



## Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Schools IT Digital Equity Collaborative

### 2022 Trailblazer Application - Indicator 2

Your local government has a digital inclusion plan or is in the process of developing a plan.

Checklist (Must meet 2 of 2):

- Plan includes strategies to support affordable home broadband access, public computer centers, affordable devices, and digital literacy.
- Process for developing the plan included active participation of community stakeholders including communities who are in most need of digital literacy and home broadband Internet subscription.

**Required Supporting Documentation (Must meet 1 of 2):**

1. The plan.
2. Documentation for planning process.

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## The plan

Our plan includes three key components

### 1. The City of Minneapolis has a digital equity policy area in its 2040 Comprehensive Plan

#### [Policy 50 – Access to Technology](#)

Access to Technology: Ensure residents have the technology tools and skills needed to fully participate in the economy and civic life.

THIS POLICY SUPPORTS GOALS:

- [#1: Eliminate disparities](#)
- [#4: Living-wage jobs](#)

THIS POLICY RELATES TO TOPICS:

- [Economic Competitiveness](#)
- [Technology and Innovation](#)

It is important that individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

ACTION STEPS

The City will seek to accomplish the following action steps to ensure residents have the technology tools and skills needed to fully participate in the economy and civic life.



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- a. Facilitate digital literacy and access to technological tools for residents to use in finding jobs, interacting with government and connecting with one another.
- a. Remove barriers to private development of citywide information infrastructure.
- b. Proactively ensure that all residents have equal access to information infrastructure.
- c. Continue to track the use and availability of technology tools.
- d. Establish strategy for ensuring every home has access to fiber optic internet.

This policy supports: [Goal #1](#) [Goal #4](#)

Related topics: [Economic Competitiveness](#) [Technology and Innovation](#)

Policy tags: [Resiliency](#)

## 2. Connecting Hennepin - Eliminating the Digital Divide

As part of the County's commitment to eliminate disparities and advance racial equity, we launched Connecting Hennepin, a campaign to eliminate the digital divide in Hennepin County.

On July 20, 2021, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners allocated up to \$10M in federal funding to continue its support of the Connecting Hennepin initiative.

[Read the full news release.](#)

## 3. Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, and Minneapolis Public Schools are coordinating services to support affordable home broadband access, public computer centers, affordable devices, and digital literacy.

The County and City are entering into a professional services agreement for an IT Digital Equity Collaborative. Context statements, services goals and program components of the agreement are below.

### Context statements

- The City and the County have collaborated on various information technology projects for the purpose of advancing digital equity.
- The City and the County, along with the Minneapolis Public Schools, have selected projects which advance digital equity for collaboration through a steering committee that includes individuals from each entity.
- The City and the County desire for the County to be the fiscal agent on selected projects;
- The City desires to contribute funds toward such projects in order to advance agreed-upon digital equity projects that directly benefit the residents of the City.
- The County is piloting digital equity projects located within the City of Minneapolis.
- The parties agree to work together collaboratively through a steering committee, which includes at least members from the City and the County. The Program projects shall be determined in a collaborative manner.
- The collaborative includes options for partnerships with local non-profits.
- The length of the agreement is planned through June 2025.



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## IT Digital Equity Collaborative services goals and program components

**PCs for People:** The County has contracted with PCs for People, a non-profit organization, to deploy fixed wireless network technology (WISP project) at two locations in Minneapolis, the John B. Davis Education Center at 1250 W. Broadway Ave., and 2215 East Lake Street, Minneapolis. When fully installed, this network is expected to provide the opportunity for 240 households to connect to reliable high-speed internet. These two installations of fixed wireless technology will serve as a pilot for whether this technology could be successfully deployed at additional locations throughout the City to increase access to reliable high speed internet access in underserved areas.

- After the network is operational, the City Funds may be used to provide to provide eligible households within the service area with assistance in accessing the network. This assistance may include: subscriptions to the network (or vouchers/subsidies to reduce cost); receivers, routers, or similar in-home devices; laptops or other connectivity devices needed to access the network; technical assistance; and programs to help persons within the service area gain digital literacy. The City and the County will collaborate in selecting the types of assistance that will be offered.
- If the pilot project is deemed successful and the County expands this technology to other underserved areas throughout the City, the City Funds may also be used to assist eligible households within the expanded service areas in accessing the network.

