

NWX-DOC-NTIA-OTIA

Moderator: Emy Tseng
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Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. All lines will be in listen only mode for the duration of today's call. I'd now like to turn the call over to Emy Tseng. You may begin.

Emy Tseng: Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for Broadband USA's monthly webinar on broadband topics of interest, policymakers, decision makers, practitioners, and consumers. I'm Emy Tseng and I'm a senior Policy Specialist at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and I'll be moderating the webinar today along with my colleague, Karen Hanson, who is the Manager of Partnerships and Interagency Affairs, and she also helped organize this webinar.

Our topic today is innovating funding solutions for digital inclusion programs. We'll be hearing from three different organizations that fund and support digital inclusion through their grant programs. We'll learn why and how these funders support digital inclusion, what criteria they use to select programs to fund, and advice for both those seeking funding and those looking to establish their own digital inclusion fund.

Our presenters today are Leon Wilson, the Chief of Digital Innovation and Chief Information Officer at the Cleveland Foundation, Rahman Khan, Vice President for Corporate Social Responsibility at Charter Communications, and John Speirs, who is the Digital Inclusion Program Manager for the city of Austin, Texas.

Before we begin, I would like to point out a few housekeeping items. The panelists will answer the questions after the end of all the presentations. Please use the question box on the right hand side of the screen to submit any questions or comments you may have. Also, the presentation along with the transcript and recording will be available on the Broadband USA website within seven days of this webinar under events Broadband USA webinar archives. The website also has many more useful materials and resources about broadband deployment, adoption, and digital inclusion.

Next slide. First up, I'd like to -- our first presenter is Leon Wilson, again, the Chief of Digital Innovation and Chief Information Officer for the Cleveland Foundation. Leon oversees the foundation's Digital Excellence and grant making strategy that is geared towards building a stronger, more equitable and inclusive digital community and elevating Greater Cleveland's position as a major regional smart community and technology innovation hub.

Additionally, Leon is part of an executive committee that leads the foundation information technology services department, focusing on strategic and traffic light use of technology and data within the foundation. Leon has over 25 years of experience in the field of information technology and previously served as the senior director of technology and data engagement for the Michigan Nonprofit Association. So take it away, Leon.

Leon Wilson: Great, Emy, thank you and thank you all for joining on the call. I'm really excited and I'm really extremely excited to be on a webinar as part of a panelist where we have philanthropy, private corporation, and also the public sector engagement. I think that's very transformational and informative.

So, if you can go ahead and go to the next slide. So I'm supposed to be talking about why should a foundation -- what role should a foundation be playing as it pertains to digital innovation and innovative ways we go about funding that particular endeavor. And as the slide that I have before you shows, when you think about the role of a foundation and definitely more specifically a community foundation, we're all about improving the quality of life for residents that we fund and that we serve.

And the argument that I continuously make within the foundation and outside the foundation that when you unpack that, when we talk about digital inclusion, we're not talking about a completely distinct effort that requires its own distinct funding at times. We're talking about pretty much the same issues but looking at it through a different lens, looking at things through the lens of digital innovation, digital equity inclusion that would be if you're funding literacy efforts, if you're funding education, health and human services, homelessness, poverty. You name it as a foundation and a lot of these are core funding areas or focus areas for a lot of foundations.

There is room to look at it from a different lens when you look -- as far as supporting digital inclusion and the way that digital inclusion can amplify and supplement the efforts that any foundation is performing. Next slide. Here at the Cleveland Foundation, when we try to look at that from digital inclusion and why are we so concerned and interested in building a stronger, more equitable digital community, it really wrestles on these major impact areas whereas we're trying to improve the employability of our residents.

When you look at most of jobs of today require some form of digital skills. Increasing educational opportunities, when you consider that, when you look at the digitalization of a classroom, what are we doing to make sure that our kids in K through 12 are digitally connected and be able to support employer role, and how it's affecting their digital education opportunities. And when you look in adults, in young adults, and what are they doing as far as increasing their educational opportunity through online learning, additional coursework and things of that nature to improve their employability as they move upwardly and more mobile.

What are we doing to improve Cleveland's economic competitiveness as a region by being a more digitally literate, digitally intelligent, more connected community? And then finally, as I go back to the first slide that I talked about as a community foundation we're concerned about improving the quality of life for residents throughout our grant making area. My job is to challenge us to look at that through the lens of technology and digital inclusion. Next slide please.

Now, with that, how I approach that -- and since we're also talking about innovative funding or innovation -- as the by default chief innovation officer here at the Cleveland Foundation, although we really don't have one, I challenge all of our program directors and program officers to not look at what we're trying to do in digital inclusion as this disconnected effort. It is leveraging the existing tools and resources that we have but in more and newer ways, basically through our funding efforts, through our community leadership or even when we're looking at developing assets development. These are all some of the core components that any foundation have at their disposal to really do good work in their respective grant making areas, i.e.

traditional grant making, community leadership, the role that they play in the community, and asset development.

Next slide. But more importantly, when I try to look at this in a more holistic integrated way, when I chat with my program officers and program directors in education, youth development, arts, economic development, workforce development, and health and human services, and the list goes on and on, what I try to look at what can we do through our existing investments to amplify that investment. So the example that I always use is that if we're funding hundreds of thousands of dollars if not millions of dollars inside the classroom to help improve the educational opportunity for our kids, what are we doing when that kid leaves the classroom and goes home to a house that may not have access to a computer, may not have internet access? How are we supporting the full experience of that child so that we're making sure that they have more continuous evolution of educational opportunities both inside the classroom and outside that classroom?

