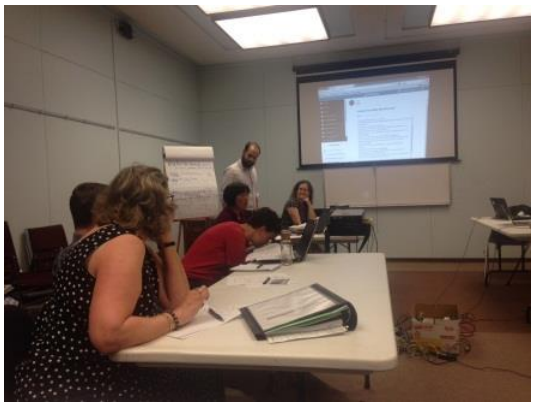
DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

CITY OF AUSTIN



2014 STRATEGY

DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

2014

Vision

The City of Austin vision includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology.

Purpose

The purpose is to address access and adoption of digital technology, to serve as a guiding document for providing digital inclusion opportunities in effecting the City's goals to ensure all Austin residents are served.

Goals

To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
- 8% of adults do not use the Internet on any device
- Initiatives: Include 4.3.3, Integrate 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.3 , Coordinate 4.5.3, 4.5.4 & 4.5.6 will help to achieve this goal

To Address Potential Barriers to Digital Inclusion
- Relevancy is a barrier to non-users, 40% of whom are not interested in using the Internet
- Initiatives: Engage 4.2.6, Include 4.3.1 & 4.3.2 will help to achieve this goal

To Understand the Need for Digital Literacy Training
- 42% of non-users would need someone to help them to get online
- Initiatives: Engage 4.2.5, Coordinate 4.5.1 & 4.5.2 will help to achieve this goal

To Understand the Need for Access via Reliable & Affordable Devices
- Nearly all adults own cell phones, and 83% own smart phones
- Initiatives: Include 4.3.4, Coordinate 4.5.1 & 4.5.2 will help to achieve this goal

To Understand the Need for Language & Disability Accommodations
- 1 in 4 non-users feel they do not speak English well enough to use the Internet
- Initiatives: Include 4.3.5 & 4.3.6 will help to achieve this goal

To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Internet non-users primarily live in Southeast Austin
- Initiatives: Connect 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, Engage 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, & Coordinate 4.5.5 will help to achieve this goal

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Chapter 1 | Introduction

1.1 | Acknowledgments

The 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategy was prepared by the City of Austin's Office of Telecommunications and Regulatory Affairs (TARA) within its Digital Inclusion Program according to directives from the Austin City Council and the Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission. This effort was met with tremendous enthusiasm and ideas from nonprofit volunteers and staff, community leaders, academics, City staff, Austin City Council members and local residents. The City's Chief Innovation Officer, Kerry O'Connor, was instrumental in the design and facilitation of the strategic process. TARA would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their ongoing support and dedication to the strategic planning process.

City of Austin 2014 Digital Inclusion Steering Committee Membership

Steering Committee	Category	Entity
Grover Bynum	Business & Entrepreneur	Austin Tech Council
Sarah Churchill Llamas	Public Health	Health IT Fellow by the Office of National Coordinator for Health IT
David Colligan	Economic & Workforce Development	City of Austin
Joe Faulk & Sue Soy	Library	Austin Public Library, City of Austin
Rebecca Frost Davis	Higher Education	St. Edwards University
Jim Lax & Angela Woods	K-12 Education	Austin Independent School District
Kerry O'Connor	Innovation	City of Austin
Teri Pennington	Public Telecom Infrastructure	City of Austin
Robert Pinhero	Nonprofit	Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Chair Gilbert Rivera	Community	Community Development Commission
Vanessa Sarria & Kevin Paris	Community-based providers	Community Advancement Network

Tech & Telecom Commission	(Ex-Officio)
Commissioner Marcy Hoen	Appointed Policy
Commissioner Chelsea McCullough	Appointed Policy
Commissioner Elizabeth Quintanilla	Appointed Policy

Austin Digital Assessment Team		**(Ex-Officio)**
Dr. Wenhong Chen	Research Partner	UT Austin - Radio, Television and Film Department
Dr. Joseph Straubhaar	Research Partner	UT Austin - Radio, Television and Film Department
Dr. Sharon Strover	Research Partner	UT Austin - Radio, Television and Film Department

City of Austin, Office of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs and other staff support

Sharla Chamberlain, Digital Inclusion Associate
Zach Greene, Director of Communication, Office of the Mayor
Rondella Hawkins, TARA Officer
Will Livesley-O'Neill, Capacity Building Coordinator, AmeriCorps VISTA Member, Office of the Mayor
John Speirs, Digital Inclusion Program Coordinator

1.2 | Council Directive: Resolution No. 20141120-074

RESOLUTION NO. 20141120-074

WHEREAS, the City Manager was directed in Resolution No. 20140320-056 to present a Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan ("Plan") to the Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission (CTTC), the Emerging Technology and Telecommunications Council Committee and the City Council for consideration; and

WHEREAS, the CTTC appointed a Steering Committee composed of diverse sector-based community representatives; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager has worked with the CTTC and other relevant Commissions, community organizations, and stakeholders to develop a "Plan" to address access and adoption of digital technology and to serve as a guiding document for providing digital inclusion opportunities in achieving the City's goals to ensure all residents are served; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin vision includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology; and

WHEREAS, the CTTC adopted the plan at its meeting on October 8, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs is the lead office for implementation, will work with other City departments and community organizations, and will conduct an annual review to inform the public of the progress and make a report to the CTTC and relevant community groups.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

Council approves the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan, attached as "Exhibit A" to this resolution, as policy guidance for management of City programs and services. Council further directs that the City Manager continue leveraging assets to deploy and support community digital inclusion programs and services in the most needed communities in partnership with other agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector by making all reasonable efforts to implement the following 25 recommended initiatives as set out in the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan:

- Initiative 1: Expand existing digital inclusion inventory and mapping resource capabilities
- Initiative 2: Develop a system for keeping the inventory and map robust and up-to-date
- Initiative 3: Promote the inventory and map
- Initiative 4: Facilitate ongoing innovation techniques using this open data
- Initiative 5: Conduct community forums & events
- Initiative 6: Host a "Day of Digital Inclusion"
- Initiative 7: Marketing campaign on digital inclusion programs
- Initiative 8: Leverage digital inclusion partners' networks to promote digital inclusion
- Initiative 9: Recruit knowledgeable individuals within the community to provide small group or one-on-one sessions of training
- Initiative 10: Identify target communities to understand their unique digital literacy needs
- Initiative 11: Integrate digital inclusion programs into on-line digital portals

- Initiative 12: Develop online consumer safety curriculum for use throughout Austin
- Initiative 13: Promote usage of digital badges to visualize and reward learning
- Initiative 14: Promote device refurbishment programs to provide inexpensive devices to low-income residents
- Initiative 15: Provide diverse language offerings for digital literacy training
- Initiative 16: Design accessible programs for people with disabilities
- Initiative 17: Advance digital inclusion as a Community Advancement Network goal that can be measured on the Community Dashboard
- Initiative 18: Encourage community program and service providers to update their institutional goals to reflect Digital Inclusion Strategy priorities
- Initiative 19: Collaborate and brainstorm with other cities' Digital Inclusion efforts
- Initiative 20: Explore grant opportunities to keep devices and trainings up-to-date
- Initiative 21: Recruit private sponsorships and donors
- Initiative 22: Facilitate ongoing program evaluation for program and service providers
- Initiative 23: Manage Digital Inclusion Strategy implementation
- Initiative 24: Create a representative accountability group to oversee and advise on programming
- Initiative 25: Conduct Digital Inclusion Strategy Implementation Workshop

ADOPTED: November 20 , 2014 **ATTEST:** Jannette S. Goodall

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

1.3 | Statement of Purpose: Serving the Community

The Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy lays out the City Council's resolution calling for a roadmap that addresses access and adoption of digital technology within Austin. It is critical that every one of our residents has access to digital and communications technology and understands technology and its relevancy to their daily lives, whether for helping with their kids' homework, or looking for jobs, getting access to health information, or accessing on-line government information.

The foundation of the Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy is an evolving set of *Taking Action: Initiatives* centered on objectives that can help overcome identified challenges. This vision includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society and is measured using the Austin Digital Assessment administered every three years. The Digital Inclusion Strategy is based upon the outcomes of the Austin Digital Assessment that evaluates and assesses residents' access to technology resources and literacy and training programs.

The Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy highlights five broad initiatives that together will realize Austin's vision to include every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology. Three of these are foundational strategies that enable Austin's residents and relevant sectors to be digitally-connected and engaged. Two growth strategies build on this foundation of technological strength to ensure coordinated service delivery. Together, these five initiatives provide the path to ensure every Austin resident has an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society.

Connect
The City and its partners in digital inclusion should embrace technological innovation to help connect residents to programs and services.

Engage
The City and its partners recognize ongoing community engagement is essential to emphasize the importance of having everyone connected.

