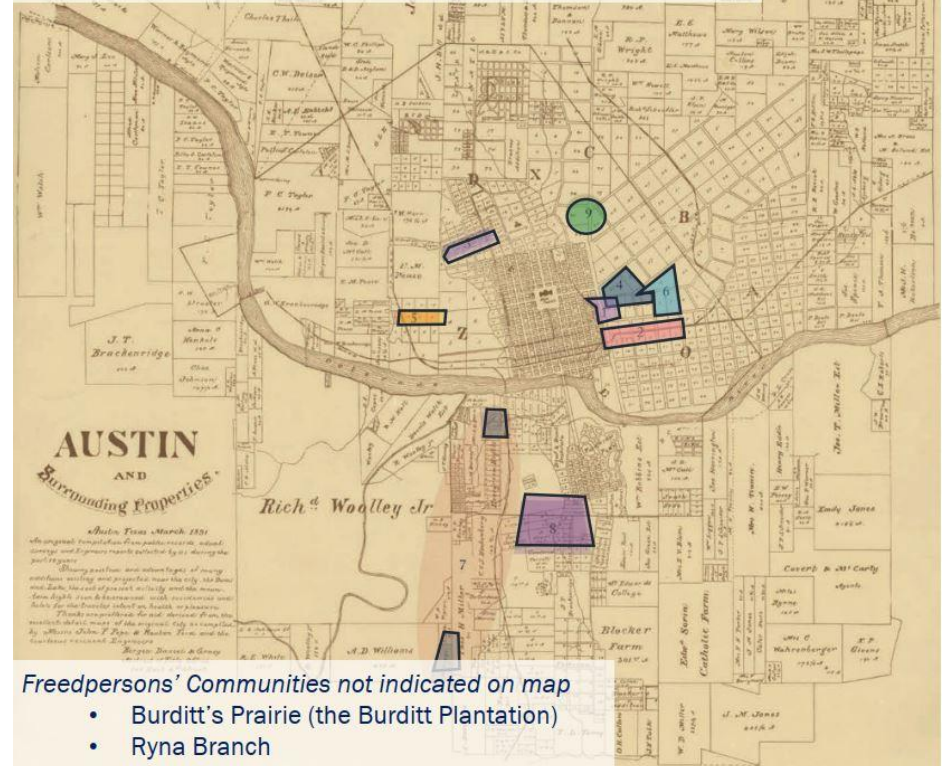
mural by Raul Valdez

The event commenced with an indigenous people's land acknowledgment, emphasizing the importance of education, collaboration, partnership, civic engagement, and funding-focused public comment submissions. The focus of the event briefly remained on the history of Austin after the US. Civil War and the formation of a municipal strategy for growth and development.

Freedperson's Communities (1860s-1928)

- Pleasant Hill
- Kincheonville
- Barton Springs
- Reyna Branch
- Masontown
- Wheatville
- Robertson Hill
- Belle Hill
- Clarksville
- Burditt's Prairie
- Red River Street
- West Side
- Gregorytown
- South Side
- Horst's Pasture

Communities such as Clarksville, Wheatville, Kincheonville, Masontown, and Gregorytown were established by former slaves after the Civil War and interspersed throughout the city.