**Broadband vouchers:** The Program may include use of City Funds to purchase internet vouchers for use by economically disadvantaged households.

**Hotspots:** The Program may include use of the City Funds for purchase of and provision to economically disadvantaged residents of internet hotspots.

**Equipment, technical assistance, digital literacy:** The City Funds may also be used to provide recipients of vouchers or hotspots with receivers, routers, or similar in-home devices; laptops or other connectivity devices needed to access the network; technical assistance; and programs to help recipients gain digital literacy. The City and the County will collaborate in selecting the types of assistance that will be offered.

**Digital Equity Study:** The Program may include conducting a study regarding the state of digital equity in Minneapolis, if the parties determine that additional information is needed to advance the Program goals in the most efficient and equitable manner. This study could include

- Survey of residents or other stakeholders
- Review of publicly available information regarding the current availability of reliable high speed internet in various areas of the City
- Analysis of barriers to adoption
- Analysis of existing resources at City, County, State and school district levels
- Report out on the state of digital equity in Minneapolis

**Digital Navigators:** The County currently has digital navigators who work with households to



increase access to high quality internet and increase digital literacy. The parties may find it beneficial for the County to hire additional digital navigators specifically to work within the City, or to dedicate the time of existing personnel specifically to work in the City. The City Funds may be used to support the salaries and benefits of personnel when their time is dedicated to working with households located within the City. The Parties agree that the purpose of this collaboration is to increase the amount of time digital navigators spend working with households within the City, and not simply to provide different funding for the same level of service. The parties will work together in good faith to achieve this objective.

## Documentation of planning process

In April 2020, with Minnesota Governor Walz's COVID-19 stay at home order and distance learning requirements, it was imperative for students and all Hennepin County residents to have access to the Internet to continue their education, to work from home, and to have online access to information and services such as electronic communication (email, social media), news, health care, employment, food delivery, and government services.

The Chief Information Officers (CIOs) from the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Schools and Hennepin County partnered to assess the Internet service availability for our jurisdictions; and to identify the needs and opportunities to address gaps. The CIOs directed their staff to review options and make recommendations for solutions.

In August 2020, with an invitation sent from Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, we held a roundtable with internet service providers and digital equity stakeholders to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions. The City of Minneapolis leveraged its resident survey data from 2012-2014, including documentation of barriers to home internet access as part of the planning process.

The roundtable and planning process enhanced the County, City and School's collaboration efforts.

City, County, and School leaders met with the City of Tucson, Arizona to learn about local broadband solutions.

### Participation of community stakeholders

- The City engaged with our Neighborhood and Community Relations Department (NCR) in the planning process. NCR has deep, authentic relationships with the City's Neighborhood Associations, cultural communities, and community organizations representing a variety of perspectives and voices of Minneapolis residents.

[See details about the City of Minneapolis Neighborhood and Community Relations Department](#)

- City staff and community members were interviewed on the City's multi-cultural radio programs in early 2022 to share digital equity resources and engage with community members about programs.

### Multilingual radio shows

NCR community specialists host four radio shows that broadcast City news in Minneapolis's most widely-spoken languages.



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- English: "Minneapolis 360" is every second & fourth Wednesday from 1:30-2 p.m. on [KMOJ 89.9 FM and can be streamed at kmojfm.com](http://kmojfm.com).
  - Spanish: "Mi Ciudad" is on La Raza 95.7 FM, 1400 and 1470 AM on every other Tuesday from 3-4 p.m. [or online at Laraza1400.com](http://Laraza1400.com).
  - Hmong: "Kuv Lub Nroog Minneapolis" is every third Thursday from 2-3 p.m. on [Hmong Radio AM 1590 and online here](http://HmongRadioAM1590.com).
  - Somali: "Magaaladayda Minneapolis" is broadcast on Somali American Radio, KALY-LP 101.7 FM every second Thursday from 2-3 p.m. You can [listen online at Kalyradio.org](http://Kalyradio.org).
- The locations of the fixed wireless (WISP project) pilot sites were determined based on the areas of greatest need in Minneapolis.
  - The County, City, Schools and PCs for People digital equity programs are launching as a pilot.
  - Community input and customer feedback is built into the evaluation process and will be used to refine the program.

**Planning materials are enclosed for reference.**

See additional attachments



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June 30, 2022