Include
The City and its partners endeavor to enhance the ability of digital inclusion program providers to serve local residents, and explore new ways of advancing digital inclusion directly to residents.

Integrate
The City should work with its partners to integrate the Digital Inclusion Strategy with community planning initiatives across all sectors.

Coordinate
To coordinate these efforts and increase the scale of digital inclusion initiatives, the City and its partners should raise additional funds and plan for efficient implementation of important programs and services.

The Plan's 25 initiatives will drive many specific benefits for Austin, city residents, and engaged sectors. These benefits fall into six goal areas, which are displayed throughout the Plan to indicate progress on the digital inclusion indicators.

Goals	2014 Baseline Indicators
To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology	8% of adults do not use the Internet on any device
To Address Potential Barriers to Digital Inclusion	Relevancy is a barrier to non-users; 40% are not interested in using the Internet
To Understand the Need for Digital Literacy Training	42% of non-users would need someone to help them to get online
To Understand the Need for Access via Reliable & Affordable Devices	Nearly all adults own cell phones, and 83% own smart phones
To Understand the Need for Language & Disability Accommodations	1 in 4 non-users feel they do not speak English well enough to use the Internet
To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations	Internet non-users primarily live in Southeast Austin

1.4 | Imagine Austin

Background: With Resolution Number 20140320-056, Council initiated the effort to develop the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan to address access to digital technology. Council followed with the passage of Resolution 20140501-043 which directs the City Manager to incorporate digital inclusion into Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan as part of the 2014 annual report. Staff from the City's Office of Telecommunication and Regulatory Affairs, Planning and Development Review Department, Technology and Telecommunications Commission members worked together on the following amendments.

Along with the Annual Review report, amendments to the comprehensive plan are proposed.

CPA-2014-0001: Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan

1. Add new policy E P19: "Provide ongoing and coordinated digital services to meet the needs of the community by ensuring that all residents have access to internet connectivity, hardware availability, digital literacy training, and access to relevant information."
2. Add new action E A22: "Initiate the development of the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan."
3. Amend the following Priority Programs by adding Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan under the Related City Initiatives
    a. Priority Program #1: Invest in Compact and Connected Austin, p. 178
    b. Priority Program #3: Economic Development, p. 194
    c. Priority Program #5: Creative Economy, p. 200
    d. Priority Program #7: Healthy Austin, p. 206

Rationale: These amendments are needed to meet the requirements of both Council resolutions and to help this initiative achieve its goals.

1.5 | Executive Summary

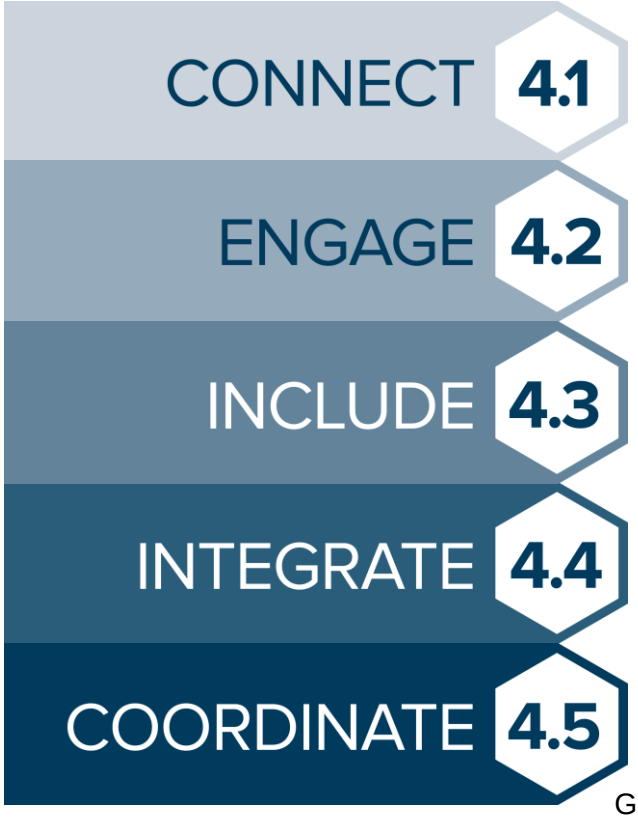
The City of Austin's 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategy is a dynamic plan to utilize community assets to overcome barriers, ensuring all residents have access to the skills and devices necessary to engage in our digital society. The process to create this strategy began on March 20, 2014 when the City Council adopted a resolution that calls for the development of a Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan that addresses access and adoption of digital technology within Austin. City staff immediately began developing this strategic plan by convening a Steering Committee to establish priorities for taking action.

The Steering Committee process began in May and continued throughout the summer to learn more about the digital realities within various sectors of Austin. Membership on the Steering Committee included representatives from nonprofits, community-based providers, Austin Public Library, K-12 education, higher education, public healthcare, business and entrepreneurship, the City of Austin, and the community-at-large. The members of the Steering Committee, who have hands-on experience within each sector, spoke to their sectors' challenges, assets, and opportunities regarding technology and digital inclusion.

This Strategy first explores the Austin Landscape to identify current trends in residential technology usage and highlight challenges related to digital inclusion. The data presented in this section represent findings from the 2014 Austin Digital Assessment, a citywide survey that asks Austinites about their technology and Internet usage. The Austin Digital Assessment was conducted by the City of Austin in partnership with the Technology and Information Policy Institute at The University of Texas at Austin.

The Strategy also discusses the seven principles outlined by the International City/County Management Association and adopted within the City Council resolution: Availability, Affordability, Design for Inclusion, Public Access, Digital Literacy, and Consumer Safety. Specifically, this discussion outlines the truths and applications within Austin for each principle.

To support efforts to take action to promote digital inclusion, the Strategy outlines some key community assets that can be built upon to help overcome barriers and challenges that make it difficult for specific groups to fully engage in our digital society.



The most direct benefit to Austin and residents will be felt through *Taking Action: Initiatives* chapter of this Strategy. This section presents 25 action items, their primary audiences and objectives to maintain accountability across five action categories: Connect, Engage, Include, Integrate, and Coordinate. Upon adoption of this Strategy, the City will begin working with its partner organizations and individuals across all sectors to execute the action items outlined in this section. This list of initiatives represents the top priorities from ongoing brainstorming and strategy sessions, but it is by no means complete. The 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategy remains a dynamic document, always open to new ideas for civic and social innovation.

Going forward, this Strategy will be applied throughout the community in support of the City's vision in which every Austin resident has an opportunity to be fully engaged in our digital society. To this end, the Strategy calls for an Action Agenda to monitor the implementation status of specific initiatives, and an official annual update to this Strategy to inform the public on progress. Members of the Steering Committee will continue to play key roles in the digital inclusion effort. They and other community leaders and residents will act as ambassadors of the initiative and further the digital inclusion dialogue within their sectors.

1.6 | The Austin Landscape

Austin has strong assets that enable and empower the digital community. But certain local challenges exist that should be considered when developing strategic initiatives to improve digital access and literacy. Austin has the resources, knowledge and expertise to address many of the challenges we face in bridging the digital divide. The most significant challenge is that we must **connect what's available to what's needed**, and determine how partners and organizations can work together to best address the digital divide.

The *Austin Business Journal* reported in 2014 that nearly 160 people move to Austin every day. This is causing rapid and profound **demographic shifts** that make it difficult to identify residents in need of specific services. This also makes it difficult for program providers to **focus and define their efforts** in providing services to residents in need.

Providers also face challenges in **securing adequate funding** for necessary and beneficial programs, and experience difficulty in effectively **evaluating their current programs** to identify opportunities for improvement and the gaps to be filled. These challenges may **limit the capacity and scale** to which providers can support their clients. New ideas for overcoming these barriers are essential for Austin program providers to effectively provide services that improve lives.

The Austin landscape is one in which most residents are well connected. The City of Austin conducted the 2014 Austin Digital Assessment in partnership with the Technology and Information Policy Institute at The University of Texas at Austin to understand residential technology usage and identify unmet needs. Preliminary data from this study suggests that **approximately 8 percent of Austinites do not use the Internet**, and approximately the same amount do not have a broadband connection in the home. Although 8 percent is better than the national average, it means approximately 55,000 adults in Austin are currently being excluded from our increasingly digital society (U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey estimated the 2013 adult population to be 691,509). Of these 55,000 adults, two-thirds are of working age (under 65 years old) and 84 percent have only a high school education or less. This is a group of traditionally underserved Austinites who suffer significant barriers to obtaining stable employment and maintaining a comfortable standard of living.

Internet non-users are defined as residents who do not use the Internet at all, on any device. Forty percent of these non-users in this survey agreed with the statement that they were **not interested in using the Internet**. This means that tens of thousands of Austinites do not realize the benefits digital technology can provide, from online banking to electronic health portals or even social media. Technology provides people with more tools to apply to work and play, and facilitates communication. Efforts can be taken to make technology relevant for all residents. Residents also face challenges in accessing **reliable and affordable devices**, and resident non-users identified the expense associated with technology as one of the top reasons for not using the Internet.