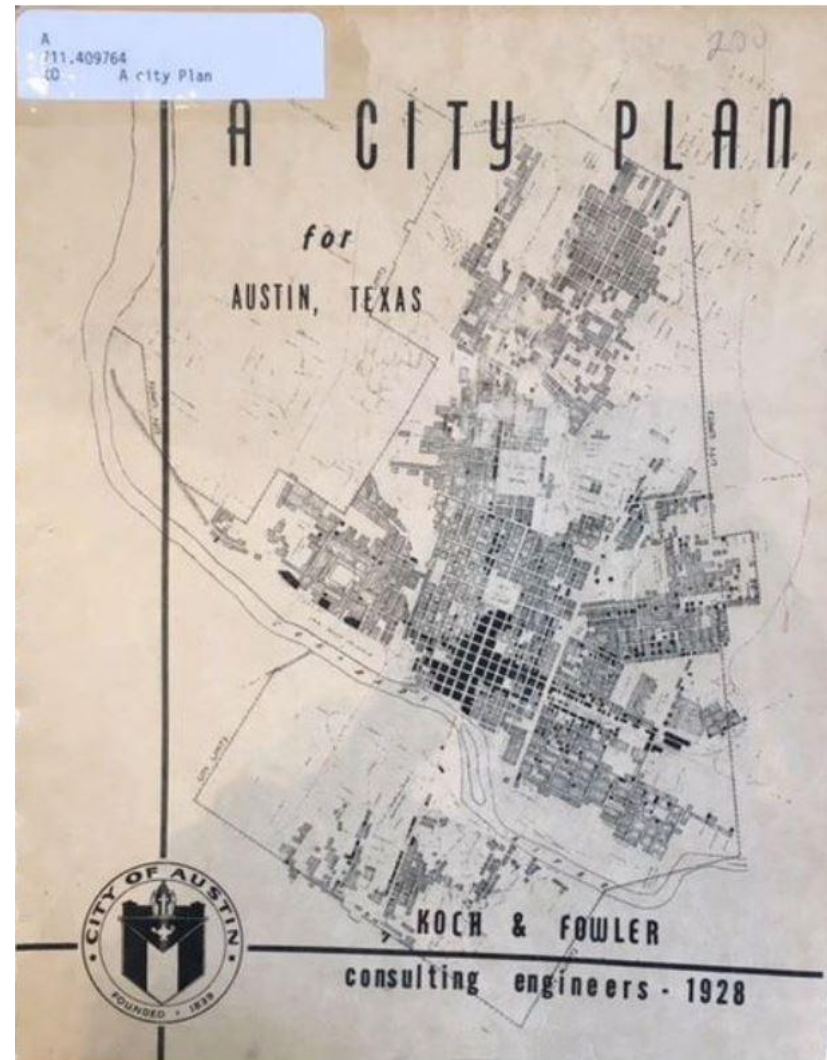
A City Plan for Austin Texas (1928)

We then delved into the root causes of the Digital Divide in Austin, TX, tracing historical challenges stemming from the 1928 City Plan, which led to racial segregation, restrictive covenants, industrial zoning, and decades of infrastructure underinvestment for marginalized groups.

Disparate Outcome Areas for Marginalized Communities

- Gaps in Wealth and Income
- Health Disparities
- Educational Attainment
- Disparate Impacts in Housing
- Gentrification and Displacement
- Climate Resilience
- Public Safety
- Access to Opportunity

This includes Digital Redlining and the ensuing inequalities in infrastructure, device access, and capabilities that endure to this day.



NTIA Covered Populations

In total, 24.8 million Texans – 86% of the state’s population – belong to one or more covered populations. NTIA identified eight “covered populations” that have historically experienced lower rates of computer and internet use.

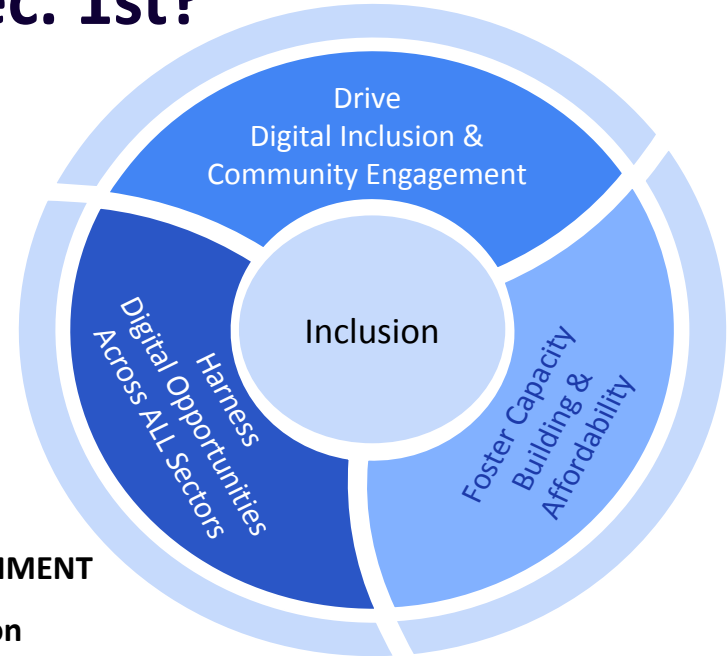
Covered Population Group	Share of Texas Population
Members of a racial or ethnic minority group (racial or ethnic minorities)	58%
Individuals with low literacy levels	28%
Individuals in households below 150% poverty (low-income households)	23%
Individuals residing in rural areas (rural residents)	21%
Persons who are 60 years of age or older (aging individuals)	18%
Individuals with disabilities	11%
Individuals with a language barrier, including those who are English learners or have low literacy levels (individuals with limited English proficiency)	7%
Veterans	5%
Incarcerated Individuals	1%

