



City of San Antonio

Legislation Details (With Text)

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In control: Transportation, Technology and Utilities Committee
On agenda: 10/14/2015
Title: Briefing on the Digital Inclusion Initiative Program [Ben Gorzell, Chief Financial Officer; Hugh Miller, Chief Technology Officer]
Sponsors:
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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DEPARTMENT: Information & Technology Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Hugh Miller, Chief Technology Officer

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Briefing on Digital Inclusion Initiative Program

SUMMARY:

With the adoption of the FY 2016 Budget, \$100,000 was allocated to establish the Digital Inclusion Initiative Program (Di2). This briefing will generally cover the digital divide within our community and the proposed program to assist in addressing this issue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Internet is currently considered the most critical utility for advancing in education and business in the United States. Yet large portions of our communities don't have adequate affordable Internet services available to them. These Digitally Challenged communities leave a significant portion of our population without the basic needs to succeed and compete for digitally skilled jobs and receive a competitive education.

The digital divide in San Antonio has been impacted by broadband rates that have led to Internet access disparities being directly correlated with socio-economic brackets in both urbanized and more rural areas of the city. Low-income residents are more likely to be hampered by lack of basic literacy, including text literacy, numeracy and financial literacy, and digital literacy. Estimates of illiteracy among San Antonio's adult population range from 11% to 25%, meaning that up to one in every four San Antonians is functionally illiterate. A coordinated initiative with multiple outreach efforts is necessary to address such a significant gap. HUD's ConnectHome program, for example, will help San Antonio access national partnerships to assist in acquiring devices for SAHA residents, but it is not anticipated that these programs will be available to other low-income residents. Overall, there remains a pressing need to take action to address the digital divide in San Antonio.

In an effort to address this issue, the Digital Inclusion Initiative will develop and implement a strategic plan that incorporates non-profit and private sector organizations. The City will leverage \$100,000 from the FY2016 operating funds to implement Di2 and collaborate with the 80/20 Foundation who dedicated \$100,000 from the 80/20 Foundation to ConnectHome. This program and strategic plan will focus on the critical components to help our citizens not only become functionally literate but also financially and digitally literate by identifying affordable access to broadband services, supplying sufficient Internet devices, and delivering training that addresses proper usage of the Internet and devices.

ISSUE:

San Antonio continues to advance as a progressive technological city, but our city also reflects the nation's broadband divide: more than 80% of households in areas north of downtown and in northern suburbs have broadband, while in areas west of Interstate 10 and within the urban core, fewer than 20% of households have access. San Antonio's more affluent residents are thus four times more likely to have access than lower-income residents.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.