1.7 | Digital Inclusion Principles

The International City/County Management Association's *Building Digital Communities: A Framework for Action* (2011) defines digital inclusion as, "the ability of individuals and groups to access and use information and communications technology." In Austin, it is our mission to ensure all residents have access to the skills, knowledge, and devices needed to empower their lives through digital technology. In this spirit, the ICMA also outlines seven principles that serve as the foundations for digital inclusion. This section explains each foundational principle and its connection to the Austin community.

1.7.1 | Availability

Without access to the Internet, Austinites do not have the opportunity to engage in the digital world, and the other digital inclusion principles referenced within this framework cannot be achieved. Availability needs to arise within two segments of society: multi-user environments and individual households.

Public multi-user environments, such as libraries, educational institutions, public access **computer labs, and other community-serving entities, provide essential services, access, and** programming to Austinites. These institutions require sufficient bandwidth and staffing to fully address the needs of clients. Additionally, the availability of faster Internet speeds can revolutionize how these institutions function and can enhance their ability to address needs within the community.

Households also need availability to ensure that individuals can have consistent and reliable access to and engagement in the digital world. An Internet connection in the home allows for more convenient and effective use of online tools to search for jobs, complete schoolwork, pay bills, fill out necessary documents, and much more. Reliable and sufficient bandwidth allows families to take advantage of more Internet features and opportunities relevant to daily living needs.

Currently, 92% of Austinites are connected to the Internet through some device and, to some extent, take advantage of Internet availability within the city. Yet, that leaves 8% who currently do not access the digital world and many more who have limited or inconsistent access. Therefore, the availability of an appropriate internet connection remains an issue in Austin.

Although multiple different Internet providers offer a wide variety of access packages, consumers are often not aware of their options or may be excluded from some options based on cost, location, or other factors. Additionally, Austinites and local institutions may not know how to obtain or upgrade their access.

Based on observations from the community, we know that opportunities exist within Austin to enhance availability.

1.7.2 | Affordability

To access the digital space, institutions and individuals need the necessary hardware and software. However, the cost of devices and connectivity is a significant barrier to access for many Austinites. Pricing structures and support systems to enable businesses, institutions, and households to afford access to broadband and digital technologies are essential.

Austinites access the Internet through many different means and devices. Smartphones are increasingly used as an Internet access point. In 2014, 83 percent of Austinites own smartphones, which is a dramatic increase from 2010 when a similar citywide survey was conducted and found that only 51% of Austinites had smartphones. Tablets, another new and popular device, are now owned by nearly 60 percent of Austinites. Laptops and desktop computers are still widely used, with the majority of Austinites stating in the current survey that they access the Internet through personal computers at least daily.

But not every individual or institution can afford the hardware, IT-related services, or broadband connection necessary to ensure continued access to the Internet. More than half of Internet non-users agree that cost is a reason why they do not use the Internet. Additionally, many community-servicing institutions have limited resources to maintain or expand their current technology infrastructure. Affordability represents an issue that Austin must address to ensure digital inclusion.

Based on observations from the community, we know that opportunities currently exist within Austin to unlock this affordability principle.

1.7.3 | Public Access

8% of Austinites do not have Internet access within their home. This may occur for a host of reasons, such as cost or lack of interest. But even for those who only have a home connection, the digital world is always on, so consistent access is becoming essential both at home and away from home. Therefore, even when out and about in the community, individuals need access to the Internet.

Uninterrupted technology and connectivity available through free public access, especially for those who have little or no communication technology available in the home, is essential for digital inclusion.

Austin has a long history of funding and promoting public access facilities. Austin Free-Net, a nonprofit organization that provides free public computer labs and training, began operations in

1995 and serves approximately 5,000 unique users per month across all of its facilities. channelAustin, serving the community since 2005, provides digital media technology access and training to Austinites, and hosts and streams local video content. Additionally, the City of Austin provides access and training through its Austin Public Libraries, other public facilities like City Hall, and other community partners. Many Austinites use these public access facilities as their gateway to the Internet and digital world.

Yet, with ongoing unmet needs within Austin, much more can be done to ensure that Austinites utilize free public access facilities and networks.

1.7.4 | Design for Inclusion

To be truly inclusive, digital services in Austin must strive to erase the boundaries in language, culture, mobility, literacy, and other dividers in our city that keep some from using technology to its full potential. Reducing the obstacles to utilizing technology through principles of effective design must be a main objective of the digital inclusion plan.

Austin is home to people of all ages, races, and income levels. Austinites also have a wide range of abilities related to the use of technology, running the gamut from high-level executives at technology firms to those without any knowledge of how to use a mouse or keyboard. To ensure that *all* Austinites have the ability to access and utilize the Internet, digital inclusion efforts must be tailored to all demographics. This includes programming and outreach that can incorporate differences in language, culture, physical abilities, age, literacy, and other aspects of life.

1.7.5 | Relevance

Some Austinites may perceive Internet access to be a luxury that they don't need or isn't worth the cost, as opposed to a crucial utility to meet daily living needs in our increasingly digital world. Such attitudes stem from a lack of exposure to the Internet due to issues of affordability, access, or otherwise. These issues create the perception that the Internet is irrelevant to the lives of some of our city's residents – a perception which has real economic and social costs for non-users. And unfortunately, as attitudes become ingrained, this perception could prevent some non-users from trying to participate in increased digital inclusion services.

The Internet is becoming an increasingly essential piece of our lives - today, it is almost impossible to live without. In Austin, the Internet is essential if you want to apply for most jobs, access governmental services, or just stay current with news and social responsibilities. Additionally, expanded technological skills can lead to better jobs and an improved life. Yet structural and perceived barriers make some feel as though the digital world is not for them. To fully realize digital inclusion, we need to ensure that everyone recognizes the potential benefits related to the use of technology and the Internet, and is able to integrate those benefits into their own life. It falls on institutions promoting digital inclusion to demonstrate the relevance and benefits of adopting technology.

Based on observations from the community, we know that there are many individuals, organizations and programs that do seek to demonstrate the relevance of digital technology.

1.7.6 | Digital Literacy

Digital literacy skills, including the ability to find, evaluate, and use information to achieve goals, are a necessary pathway to digital inclusion. These skills may be imparted through professionally-administered classes, dialogues with public access lab instructors, or just informal conversations with a friend, family member, or neighbor. All of these interactions are important to move individuals along the spectrum of digital literacy and ensure that they attain the level of skills necessary to fully participate in the digital world.

Digital literacy relates to a spectrum of technological skills - from the use of a mouse to the coding of a website. Institutions and programs currently exist within Austin to address digital literacy needs. Available programs range from introductory computer to advanced programming classes. Yet we still see that individuals lacking digital literacy do not seek out or request skills training. More than one-third of these Internet non-users surveyed in our citywide study said they were interested in participating in free training through a local organization. In particular, non-users were interested in receiving training on how to edit and create their own work, use email, and operate software.

1.7.7 | Online Consumer Safety

Consumers — both individual and institutional — need accurate, unbiased information on how to safely navigate the digital world.

Through the efforts of digital inclusion, we hope to have all Austinites online and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the Internet. Currently, Austinites use the Internet to buy goods, manage personal finances, health care, and other costs, and to stay connected. All of these activities involve sharing sensitive information, which puts personal information at risk of being compromised. The vast amount of information available online can also be confusing for new users, who may be unsure which sites to trust as accurate or legitimate and which to avoid. These risks dissuade many people from using the Internet and may make others wary of continued use. In fact, more than half of Internet non-users in the Austin Digital Assessment cited privacy concerns as a reason they do not use the Internet. Therefore, we need to address consumer safety so that Austinites may access the Internet with the knowledge and understanding necessary to protect personal information.

Chapter 2 | Community Sectors

In preparation for the 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategy development process, the City recognized the immense need for ideas and support across community sectors. To gain diverse input from across sectors and ensure all residents' interests are represented, the City engaged community leaders to be a part of the Digital Inclusion Steering Committee. The assets, barriers and opportunities associated with each sector have been captured throughout this plan's action agenda, *Taking Action: Initiatives*.

2.1 | Community

The Digital Inclusion Steering Committee had, above all else, an obligation to the Austin community at large, ensuring that the voices of Austin residents were heard and the needs and wants of the public were addressed in the 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategy. Gilberto Rivera, the chair of Austin's Community Development Commission as well as a local business owner and neighborhood activist, represented the Community sector of the committee. Chair Rivera ensured that the needs of neighborhoods, community groups and underserved residents in particular, will be met through this plan.

2.2 | Community-Based Providers

Organizations that work on the ground level with Austin residents, known as community-based providers, also provide valuable insight into the challenges that the digital divide presents to Austinites. Community Advancement Network, or CAN, is one of Austin's most prominent community organizations, convening meetings and forums aimed at coordinated solutions to issues of inequality in our city. CAN Executive Director Vanessa Sarria and Assistant Director Mary Dodd represented the perspective of community-based providers on the Steering Committee. Their experience and expertise ensured that opportunities to convene diverse stakeholders in the promotion of connecting what's available to what's needed were incorporated into the strategy.