2. Call(s) to Action: Public Comment, Collaboration, & Education

Why attend a Stakeholder Summit focused on Digital Inclusion on Dec. 1st?

Intentional collaboration, partnerships, and strategic alignment with “stakeholders” for Digital Inclusion can do many key things:

- **Drive Digital Inclusion and Community Engagement**
- **Enhance Resiliency and Emergency Response**
- **Cultivate a future-oriented "Well-Being Economy"**
- **Harness digital opportunities across ALL sectors in PUBLIC COMMENT**
- **Foster Capacity Building, Affordability, and Consumer Protection**



“Getting EVERYONE to the table”

Calls To Action: Public Comment, Collaboration, & Funding Movement Moment

Anchoring the call to action for driving public comment responses to both the BEAD program and TDOP, the Summit featured expert guidance from Jennifer Harris, TX Federal Program Officer, NTIA, after the historical framing.

Next Becky Lentz, the Director of the Tech & Society initiative at the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service explained how “Digital Inclusion Needs Funding for Its Movement Moment” to include philanthropic funders and critical strategies to fund digital inclusion as investments in sustainability, social justice, and economic development, rather than charity for the needy.



Many in our diverse group of stakeholders then joined the three “Intersectional Resource Mapping” flip-chart breakout workshops facilitated by ready-to-serve subject matter experts on **Digital Opportunity**, Broadband Infrastructure, and Funding.

Self-selection enabled robust direct lived experience and expertise sharing, problem-solving, resourcing, collaboration, and partnership discussions to propel those calls to action for the Summit, all before our first distinguished panel.

Themes & Recommendations Notes:

- Multifamily should receive important focus for services
- Educating kids so they are not left behind by technological advances - AI
 - Can we onramp youth and seniors as digital navigators?
 - Educating kids in schools about privacy and safe usage
- Serving older adults and people with disabilities
- How do we educate people about fraud & data recording/collection associated w/new tech access?

Digital Opportunity Breakout Highlights

- Supporting LEP & non-English speaking communities
- On the infrastructure side – how do we reach hard to serve areas and incorporate infrastructure for future tech?
- Creating collaborative space to leverage the work and expertise of other organizations
- Integrating school districts & schools as local partners because of their community footprint (scalable model) and other civic facilities
- Aligning education parameters and certificate requirements at community colleges w/where people are from in skills perspective
- Emergency preparedness & how digital inclusion can support that
- Affordable tech support
 - Train youth?
 - University? Library?



Broadband Infrastructure Breakout Highlights

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Themes & Recommendations Noted:

- Network the house
 - Latency
 - Actual speeds “quality of service”
- “Physical infrastructure” access
- Device
- Skills/Applications
- Ongoing education/outreach
 - Communities
 - Local Government

Funding Breakout Highlights

Many in our diverse group of stakeholders then joined the three “Intersectional Resource Mapping” flip-chart breakout workshops facilitated by ready-to-serve subject matter experts on Digital Opportunity, Broadband Infrastructure, and **Funding**.

Self-selection enabled robust direct lived experience and expertise sharing, problem-solving, resourcing, collaboration, and partnership discussions to propel those calls to action for the Summit, all before our first distinguished panel.

Themes & Recommendations Noted:

Build on what exists
Advocacy/
Direct Services <----- Education -----|-----> Direct Action
Govt Corp – CSR
Civil Society
– Family Foundations, institutional, philanthropic

Locally

- GTOPS

Statewide

- Texas Rural Funders
- State Broadband Office

National

- NTIA

What does success look like to them?

