

CREATION OF A STRATEGY FOR THE ALLOCATION OF VERIZON \$1 MILLION DIGITAL EQUITY CONTRIBUTION

Under the direction of the Department of Innovation and Technology and the Mayor's Office of Strategic Partnerships, the City of Boston is creating a strategy for the allocation of a \$1 million digital equity contribution made by Verizon in November 2018. The process will use the following inputs to come up with a set of recommendations for the allocation of this pool of resources.

American Community Survey Census Tract Data

The City of Boston is beginning to use American Community Survey census tract level data about broadband adoption, smartphone use, and computing device ownership to inform digital inclusion resource allocation and program design. The City's Analytics Team created a [map](#) and [summary document](#) of select metrics to help guide initial exploration. The next version of the map will allow users to see each metric as a separate layer.

An immediate use case for this data is the Boston Public Library wifi hotspot lending program. In the program's next iteration, library staff will use this map to conduct targeted outreach at branches located in neighborhoods with low levels of home broadband adoption and high rates of smartphone only internet users. Hotspot devices will also be distributed at branches based on this spatial data as well as focus group data from the first round of the program (nearly complete), and user surveys.

Digital Equity Fund Summary Data

The City of Boston launched the Digital Equity Fund in 2017. The Department of Innovation and Technology, the Mayor's Office of Strategic Partnerships and the Digital Equity Fund Council have overseen two funding rounds to date with a total of \$135,000 granted to four organizations. Engagement with community organizations through the application process has helped the City to gain a broader understanding of digital inclusion efforts that already exist in Boston, the aspirations of diverse organizations who would like to explore doing such work, the basic computing infrastructure needs of non-profit organizations, as well as ideas that community based organizations and local universities have that are not immediately aligned with the goals of the fund but that seek to advance the public good through responsible use of technology. Summary data from 2018 and [2019](#) will inform our strategy of future grantmaking as well as the strategy for the allocation of the \$1 million digital equity contribution from Verizon.

Digital Inclusion Across City Departments

We have enlisted the support a fellow in the Mayor's Office to conduct Interviews with City staff across the following departments to learn about specific challenges and opportunities related to digital inclusion.

- Age Strong Commission
- Boston Centers for Youth and Families
- Boston Housing Authority
- Boston Public Health Commission Office of Recovery Services
- Boston Public Library
- Boston Public Schools
- Department of Neighborhood Development Office of Housing Stability
- Department of Neighborhood Services Office of Language and Communications Access
- Disabilities Commission
- Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement
- Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens
- Suffolk County Sheriff's Department