2.3 | Nonprofit Organizations

Austin's robust non-profit sector, the largest collection of registered non-profit agencies in any city in the nation, is well equipped to tackle the challenges of digital inclusion and other community needs. The Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations, an Austin-based agency dedicated to harnessing the power of non-profit initiatives, was represented on the Steering Committee by Robert Pinhero. Philanthropic organizations are essential to directly serve citizens in this need. This plan will utilize nonprofit organizations that are key resources for programs and services, and to give them the tools and strategies they need to succeed.

2.4 | Education & Higher Ed

As home to several large public school districts as well as renowned institutions of higher learning, education is Austin's bedrock. Educational institutions have a vital role to play in digital inclusion, particularly in technological training and advancing digital literacy. The Austin Independent School District (AISD) was represented on the committee by Jim Lax and Angela Woods who ensured that the educational needs of Austin's youth will be met through this plan's initiatives. AISD has been a leader in bringing new technology into classrooms to empower students; this plan endeavors to capture and build on AISD's existing innovations. The higher education community in Austin is also a valuable resource that was represented by Rebecca Frost Davis of St. Edward's University. St. Edward's university is known for its commitment to social good, and it hosts the annual ATX Hack for Change event to spur civic innovation in Austin. Academic institutions in Austin are able to provide many necessary services to promote digital inclusion through their large network of researchers and students.

2.5 | Business & Entrepreneurs

One of the fastest-growing economies in the nation, Austin's business sector represents an expansive range of industries, including a significant number of entrepreneurs and start-up ventures. This variety in business offers many opportunities for innovation and for Austin's business community to take a leading role in the hardware and software elements needed to close the digital divide. Austin entrepreneurs were represented on the Steering Committee by Grover Bynum of the Austin Technology Council. Grover brought insights into the technical capabilities different technologies could provide to advance digital inclusion programs and services and how to engage with this community.

2.6 | Public Health

A highly important but less often recognized element of the digital divide is the role that access to technology plays in public health, from individuals managing their own health care, to organizational approaches to reaching the public. Austin's public health community, which includes a large network of hospitals, nonprofit agencies and health care providers, had its perspectives represented on the Steering Committee by Sarah Churchill, a Health IT Fellow at

the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT. Sarah is highly knowledgeable on how technology can realistically and effectively be applied to public health settings to meet unmet healthcare needs for patients and providers.

2.7 | City Government

Finally, as the driving force behind the Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan, the City of Austin plays a multifaceted role in implementing initiatives of digital inclusion. Community service provision, offered by City libraries and community centers, was represented on the Steering Committee by Joe Faulk and Sue Soy of the Austin Public Library system. The work of the City to spur economic and workforce development was represented by David Colligan. Teri Pennington represented the City's Communications & Technology Management office to provide insight into the public telecommunications infrastructure, while Kerry O'Connor of the Innovation office offered perspective on how the City of Austin can convene and inspire original solutions to issues of digital inclusion. The City recognizes the need for inter-departmental dialogue and shared goals to truly impact positive change in Austin. Each of these City representatives' perspectives was and will continue to be essential in executing the initiatives outlined in this plan.

Chapter 3 | Building Blocks: Community Assets

3.1 | Transportation

Transportation is essential in solving issues of digital access, availability and affordability, as it allows Austinites to more conveniently and reliably reach libraries, educational institutions, public access computer labs and other facilities, as well as connect in person with Internet providers. Without Internet access at home *and* without reliable transportation, non-users are isolated from access to available and affordable connectivity services.

In strategizing on how to capitalize on Austin's existing transportation assets, we should continue to take into account public transit, street and parking access for automobiles, shuttle and transportation service options, and alternate transit options such as bicycles. New or expanded public access computer labs and digital programs should, whenever possible, be located near existing bus and/or rail stops, with simple street access and ample parking. Because Austin has an established and expanding bike infrastructure, proximity to bike lanes or safe biking streets would also capitalize on transportation convenience.

3.2 | Language

Austin's language resources provide an opportunity to expand digital inclusion. In a city with a high number of multilingual residents, existing foreign language education programs and translation services can aid in efforts to make digital literacy curriculum, marketing and other materials more accessible to a wider audience. Additionally, the proliferation of foreign language expertise in Austin makes for a service provider talent pool that is well-equipped to bridge differences in language.

Austinites must continue to be able to participate in public access technology, as well as take part in the civic conversation about the importance of connectivity in a language in which they feel comfortable. Otherwise, the digital divide is perpetuated by intractable divisions in communication.

3.3 | Physical Space

To grow Austin's digital inclusion programming, space is required to house public access events, centers, provider offices, and more. Without the infrastructure to host and expand digital connectivity services, cities risk isolating services in certain areas or rendering them inaccessible altogether. Creating and sustaining numerous physical spaces to connect more of the population with digital resources is essential to solve issues of accessibility, availability, and affordability.

There are already many physical centers of digital connectivity in Austin, including public access labs, educational facilities, and public facilities such as libraries and recreation centers interspersed throughout the city. In addition, Austin's lack of density relative to other cities means that there is still a large amount of unused physical space, which could potentially house both public access facilities and technology development and storage space. The availability of space in Austin for digital connectivity services gives residents a chance to find accessible and affordable resources.

3.4 | Connectivity

A strong network of connectivity is required as a baseline to make digital services available and affordable to all. Such a network gives residents more options for services, including in-home and public services, and also strengthens access to wireless internet in a more diverse range of locations.

As one of the earliest cities in the United States to be selected for Google Fiber's Community Connections program, Austin has the connectivity base needed to grow digital inclusion. Service providers all around the city, including many public and non-profit facilities used by a large section of the public, will provide greatly increased bandwidth and corresponding technology that will allow for expanded and more reliable services. Public-use computers are located around the city at libraries, labs, schools, non-profits, and elsewhere, and Austin's limited Wi-Fi network footprint allows for connectivity on mobile devices away from wired computer facilities, meaning that Internet access is readily available for no cost or on personal devices. These resources give Austin a strong base on which to build a larger and even more inclusive connectivity network.

3.5 | Training

Digital literacy is a bedrock principle of digital inclusion, and efforts to increase literacy among non-users or those without much technological experience cannot occur without sufficient training and individuals trained to assist. To navigate the digital world successfully and safely, newly included users must have guidance, the right tools and the skills to utilize them.

Austin's core of digital training services includes training programs and certificate courses offered by several local non-profit agencies and educational institutions. These programs already serve members of the community hoping to gain job skills, learn basic

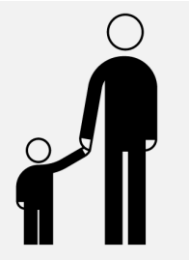
programming, or simply navigate the Internet for personal use. Additionally, for those able to connect to the Internet, a number of online guides and tutorials can increase digital knowledge. Some of these online tools are freely available from the public library. By capitalizing on these resources, more Austinites can increase their own digital literacy and join the digital world more fully.

3.6 | Human Capital

The human capital that our city already possesses in the digital sphere is a critical factor in creating a design for inclusion that allows for more available and affordable connectivity. Taking advantage of our community's expertise will maximize our inclusion plan's chances for success, and leverage the best use of Austin's talents.

Between staff of public institutions, technological firms, community agencies, and faculty and staff of educational institutions, Austin possesses the capacity to design and implement an inclusion plan that will enhance partnerships, evaluate programs and results, and enable an effective push for greater connectivity. Keeping the principles of digital inclusion in mind, these players will be key in leveraging what already exists to provide more access and affordability for our community.

3.7 | Age-Specific Resources



To make the digital world feel relevant to all members of our city, it is important to recognize that just as differences in language, income level, race, and ethnicity create different perceptions and barriers to digital inclusion, so too does age. Austinites in various age groups will have differing concerns about their involvement with the Internet and communications technology, and tailoring programming to address those varying concerns will ensure that all demographics feel comfortable and included.

To that end, Austin is already home to diverse digital programs for students, parents and mid-career adults, and seniors. Youth mentoring opportunities introduce technology to students, who may have grown up around technology but have not had the opportunity to use many digital tools. Training parents to use student portals and other tools to manage their child's education both builds skills and serves as a practical benefit to parenting, just as job skills classes train adults to utilize technology as well as in-person help to gain employment. Classes targeting seniors address the concerns that many older people feel about using technology which may feel new or foreign or raise privacy concerns, and help integrate seniors into digital life. By addressing the digital divide in stages, age-specific programming makes technology feel more relevant and relatable for Austinites.

3.8 | Hardware

The Austin area is home to one of the top computer hardware manufacturers, in addition to numerous technology companies with rotating inventories of high quality digital technology. One of the greatest challenges to addressing digital affordability is the question of hardware – many non-users are unable to participate in the digital world because they cannot afford a personal Internet access device. Others who can afford a device may not be able to pay for the connection required to utilize the device to its maximum capability. While public access facilities can mitigate some of the disadvantages of those without hardware, having personal access to the Internet and digital technology is the surest, most convenient way to be included digitally.