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Mapping?
- Convening?
- Co-Learning?
- Coalition-Building?
- Political Parties?

FEATURED SPEAKERS & PANELISTS

- **Nehemiah Pitts III** - Event Host & Moderator, Chairman, Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission (CTTC), City of Austin
- **Jennifer Harris** - Federal Program Officer, Texas | Office of Internet Connectivity & Growth (OICG) | National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) | U.S. Department of Commerce
- **Becky Lentz, PhD** - Faculty Associate, LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT Austin, Director of the Tech & Society Initiative at the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service
- **Lila Valencia** - City Demographer, City of Austin
- **Daniel Culotta** - Interim Chief Innovation Officer, City of Austin
- **Brian Dillard** - Chief Innovation Officer, City of San Antonio
- **Rubén Cantú** - Co-Moderator, Executive Director, Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Division of Diversity and Community, Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Texas at Austin

FEATURED SPEAKERS & PANELISTS, Cont.

- **Laura Donnelly, M.S.** - Owner, The Radical Consultant, and Founder & Former CEO (21+ years), Latinitas
- **Rakeda L. Ervin** - Director of Community Education, Austin Film Society
- **Skye Downing** - Digital Equity Programs & Partnership Director, Community Technology Network (CTN)
- Moody College of Communication, University of Texas at Austin
- **Michael Ward Jr.** - President and CEO, Austin Urban Technology Movement (AUTMHQ)
- **Sharon Strover, PhD** - Director, Technology & Information Policy Institute, Philip G. Warner Regents Professor of Communication, Moody College of Communication, University of Texas at Austin
- **Emily Binet Royall** - Smart Cities Administrator, City of San Antonio
- **Bill Pugh** - Managing Partner, Smart Connections Consulting LLC, and Technology Advisor, Autonomy Institute
- **Arati Singh** - Board President & At-Large Trustee, Austin ISD, and Founder, Raise Achievement, LLC
- **Catherine Crago** - Head of Strategic Initiatives & Resource Development, Housing Authority of the City of Austin & Austin Pathways

Call To Action: Educating & Convening Diverse Stakeholders

The inaugural Digital Inclusion Summit set out to educate a diverse group of stakeholders about intersectionality. Our first panel on “**Digital Inclusion Data, Research, & Policy**” explored the opportunities and challenges of using all three to drive equitable outcomes with Lila Valencia (Demographer, City of Austin), Brian Dillard (Chief Innovation Officer, City of San Antonio), and Daniel Culotta (Chief Innovation Officer, City of Austin) all providing tremendous insight and candor on the importance of inclusive intention for Summit participants. Regional government truly benefits from collaborative leaders like these.

As part of the program, before and during the lunch, catered by Three Chicks Soul Food, the agenda featured a “**Digital Empowerment Community (DECA)-Exhibitor Showcase**” and a series of “**Resource Lightning Round**” presentations. Regional resource providers such as Goodwill Central Texas, Human I-T, T-Mobile, UT Austin Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and FiberLight participated in showcasing their offerings and expertise.

Our subsequent engaging panel on “**Inclusive Workforce Development & Entrepreneurship**” was co-moderated virtually by Rubén Cantú, the Executive Director of the Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship within the Division of Diversity and Community. Additionally, he holds the position of Assistant Professor in the College of Education at the University of Texas at Austin.

Inclusive Workforce Development & Entrepreneurship Panel

Utilizing recorded video playback for most questions, the panel featured contributions from notable digital inclusion leaders: Skye Downing, Programs & Partnership Director at Community Technology Network; Rakeda L. Ervin, Director of Community Education at the Austin Film Society; Laura Donnelly, Owner of The Radical Consultant and Founder & Former CEO of Latinitas (with over 21 years of experience); and Michael Ward Jr., President & CEO of the Austin Urban Technology Movement (AUTMHQ).

Together, they enriched the discussion with a lively exchange of best practices and insightful perspectives, challenging the audience to consider innovative approaches in the realm of workforce development and entrepreneurship.