While the cost of new hardware is prohibitive both for many individuals and many service providers, Austin does possess a number of resources to address the hardware gap through repair facilities and refurbishing and/or wiping of old, unused and used computers. Building on programs that already exist to repurpose these devices, and get the repaired devices into the hands of those who need them, compromise the principle concern to address affordability and access. Expanding partnerships and making hardware a centerpiece of the design for inclusion will go a long way toward addressing the digital divide.

3.9 | Awareness

To help raise the level of public access by increasing awareness, service providers in Austin can continue to work together to advertise programs and opportunities in appropriate languages and places. Many forums exist to get the word out about access opportunities, hardware and connectivity suppliers, educational programs, community newsletters, congregation areas, classes and gatherings, as well as contact and distribution lists of agencies, institutions, and providers. By collaborating and sharing the task of awareness, Austin's resources can be maximized and reach a wider audience.

One of the central missions of the digital inclusion plan is to connect what's available in Austin with what Austinites need. Raising public awareness of digital resources is crucial to this task. Increasing awareness of resources and the needs they can address will also help foster partnerships between existing service providers, making services more widely available and used by more people.

3.10 | Security

Addressing digital literacy, as well as ways to make both hardware and software more affordable, must take user security into account. Online safety is a paramount concern for all users, but especially for those who are new to the Internet and may not have learned the tools to navigate the digital world without making themselves or their personal information vulnerable. In teaching digital literacy, and in finding low-cost ways to provide devices and connectivity, keeping personal

security in mind is essential to ensure that the digital divide does not also pose a divide in safety.

Through portals, privacy policies, and secure log-ins, both at public access centers and in new user homes, Austin can continue to ensure that digital inclusion efforts take care to keep users secure. Taking advantage of these tools, Austin's service providers build security and safety into their definitions of what it means to be digitally literate.

3.11 | Financial

Like any large-scale project, a plan for digital inclusion must address how efforts will be financed, expanded to meet needs, and sustained. Increasing availability of digital technology and addressing the issues of affordability that the digital divide presents requires tapping into a range of funding options and financial resources.

Fortunately, Austin already has several grants and incentives for digital technology expansion, in both the public and private sectors. These funding sources encourage programs aimed at the digital divide, and provide an opportunity to expand funding sources through partnership. Collaboration can also create opportunities to generate and efficiently use shared funds to promote digital inclusion efforts and supplement costs to raise the level of affordability and increase access.

3.12 | Partnership

Austin is fortunate to have so many actors in the public, private, educational, and nonprofit sectors that work to promote the values of digital inclusion through funding, provision of hardware and software, training, and much more. However, a wealth of options also runs the risk of creating silos or unnecessary and inefficient overlaps. By working together, service providers can ensure that needs are being met and that programs can be expanded and utilized by more Austinites who need them.

Connections between providers and government entities and between providers and national corporations and foundations are already taking place, as evidenced through funding and shared initiatives. Austin can build on these existing partnerships through application of a cohesive plan for digital inclusion that unites all actors in a strategy to tackle the digital divide from every angle across sectors. Connections in the local community help define how partners can attach available resources to needs and collaborate to push those resources even further.

3.13 | Demographic Insight

A digital inclusion strategy for Austin must be Austin-focused: relevant to the concerns of Austinites and cognizant of the challenges and advantages within our city. To that end, accurate, in-depth information about Austin as a whole and the character of its residents must inform the strategy for digital inclusion moving forward.

Through demographic insight, into clients served by digital technology and programs and into Austin's residents currently unserved by the digital world, the strategic plan can tackle challenges in a way that will make the greatest and most effective impact in Austin. Using demographic information gleaned from studies, surveys, and other tools, digital inclusion programs and efforts can lead to a design that is relevant to diverse communities within the city, raise awareness of Austin's challenges and how they might be overcome, and, most importantly, meet the needs and desires of the residents of our city navigating the digital world. The Austin Digital Assessment was designed as a critical asset to provide data crucial to understanding Austinites and their preferences. Regular updates to this research will continue to give service providers an accurate and reliable depiction of the digital landscape in Austin.

Chapter 4 | Taking Action: Initiatives

The 2014 Digital Inclusion Strategy calls on the City and its partners in digital inclusion to **take action**. The foundation of this Strategy is an evolving set of strategic initiatives centered on objectives to help overcome identified challenges. These initiatives can be implemented in key communities and sectors across Austin to advance digital inclusion and connect all residents to our digital world. To this end, the Strategy incorporates an Action Plan to monitor the implementation status of specific initiatives. Official updates to the Strategy will inform the public on progress and incorporate new ideas for civic and social innovation. These initiatives have been categorized into five key priority areas: **Connect**, **Engage**, **Include**, **Integrate** and **Coordinate**.

CONNECT 4.1

Austin has the resources, knowledge and expertise to address the challenges we face in bridging the digital divide. The real problem is that we must **connect what's available to what's needed.** The City and its partners in digital inclusion should embrace technological innovation to help connect residents to programs and services.

- **Initiative 4.1.1: Expand existing inventory and mapping resource capabilities**
    - Residents need to be able to access a robust and accurate inventory of public computer labs and digital literacy training opportunities. AustinConnects.net is an example of an existing catalog with geographic filtering capabilities by program type. But this map could be strengthened by incorporating data indicating where programming and public technology access is most needed as identified in the Austin Digital Assessment. This could be visualized as a heat map useful to providers to identify where further program development could be maximized.

The City should work to make sure that Austin Digital Assessment data and AustinConnect.net's program inventory are publically available through Austin's Open Data initiative. This effort can be guided by advice and input from the City's Communications & Technology Management Department. Next, the City should work with local programmers and hackers to build upon AustinConnects.net to improve its existing mapping capabilities and incorporate technology usage data as a tool for providers. Once completed, the City should alert social service partners like Texas Connector and 2-1-1 to these mapping tools so they can be incorporated into these existing services.

- Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Objective: Schedule a presentation at an Open Austin (or equivalent community organization) event to garner technical support for this initiative within the local civic hacking community. Create a timeline for hacking to occur.
- Primary Audiences: All residents seeking digital inclusion programming & local community providers
- Key Players: City, Business & Entrepreneurs

- **Initiative 4.1.2: Develop a system for keeping the inventory and map robust and up-to-date**
    - Keeping information up-to-date is a major challenge for any community inventory effort. A system must be developed to engage local providers in providing information about programs as programs change, expand, or new programs are added. 2-1-1 and Texas Connector may be valuable partners in this effort, as they both provide public information on community programs of all types, including community computer labs and digital literacy programs. An effort should also be made to expand the types of programs included in the digital inclusion inventory to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of this issue. For example, relevant public health locations should be included to the extent that access to computer hardware and online patient and caregiver portals are available.

      2-1-1 annually asks community providers to update information about their programs and sees a very high response rate to this effort. The City and its partners in digital inclusion should work to promote this 2-1-1 outreach to local program providers to ensure the highest response rate possible, creating a reliable information resource. After the 2-1-1 inventory has been updated, this information can be annually incorporated into the digital inclusion inventory and

map as outlined in Initiative 1. Texas Connector, which draws data from 2-1-1, can tag and map these resources

- Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Objective: Create a calendar for updating the catalog based on the 2-1-1, and any other relevant inventory catalog, annual update timeline. Coordinate with others who use these data in mapping tools distributed across Austin such as the Texas Connector.
- Primary Audiences: Digital inclusion program and service providers
- Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Nonprofits

- **Initiative 4.1.3: Promote the inventory and map**
  - Upon the launch of the updated inventory and map, the City and its partners should promote the map to the community to ensure the public and community providers are aware of it. Links to the inventory and maps should be made available and promoted through literature available at the public libraries, public computer labs, public schools, recreation facilities and public health facilities. Organizations that provide social services support should encourage their clients to use this as a resource to identify available access or training resources.

    - Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
    - Objective: Identify key channels and strategies to promote the inventory and mapping tools
    - Primary Audiences: Digital inclusion program and service providers
    - Key Players: Business & Entrepreneurs, Community-Based Providers, Community, Nonprofits, Public Health, Education & Higher Ed, City

- **Initiative 4.1.4: Facilitate ongoing innovation using this open data**
  - The local civic hacking community can be a strong resource to the Digital Inclusion effort. We should engage with this community on an ongoing basis at Open Austin and similar meetups in addition to civic hack-a-thons like the ATX Hack for Change to seek advice and technical support when needed on how to spark social innovation. For example, we should encourage a volunteer from

within the civic hacking community to bring to Austin an application like LocalFreeWeb.org, a text-based application that can locate public computer locations near specific bus stops. The LocalFreeWeb API is publically available on Github.

- Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Objective: Attend an upcoming Open Austin meeting to promote development of this application and ongoing innovation
- Primary Audiences: Civic hackers
- Key Players: Business & Entrepreneurs, City

ENGAGE 4.2

Many residents who have not engaged in our digital world either are not aware of the many programs and services available to them, or they do not feel that they can benefit from technology. The City and its partners recognize that **ongoing community engagement** is essential to emphasize the importance of having everyone connected.

- **4.2.1: Conduct community forums & events**
    - Many organizations like the Community Advancement Network, Skillpoint Alliance and Austin Public Libraries host and attend community events and forums to engage directly with the community on a range of issues. The City should work with these and other community organizations to advocate for digital inclusion as a component of larger community development events, in addition to participating in or hosting digital inclusion-specific events. The City's presence should include a technology display to show community members resources like AustinConnects.net and the virtual public library e-books and databases, and should also provide informational one-pagers in English and in Spanish. While the City already participates in some local events, it needs a more consistent and engaging physical presence to fully communicate the importance of having everyone connected. The City therefore should aim to participate in and promote regular community events and provide staffing to do so.

- Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Objective: To plan and host City events and participate regularly in events held in the community
- Primary Audiences: Internet non-users
- Key Players: Community-Based Providers, City, Nonprofits

- **Initiative 4.2.2: Host a "Day of Digital Inclusion"**
  - Working toward a digitally engaged society is an exciting process that should be celebrated by the Austin community. The City and its many partners across all sectors should host an annual "Day of Digital Inclusion". This exciting event is an opportunity to inform the community about work being done, create a fun and engaging environment for residents to learn about programs and services, while it engages residents from all backgrounds and neighborhoods. The City should seek sponsors to help fund this event and work with local digital inclusion program providers to plan and execute the event.

    - Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
    - Objective: Schedule and plan an annual "Day of Digital Inclusion" celebration
    - Primary Audiences: All residents
    - Key Players: Community-Based Providers, City, Nonprofits, Education & Higher Ed

- **Initiative 4.2.3: Marketing campaign on digital inclusion programs**
  - Relevance continues to be an issue for the 8% of Austinites who do not use the internet. A marketing campaign should be designed to produce public messages that promote digital inclusion. The campaign should be multi-sectorial in nature, with different messages crafted to appeal to different motivations. For example, a public health message could communicate the benefits of online health resources like the Livestrong Foundation's website and free databases related to health and wellness at the Austin Public Library. The campaign should use local

media resources including but not limited to public service announcements, City bus advertisements, utility mail-outs, and public posters. Digital literacy associations and experts should be contacted for professional advice for building effective marketing campaigns and metrics to measure the success of the campaign.

- Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Objective: Create a successful targeted marketing campaign based on standard metrics of success
- Primary Audiences: Internet non-users
- Sectors: Community-Based Providers, Community, Nonprofits, City, Public Health, Education & Higher Ed

- **Initiative 4.2.4: Leverage digital inclusion partners' networks to promote digital inclusion**
  - Our partners in all sectors have robust and engaged networks. This is an opportunity to promote digital inclusion efforts to a broad audience. Partners in diverse sectors—including public health, community, public library, nonprofit, and more—should make their networks available for outreach, promotions, and social media pieces. Information divulged to these sector-based networks should inform residents about public access computer locations and digital literacy programs in a way that is relevant to the interests of the partner organization or entity. For example, White Crane Day provides an opportunity to focus on individuals with limited sight and their digital literacy opportunities.

    - Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
    - Objective: All sectors should work with partner organizations to incorporate relevant digital inclusion information into their communications
    - Primary Audiences: Audiences engaged in specific sectors
    - Key Players: Community-Based Providers, Community, Nonprofits, Public Health, Education & Higher Ed, Business & Entrepreneur

- **Initiative 4.2.5: Recruit knowledgeable individuals within the community to provide small group or one-on-one sessions**
    - Austin is known for its volunteerism. Small groups and one-on-one sessions can be very effective at helping individuals build digital skills, particularly if they want to learn a skill like creating a resume or using email. There is an opportunity to leverage technologically skilled Austinites who want to "give back" to the community. Organizations like Austin Free-Net host volunteers who work directly with residents, but there are additional opportunities to expand and localize these direct services. An effort should be made to recruit more skilled volunteers at all public computer locations to create more opportunities for small groups and one-on-one sessions. Organizations that already host these volunteers like Austin Free-Net and Austin Public Libraries can help create job descriptions, and identify and recruit volunteers with the appropriate background, knowledge, and skills assist local residents and measure outcomes.

        - Goal: To Understand the Need for Digital Literacy Training
        - Objective: Identify the skill levels and talents required and develop job descriptions that can be used to recruit volunteers. Reduce turnover for volunteers by matching them well with client needs and measure outcomes.
        - Primary Audiences: Residents interested in digital literacy training
        - Key Players: City, Community, Community-Based Providers, Community

- **Initiative 4.2.6: Identify target communities to understand their unique digital literacy needs**
    - Data from the Austin Digital Assessment should be used in combination with guidance from community leaders and local residents to identify key communities to prioritize for programming and service development. The Austin Digital Assessment includes a geographic analysis by zip code of key digital inclusion indicators like Internet usage and home broadband connection. These data should be supported by guidance from leaders within local communities who can also promote programs and their relevance. We should develop a systematic, ongoing, and consistent method for asking members in key communities about their digital inclusion needs. Public libraries and other community spaces can be used to engage directly with residents and can provide geographic dispersion to further data collection. We should ensure that all relevant sectors are

represented in this analysis and that sufficient staffing is provided to gather and analyze data.

- Goal: To Address Potential Barriers to Digital Inclusion
- Objective: Utilize Austin Digital Assessment to identify key communities. Reach out to community leaders in those areas for input on literacy needs. Develop methodology to engage directly with residents in community spaces
- Primary Audiences: Residents in underserved areas
- Key Players: City, Community

INCLUDE 4.3

As residential technology needs and tools change, we must continue to provide the adequate resources to **address access and adoption** of digital technology so that **all residents can be included in our digitally evolving society.** The City and its partners endeavor to enhance the ability of digital inclusion program providers to serve local residents, and explore new ways to advance digital inclusion directly to residents.

- **Initiative 4.3.1: Integrate digital inclusion programs into online digital portals**
    - For many individuals, digital access or training is just one of many needs. We should work to ensure online digital inclusion programming is offered at all community locations that provide social supports like public housing facilities, the Asian American Resource Center, the DeWitty Center, etc. We should also promote further development of one-stop service shops. The Community Advancement Network has stated that one-stop service shops are best positioned to support individuals and families with diverse needs. This initiative echoes this sentiment and acknowledges the role that digital inclusion can play in empowering and helping all Austinites in need.

- Goal: To Address Potential Barriers to Digital Inclusion
- Objective: Compile list of all existing one-stop service shops, and integrate their locations into digital inclusion mapping initiatives. Efforts should be made to provide programming at any locations with no current digital inclusion program offering
- Primary Audiences: Individuals or families with multiple needs
- Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Nonprofits, Community

- **Initiative 4.3.2: Develop online consumer safety curriculum for use throughout Austin**
  - As our community becomes more technologically engaged and independent, we need to continue to prepare curriculum that teaches online consumer safety to protect the privacy and personal information for all Austinites. Online consumer safety should be incorporated into AISD's educational programs for adults and youth, "No Place For Hate" curriculum, Parent Involvement policies, and Learning Support Services. Online safety resources related to healthcare could also be made available through patient portals and on health provider's online resources. The public libraries can include consumer safety in their basic digital literacy courses.

    - Goal: To Address Potential Barriers to Digital Inclusion
    - Objective: Issue curriculum evaluations to users to gauge impact
    - Primary Audiences: New Internet users
    - Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Community, Public Health

- **Initiative 4.3.3: Promote usage of digital badges to visualize and reward learning**
  - Digital Badges, like those offered for faculty training at Austin Community College and to public school students in New York and Chicago, can serve as a new and powerful tool to empower digital learning. Digital badges are awarded when a training or learning task has been completed; recipients manage their badges

online and can use them to validate learning in social and professional online environments. Digital badges can be developed for all kinds of learning including math, science, nature, and more. With increased focus on online learning and training, digital badges can help residents visualize and receive validation of new skills. Educational programs in all sectors should consider offering digital badges to help Austinites—youths and adults—manage their skills development over time.

- Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
- Objective: Work with educational programs across all sectors to offer digital badges for program completion
- Primary Audiences: Youths & Adults learning new skills
- Key Players: City, Education & Higher Ed, Nonprofits, Community-Based Providers

- **Initiative 4.3.4: Promote device refurbishment to provide inexpensive devices to low-income residents**

  Having access to digital technology at home is a valuable resource for individuals to build technology skills. Low-income residents need access to more reliable home devices at affordable prices. The City and its partners in digital inclusion should promote donation of used devices to organizations like Goodwill of Central Texas and American Youthworks that can refurbish these computers and make them available to low-income residents at reasonable and affordable prices.

  - Goal: To Understand the Need for Access via Reliable & Affordable Devices
  - Objective: Increase the number of used devices donated locally for refurbishment and sale at affordable prices
  - Primary Audiences: Low-income residents
  - Key Players: City, Business & Entrepreneurs, Education & Higher Ed, Nonprofits, Community-Based Providers

- **Initiative 4.3.5: Provide diverse language offerings for digital literacy training**

  - Austin is a highly diverse community that is home to numerous languages and cultural backgrounds. Language barriers can be a significant deterrent for

individuals seeking digital literacy training. Many digital inclusion program providers like the Austin Public Library, Skillpoint Alliance, Austin Free-Net and several others offer training in both Spanish and in English. As we continue to create program and service offerings throughout the community, we should ensure that language barriers do not prevent residents from accessing helpful training opportunities. New and existing programs should be analyzed for language inclusiveness and, if necessary, more language services should be offered and more staffing provided to do so.