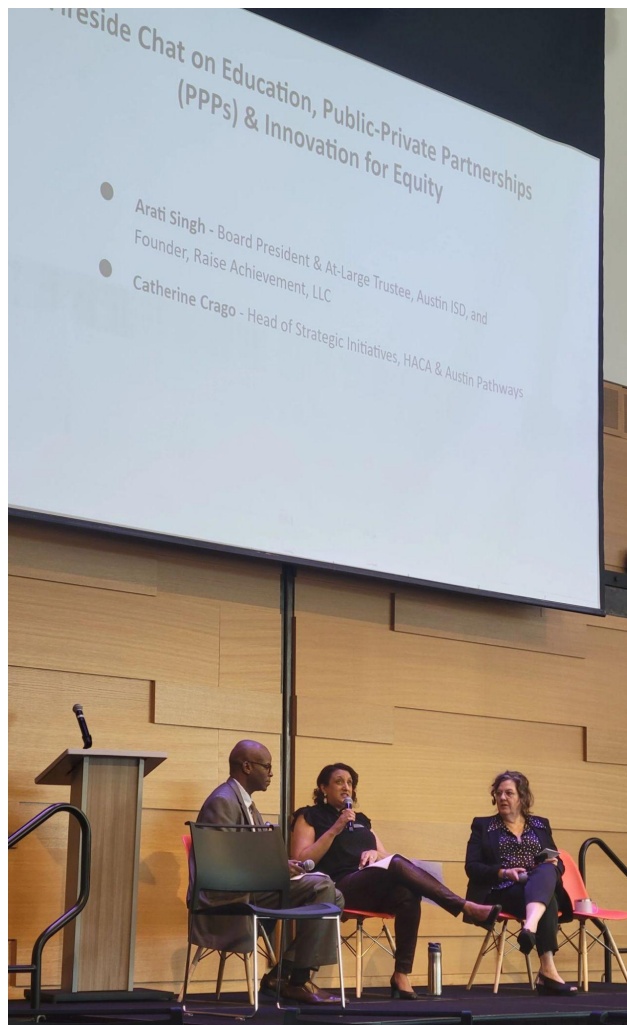


Smart City: Artificial Intelligence, Privacy, Resilience, & Data Governance Panel

With the challenges and possibilities of contemporary city planning at the forefront for all participants, our final panel of subject matter experts delved into the compelling theme of "Smart City - Artificial Intelligence, Privacy, Resilience, and Data Governance."

The panel featured Sharon Strover, Ph.D., the Phillip G. Warner Regents Professor in Communication at UT Austin and former Chair of UT Good Systems; Emily Binet Royall, Smart Cities Administrator at the City of San Antonio; and Bill Pugh, Managing Partner at Smart Connections Consulting LLC and Technology Advisor at the Autonomy Institute.





INCLUSIVE HOUSING & EDUCATION Fireside Chat

A crucial penultimate conversation addressing digital inclusion, equity in housing and education, and ongoing challenges was the focus of a "Fireside Chat on Education, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) & Innovation for Equity." The discussion featured leaders Arati Singh, Board President and at-large Trustee at Austin ISD and Founder of Raise Achievement, LLC, and Catherine Crago, Head of Strategic Initiatives at HACA & Austin Pathways, who both spoke about innovative programs focused on inclusion and comprehensive client needs impacted by affordable broadband and housing access.

Each expert who spoke at the event provided thoughtful perspectives and a nuanced understanding of these intersectional topics shaping society and the lives of our community members. After each session the audience was left wanting more than our brief agenda would allow and freshly reminded that Digital Inclusion impacts everyone.

The event concluded with strong support for advocacy, collaboration, partnership, civic engagement, and public comment, emphasizing continued stakeholder engagement. Key milestones are the TDOP public comment due date of 1/5/2024 and the Community Anchor Institution (CAI) challenge process which opens this spring to allow the much-needed addition of unlisted Community Support Organizations to the BEAD Program and TDOP.