- Goal: To Understand the Need for Language & Disability Accommodations
- Objective: Evaluate all digital training programs for language offerings and determine gaps and needs
- Primary Audiences: Non-English speakers
- Key Players: City, Nonprofits, Community

- **Initiative 4.3.6: Design accessible programs for people with disabilities**
  - Many of the Austin residents with disabilities could benefit from public computer access and digital literacy training, but they may face accessibility barriers if opportunities are not designed to make reasonable accommodations. People with mobility disabilities especially may have difficulty accessing sites while people with learning disabilities or speech impediments may find it difficult to communicate with trainers. Digital training programs and public access sites should be evaluated to ensure that all Austin residents are able to access programs and services, including individuals with disabilities.

    - Goal: To Understand the Need for Language & Disability Accommodations
    - Objective: Evaluate all digital training programs and public access sites for accessibility for people with disabilities and staffing to meet training needs
    - Primary Audiences: People with Disabilities
    - Key Players: City, Nonprofits, Community

INTEGRATE 4.4

The success of this Strategy depends on in its adoption both within City government and among its many community partners. The City should work with its partners to **integrate the Digital Inclusion Strategy with community planning initiatives** across all sectors.

- **Initiative 4.4.1: Advance digital inclusion as a Community Advancement Network (CAN) goal that can be measured on the Community Dashboard**
    - CAN is a partnership between key community sectors including government, nonprofit, enterprise, and faith-based institutions that shares ideas and resources to make positive changes in our community. CAN maintains a dashboard of key indicators to help track progress overcoming specific local and regional challenges. Digital inclusion should be added to the CAN dashboard to identify mutually shared goals and work with the CAN strategic framework. Other opportunities to create accountability for improving the digital community through this strategic plan should also be pursued.

        - Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
        - Objective: Identify key metrics to be included on the CAN dashboard
        - Primary Audiences: Digital inclusion program and service providers
        - Key Players: Community-Based Providers

- **Initiative 4.4.2: Encourage community program and service providers to update their institutional goals to reflect Digital Inclusion Strategy priorities**
    - Providers should be encouraged to conduct annual update reviews of their internal strategies and goals to include digital services throughout their areas of responsibility. All sectors have a capacity to benefit from digital inclusion programs and services. Providers should work with the City and its partners to identify ways to incorporate initiatives outlined in this plan into their program and service offerings.

- Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
- Objective: Develop an annual reporting mechanism to evaluate organizational progress
- Primary Audiences: All community organizations
- Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Nonprofits, Education & Higher Ed, Public Health

- **Initiative 4.4.3: Collaborate and brainstorm with other cities' Digital Inclusion efforts**
  - For the Digital Inclusion Strategy to achieve maximum benefit in Austin, digital inclusion needs to continue to be a national conversation, open to strategic partnerships and new ideas. The City of Austin has connected with digital inclusion programs in other cities like Seattle and Chicago to discuss priorities and strategies. These conversations should be expanded to include more cities and to include digital inclusion program and service providers. Bringing more ideas and perspectives together will help Austin implement the initiatives outlined in this plan and annually re-evaluate the need for different or new initiatives.

    - Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
    - Objective: Maintain regular conversation with external cities, incorporating key service providers
    - Primary Audiences: National digital inclusion network
    - Key Players: City, Nonprofits, Community-Based Providers, Other Cities

COORDINATE 4.5

This Strategy calls for significant added time, resources, and dedication among the City and its partners to effectively take action. To **coordinate these efforts and increase the scale of digital inclusion initiatives**, we should raise additional funds and plan for efficient implementation of important programs and services.

- **Initiative 4.5.1: Explore grant opportunities to keep devices and trainings up-to-date**
    - Digital inclusion program providers should continue to seek funding sources for digital inclusion. The City currently offers financial support to qualified program and service providers through the Grant for Technology Opportunities Program, but more and diverse resources are needed to stay relevant and continue to provide access to up-to-date trainings and technology. Public libraries are recognized nation-wide as key access points for community digital technology use and learning. Austin is fortunate to have a robust and well-connected public library system. Austin Public Libraries should explore grant opportunities to continue to improve upon their digital infrastructure and literacy training programs. The library system also has a unique opportunity to access funds that may be restricted to library-specific usage. Similar to libraries, the public health community has access to a large pool of health-specific funding that could be used to support strategic initiatives. The public health community should identify grants and partners, such as the St. David's Foundation, that could partner on this initiative to incent providers through targeted grant programs. The Library, public health, and other sectors should work with the City and local digital literacy providers to identify potential grants and build successful collaborations and applications. Fund recipients should also develop processes for measuring the impact of these funds on outcomes for organizations and the residents they serve.

    - Goal: To Understand the Need for Digital Literacy Training and Access via Reliable & Affordable Devices
    - Objective: Produce a report to identify grants that are obtained to improve customer access and experience and measure impact outcomes.
    - Primary Audiences: Program and service providers
    - Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Public Health

- **Initiative 4.5.2: Recruit private sponsorships and donors**
    - All Austin residents, institutions, and businesses stand to benefit from a community that invests in the skills, staff and tools to fully engage the entire community in our digital society. Digital inclusion empowers people to participate in conversations, events, and marketplaces that cannot be accessed without technology. Because of this, there is an opportunity to recruit financial support from the private donor community in Austin. Providers should work with the City and its partners to facilitate ongoing conversations with local businesses and institutions that may have an interest in publically supporting digital inclusion programs and services in libraries and elsewhere in the community. Increased funding expands the capacity for providers to provide high-quality services to all residents who need free training or access to devices.

        - Goal: To Understand the Need for Digital Literacy Training and Access via Reliable & Affordable Devices
        - Objective: Set a realistic fundraising goal with specific program and implementation plans associated with funds
        - Primary Audiences: Program and service providers
        - Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Nonprofits, Business & Entrepreneur

- **Initiative 4.5.3: Facilitate ongoing program evaluation for program and service providers**
    - Organizations that provide digital inclusion programming need regular and high-quality evaluation of digital inclusion program success. While most programs are designed with certain performance metrics in mind, there is opportunity to maximize the potential benefit to program participants by obtaining third party evaluation and recommendations for improvements. Austin has several local consultancy groups that provide program evaluation, in addition to one of the top MBA programs in the country. Digital inclusion service providers, with the support of the City, should seek pro bono program evaluation services from local consulting organizations or MBA students from local higher education institutions. Existing data collection and evaluation procedures and tools from top digital inclusion providers, like Austin Public Library, should be considered when recommending program evaluation processes. Those programs with the most successful evaluation processes should be strongly utilized and promoted to other organizations.

- Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
- Objective: Ensure every digital inclusion program has a plan and partner for program evaluation
- Primary Audiences: Digital inclusion program and service providers
- Key Players: City, Nonprofit, Community-Based Providers, Education & Higher Ed

- **Initiative 4.5.4: Manage Digital Inclusion Strategy implementation**
  - The City of Austin is dedicating new staff resources to support the implementation of the initiatives outlined in this plan. This staff member will track progress on each initiative outlined in this plan, in addition to pursuing any new opportunities that may become available. The staff member should report to key stakeholders on progress quarterly in preparation for an annual update. The staff member should also regularly update the Action Plan (see Supplementary Materials: Action Plan), which will be made publically available on the City's website to create accountability in the Digital Inclusion Strategy implementation process. The City's key partners may also need to explore options for recruiting additional staff, volunteers, technical support and funding to advance digital inclusion efforts through increased promotion, training, and evaluation.

    - Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
    - Objective: Quarterly progress reviews, annual update & ongoing Action Plan
    - Primary Audiences: All residents and community organizations
    - Key Players: City

- **Initiative 4.5.5: Create a representative accountability group to oversee and advise on programming**
  - As demonstrated throughout this plan, digital inclusion is a broad topic that touches diverse community areas and sectors. Therefore, it is essential that an interdisciplinary board be created as a knowledge base and advisory resource for digital inclusion strategic implementation. The board should include

representation from all sectors, including the City, across all geographic regions to ensure the entire community is represented.

- Goal: To Develop Relevancy & Advocacy Campaigns Within Specific Communities & Populations
- Objective: Identify community leaders willing to participate on this board and develop specific expectations for its contribution to digital inclusion
- Primary Audiences: All local geographic and service sectors
- Key Players: City, Community-Based Providers, Community, Education & Higher Ed, Nonprofit, Business & Entrepreneur

- **Initiative 4.5.6: Conduct Digital Inclusion Strategy Implementation Workshop**
  - The Digital Inclusion Strategy is a dynamic document that benefits from innovative ideas to create a digitally engaged society for all residents. The City and its sector-based partners should participate in an implementation workshop to brainstorm and plan for implementation of the initiatives outlined in this document. The ideas sparked from these sessions should be reflected in the Digital Inclusion Action Plan.