3. Thank You(s) & Acknowledgements

December 1
Austin, Texas

YOU
RETAIL
SCIENCE
FINANCE
NONPROFIT
EDUCATION
REAL ESTATE
HEALTHCARE
COMMUNITY
PUBLIC WORKS
CONSTRUCTION
SOCIAL SERVICES
INFRASTRUCTURE
TRANSPORTATION
PARKS & RECREATIONS
MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Stakeholder Summit 2023

Austin Public Library
Special Events Center

NGO
DATA
ENERGY
RESEARCH
ENTERPRISE
HOSPITALITY
AGRICULTURE
INFORMATION
GOVERNMENT
TECH INDUSTRY
MANUFACTURING
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
SMALL & MED. BUSINESS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INSERT NAME HERE: _____

This wonderful event was made possible through the generous support of various sponsors, including fiscal sponsor US Ignite, host sponsor Austin Public Library, financial sponsors Google Fiber, and the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. Key planning contributions from Intel, Capacity Catalyst, N50, Geeks Without Frontiers, Community Tech Network, and others from the DECA Network all helped bring this event to fruition.

As leaders of this DECA Digital Inclusion Summit Planning Team effort, the Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission for the City of Austin expresses overwhelming gratitude for all the contributions and eagerly anticipates sustaining this momentum in the coming weeks, months, and years toward 2028, the 100th anniversary of the 1929 City of Austin Plan.



Digital Inclusion Summit 2023: Acknowledgements

Heartfelt appreciation goes out to everyone who participated in the inaugural All Together For Digital Inclusion - Stakeholder Summit 2023 at the beautiful Austin Public Library Special Events Center downtown on December 1, 2023. By all accounts, we helped educate participants about the Digital Divide, shined a light on various organizations dedicated to achieving Digital Inclusion in Central Texas, and catalyzed a call to action for collaboration and partnership, as well as public comment responses to the BEAD program release and Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP) due January 5, 2023.

This important event was made possible with each contribution -- all of these leaders convening to bridge the digital divide in Central Texas and take action! It was an honor to manage this collaborative production effort enabled by the **US Ignite** team.

Although only so many can be mentioned by name now, the following dedicated stakeholders deserve recognition for impacting our Central Texas Digital Inclusion Ecosystem.

THANK YOU...Featured Speakers and panelists in order of appearance:

Content & Contributions are listed in bold

- **TDOP AND PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Jennifer Harris - Federal Program Officer, Texas | Office of Internet Connectivity & Growth (OICG) | National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) | U.S. Department of Commerce

- **DIGITAL INCLUSION PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING**

- Becky Lentz, Ph.D. - Faculty Associate, LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT Austin, Director of the Tech & Society Initiative at the RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service

- **DIGITAL INCLUSION DATA & POLICY PANEL**

- Lila Valencia - City Demographer, City of Austin Government
- Daniel Culotta - Interim Chief Innovation Officer, City of Austin Government
- Brian Dillard - Chief Innovation Officer, City of San Antonio - Municipal Government

Digital Inclusion Summit 2023: Acknowledgements, Cont.

- **INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP PANEL**

- Rubén Cantú - Co-Moderator, Executive Director, Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Division of Diversity and Community, Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Texas at Austin
- Laura Donnelly, M.S. - Owner, The Radical Consultant, and Founder & Former CEO (21+ years), Latinitas
- Rakeda L. Ervin - Director of Community Education, Austin Film Society
- Skye Downing - Digital Equity Programs & Partnership Director, Community Tech Network (CTN)
- Michael Ward Jr. - President and CEO, Austin Urban Technology Movement (AUTMHQ)

Digital Inclusion Summit 2023: Acknowledgements, Cont.

- **SMART CITIES, AI, AND DATA GOVERNANCE PANEL**

- Sharon Strover, PhD - Director, Technology & Information Policy Institute, Philip G. Warner Regents Professor of Communication, Moody College of Communication - UT Austin
- Emily Binet Royall - Smart Cities Administrator, City of San Antonio - Municipal Government
- Bill Pugh - Managing Partner, Smart Connections Consulting LLC, and Technology Advisor, Autonomy Institute

- **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & HOUSING FIRESIDE CHAT**

- Arati Singh - Board President & At-Large Trustee, Austin ISD, and Founder, Raise Achievement, LLC
- Catherine Crago - Head of Strategic Initiatives & Resource Development, Housing Authority of the City of Austin & Austin Pathways