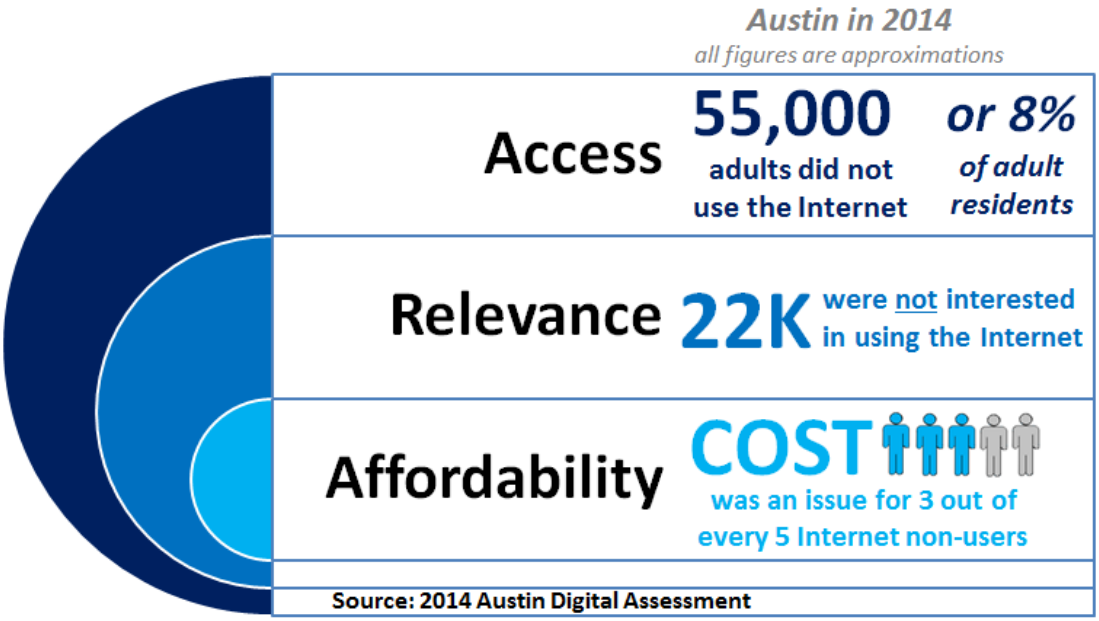
    - Goal: To Understand and Increase Usage of Digital and Communications Technology
    - Objective: Host a strategy implementation workshop to create implementation plans for initiatives identified in this document, and update the Action Plan accordingly
    - Primary Audiences: The City and its partners in digital inclusion
    - Key Players: City, Nonprofit, Community, Community-Based Providers

Chapter 5 | On the Horizon

Austin residents demonstrate every day what amazing, innovative, and creative possibilities can come from accessing and using digital and communications technology. This strategy envisions every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society.

The City of Austin is committed to digital inclusion for all of our residents by providing services such as technology literacy training and access for the community. These important opportunities foster the skills that enable people to succeed in a digital age through a variety of community technology programs.

And that's where you can take action.



This document lays out the City Council's resolution calling for a roadmap that addresses access and adoption of digital technology within Austin. It's critical that every one of our residents has access to digital and communications technology and understands technology and how it is relevant to their daily lives, whether to help their kids with their homework, look for jobs, access health information, or access online government information.

Austin has the resources, knowledge and expertise to address the challenges we face in bridging the digital divide. The real challenge is that we must connect what's available to what's needed, and determine how partners and organizations can work together to best address this digital divide. This plan will deploy and support community digital inclusion programs and services in partnership with other agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector.

The foundation of the Digital Inclusion Strategy is an evolving set of Taking Action: Initiatives centered on objectives to help overcome identified challenges. This vision includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society and is measured using the Austin Digital Assessment administered every three years. The Digital Inclusion Strategy is based upon the outcomes of a periodic residential technology survey that will evaluate and assess residents' access to technology resources and literacy and training programs

We all benefit from a connected Austin in which every citizen is able to use the available digital and communications technology to improve their lives. Both the public and private sectors now presented have a tremendous opportunity to enhance the way we operate and serve our communities through technological innovations. It is our connection to technology, creativity and collaboration that will allow Austin to continue to be the most livable city in the country.

Chapter 6 | Appendix

The City Council Resolution directed development of the Strategy to serve as a roadmap to address access and adoption of digital technology. Austin looks forward to continuing to work with the sectors identified in the plan across five action categories: Connect, Engage, Include, Integrate, and Coordinate for every resident to have access to the knowledge and resources needed to participate in our emerging digital society. The City is now working with its digital inclusion partner organizations and individuals across all sectors to execute these Initiatives. The following Digital Inclusion Action Plan is organized by Initiative and may be considered in monitoring and assessing success of each of the Strategy's initiatives over time:

6.1 | Digital Inclusion Action Plan Indicators

Connect	Engage	Include	Integrate	Coordinate
The City and its partners in digital inclusion should **embrace technological innovation** to help connect residents to programs and services.	The City and its partners recognize that **ongoing community engagement** is essential to emphasize the importance of having everyone connected.	The City and its partners endeavor to enhance the ability of digital inclusion program providers to serve local residents, and explore new ways to **advance digital inclusion.**	The City should work with its partners to **integrate** the Digital Inclusion Strategy with **community planning initiatives** across all sectors.	To coordinate strategic efforts & increase the scale of digital inclusion initiatives, we should **raise additional funds & plan for efficient implementation** of important programs & services.
Initiatives • 4.1.1 • 4.1.2 • 4.1.3 • 4.1.4	**Initiatives** • 4.2.4 • 4.2.5 • 4.2.6	**Initiatives** • 4.3.1 • 4.3.4 • 4.3.5	**Initiatives** • 4.4.2	**Initiatives** • 4.5.2 • 4.5.3
1 Program supporting this category	**12** Programs supporting this category	**5** Programs supporting this category	**4** Programs supporting this category	**3** Programs supporting this category

Key Audiences Served	Total FY 15 funds
Public housing residents Vulnerable populations At-risk youths Individuals with disabilities Educators Residents of key underserved areas Digital inclusion service providers	$397,774 Total $200,000 GTOPs + matching funds

Updated September 2015

6.2 | Council Resolution No. 20140320-056

RESOLUTION NO. 20140320-056

WHEREAS, the City of Austin vision includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology; and

WHEREAS, increasingly, digital engagement is a requirement to fully participate in many elements of society including education, health care, civic engagement, job opportunities and social connections; and

WHEREAS, "Building Digital Communities – Getting Started", developed by the International City/County Management Association, the W Technology and Social Change Group, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services with input from over 100 organizations and individuals, outlines a framework to foster digital inclusion including:

- Access Principles of Availability, Affordability, Design for Inclusion
- Adoption Principles of Public Access, Relevance, Digital Literacy, Consumer Safety; and

WHEREAS, Austin has several city and community resources that help to achieve a vision of digital inclusion, including support by the City of Austin through the Grant for Technology Opportunities (GTOPS), the newly created Innovation Office, and partnerships with local non-profits; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is currently undertaking a residential technology survey to evaluate and assess residents' access to technology resources and literacy and training programs and to identify unmet needs and barriers; and

WHEREAS, a Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan based upon the outcomes of the residential technology survey will allow the city and community to set goals, inventory resources, identify gaps in services and develop a roadmap to reach the adopted goals; and

WHEREAS, the City can leverage assets, such as fiber networks, to deploy/support community digital inclusion programs and services in the most needed communities in partnership with other agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector; and

WHEREAS, the City works with the University of Texas at Austin in a joint effort to examine the digital divide in Austin communities, in which UT performs the data collection and analysis while the City sets research goals and oversees implementation; and

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2014, the Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission (CTTC) created a working group on the residential technology survey and would be a key participant in developing a Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to work with CTTC and other relevant Commissions, community organizations and stakeholders to develop a Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan to address access and adoption of digital technology, to serve as a guiding document for providing digital inclusion opportunities in effecting the City's goals to ensure all Austin residents are served; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to present the recommended Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan to the CTTC, the Emerging Technology and Telecommunications Council Committee and the City Council for consideration by October 23, 2014.

ADOPTED: March 20, 2014 **ATTEST:**

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

Digital Inclusion

City of Austin

Digital Inclusion Team Contact

Rondella Hawkins, TARA Officer

Rondella.Hawkins@austintexas.gov

John Speirs, Program Coordinator

John.Speirs@austintexas.gov

512.974.3510

Sharla Chamberlain, Program Specialist

Sharla.Chamberlain@austintexas.gov

512.974.7676

Kirby Aull, Community Engagement Associate (VISTA)

Kirby.Aull@austintexas.gov

512.974.1463

austintexas.gov/digitalinclusion

@COADigInclusion

digital.inclusion@austintexas.gov

512.974.2999

DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

CITY OF AUSTIN

Digital Inclusion Strategy 2014