THANK YOU...Volunteers, Staff, and Community Stakeholders:

- **Participating Fellow CTTC Commissioners (sub-quorum):**
 - **Nehemiah Pitts III**, District #1
 - **Steven Apodaca**, District #2
 - **Carina Alderete**, District #3
 - **Cristina Garza**, District #4
 - **Sumit DasGupta**, District #10
- **TARA, DECA, & TX Broadband and Equity Leaders:**
 - **Khotan Shahbazi-Harmon**, Senior Program Manager, TARA-FSB
 - **Kami Griffiths**, Executive Director, Community Tech Network (CTN)
 - **John-Michael Cortez**, Head of Government & Community Affairs, Google Fiber
 - **Molly Weiner**, Director of Local & Regional Planning, Connected Nation
 - **Andrea Pacheco**, Outreach Coordinator, Texas Broadband Office

THANK YOU...Volunteers, Staff, and Community Stakeholders:

- **VOLUNTEERS & STAFF:**

- **Kevin Schwartz**, Executive Director, Geeks Without Frontiers
- **Larry Williams**, Community Liaison, Travis County HUB Program
- **Carmaleta McKinnis-Williams**, Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, APL
- **Josh Wilkinson**, Sales & Events Manager | Austin Central Library Event Services
- **Davetta Martinez**, Event Coordinator, Austin Central Library Event Services

- **DESIGN SERVICES:** Hammerknife Press

- **MEDIA:** Omar L. Gallaga, Business Writer, Texas Standard

- **US Ignite Team:**

- **Lee Davenport**, Director, Community Development, US Ignite. Inc.
- **Erin Hill**, Operations Officer, US Ignite, Inc.
- **Lizzette Arias**, Communications Manager, US Ignite, Inc.

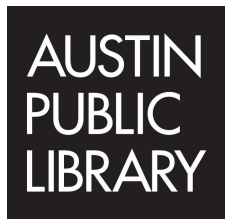
- **DECA-EXHIBITOR RESOURCES:**

- **Goodwill Central Texas**
- **Human I-T**
- **T-Mobile**
- **Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship at UT Austin**
- **FiberLight, LLC**

Thank you Sponsors and Contributors!



Google Fiber



The University of Texas at Austin
RGK Center for Philanthropy
and Community Service
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Texas Standard Report (12/7/2023) on Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Summit:

<https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/digital-divide-inclusion-summit-austin-tx/>

DECA Digital Inclusion Summit Planning Team:

[Learn more about the DECA Digital Inclusion Summit Planning Team here.](#)

Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) Program:

[Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) Program \(texas.gov\)](#)

Texas Digital Opportunity Plan & Public Comment Form:

[Texas Digital Opportunity Plan & Public Comment Form](#) - **DUE DATE 1/5/2024**

4. Next Steps

Planned Community TDOP Engagement

- CTTC will collaborate with other Austin Boards & Commissions to spread the word about TDOP & Public Comment opportunity.
 - **Library Commission Meeting - 12/18 @ 6PM**
- CTTC will collaborate with City Council Districts and community partners to promote TDOP & Public Comment throughout Austin
 - **City Council Districts:**
 - Coordinated outreach into District offices through CTTC Commissioners
 - **Community Partners:**
 - Post information about TDOP & Public Comment at in person service and payment locations
 - Austin Public Library
 - Austin Energy



HOW YOU CAN HELP?

- ★ **Mindshift** towards how digital Inclusion impacts EVERYONE
- ★ **Persistent** collaboration, partnership, and advocacy to address challenges
- ★ Prioritizing equitable outcomes over events
- ★ **Drive public comment response...**
 - [Texas Digital Opportunity Plan](#): Elevate Voices of the Affected - Stand-In OR Bring Them To The Table
 - ★ Get Plugged In - [Join DECA Community Calls](#)
 - ★ Join BDO Partner Webinars on TDOP & Public Comment - [RESOURCES HERE](#)
 - ★ Become a [GTOPs Grant Review Volunteer](#)
 - ★ [Apply for GTOPs funding here!](#)

For more information:
<http://digitalatx.com>

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