That's not looking at it as an either/or but looking at it as an and solution. So how are we supporting? How are we educating them about opportunities that one of our other presenters from Charter Communications, with their lifeline program, how are we supporting those particular endeavors, coupled with the investment that we're already doing so that we're amplifying our existing work, not piecemealing it.

Next slide please. So how do we go about doing this at the Cleveland Foundation? Well, or any foundation, again, speaking as the representative for the foundation community. Well, there's always our traditional grant making that we do, direct grant making where we're granting those local nonprofits that are actively addressing digital inclusion. But to do that, you need to as a foundation, need to learn who's doing what in your grant making

area, especially if this area is new to you. You probably already know the local food banks who's dealing with food desert. You already know the organization that's working on education and after school programming. But who's working in your area in this particular space? I would challenge you to get out there and learn. And they may be some of your existing grantees. They may not.

But also, partner with your existing grantees where digital inclusion work can be embedded within their existing programmatic work. And when I talk about embedded, what does that look like? If you're funding your local boys and girls club, if you're funding a local Salvation Army, things of that nature, well, if we're really trying to promote digital inclusion, you can look at that through STEM. You can look at that to ensure that the youth at the local boys and girls club have access to computers so they can improve their keyboarding skills, their safe cyber bullying skills, things of that nature, smart internet searching and searching and using the internet as a resource as opposed to just for gaming and things of that nature.

So how can you amplify the work of your existing grant makers to support digital inclusion and embed that into your traditional grant making. It's also from another way I see where a lot of foundations play an instrumental role in this is funding through fellowships, internship, AmeriCorps staffing, looking for alternative digital inclusion related positions where your local housing authority, where your local library system might be able to provide more digital literacy training through additional supplemental resources, through fellowships.

A number of foundations are beginning to recruit technologists into their program area, into their grant making area to help inform their program offices and program directors about how to look at a particular grant through

the lens of technology or through the lens of digital inclusion, or just hiring someone onboard. But again, through alternative staffing you can look at that.

Another way that foundations and the philanthropic community can play a role or from an innovative fund making is through impact investing, which is a big topic in the philanthropic sector. It's been around for a while and it's continued to be a more favorable, prominent space. What are we doing to look at how can we leverage our program related investment, our PRI to support innovation, digital inclusion as opposed to our non-traditional grant making -- as opposed to our traditional grant making efforts.

What are we doing to -- sometimes we don't know what we don't know but we have the resources to put out competitive grant challenges like the MacArthur 100 million grant that they put out there that challenge some community issue, some systemic issue. But now, we want to tackle it through the lens of digital inclusion, digital equity inclusion that is, or XPrizes that you might see.

These are innovative ways where beyond your traditional grant making funding to your local, again, Goodwill and things of that nature, you're trying to challenge the community to come up with innovative ideas and you can use your financial resources, your funding resources to report that. Next slide.

And then two other areas that I would put out there is indirectly by if you know that there are organizations in your community, grassroots organizations, literacy programs that really want to support digital inclusion, digital equity inclusion, digital literacy, things of that nature, look at sponsoring some awareness activities, some convening, some forum, some get together to really help educate the rest of the community about the importance as it pertains to digital inclusion in your respective local community.

Funding research work, funding studies and reports about how bad is the situation in your respective grant making area so that you can be more informed to what you want to do as far as funding specific issues to help you target where you fund. And then finally, capacity building, that is funding cohorts, funding collaborative partnerships. There are a few different groups, I'm part of some that are looking to bring different organizations from different communities together to listen and learn from each other.

Recently, we had Living Cities that funded a cohort for two to three years around digital inclusion and open data civic tech. I know the Knight Foundation is involved in some of this work as well, as well as some other private and public foundations. So what can you do to introduce residents or agencies from your local community and connect them to other cohorts that are trying to learn from a capacity building.

And then finally, educating your own internal staff, your own internal program directors and program office. Get out there and go to some of these conferences and workshops that are really trying to amplify and elevate the importance and relevance of digital inclusion throughout the country. A couple of great organizations, obviously sitting on webinars such as this, but you have groups like the National Digital Inclusion Alliance that host an annual conference, as well as other organizations like NTN's NPC Conference.

There are a number of different organizations, and conferences, and forums both nationally and regionally that are supporting this effort and it would behoove you to get your program staff out there and your other staff out there to listen and learn from others.

So with that, hopefully those are helpful tips and pointers, and I'd be more than happy to answer any other questions from a philanthropic perspective about the importance, and relativeness, and the roles that you can play. Thank you.

Emy Tseng: Thank you so much, Leon, for that perspective. Next slide. Our next speaker is Rahman Khan, who is the Vice President for Corporate Social Responsibility at Charter Communications Spectrum. Rahman leads Charter Communications' flagship philanthropic and community engagement program and sets direction for how employees volunteer. He also internally spearheads the company support for disaster relief. Before Charter's acquisition of Time Warner Cable, Rahman served as Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Time Warner Cable, where he worked to attract, retain, engage, and develop a diverse staff. He also partnered closely with sales and marketing teams to attract diverse communities to the company's product and services.

Previously, Rahman founded the Good Works Media Group where he produced and hosted a PBS television show in North and South Carolina about giving back to the community and was the architect of the Good Works Youth Awards. All right, thank you. Take it away.

Rahman Khan: So thank you and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to share briefly about the work that we're doing here at Charter Communications. So I want to talk today about our spectrum digital education grant program. Next slide. So this is basically for those people who aren't as familiar with Charter Communications, we're in 41 states, about 25 million customers, a Fortune 100 company.

And basically, what we provide is broadband communication services. We're the second largest broadband provider and third largest video service provider.

And people may see us by the name Charter Communications or sometimes by our brand name with Spectrum. So many times, on advertisements, on television and different places you'll see our brand name as Spectrum. So if you see either one of those, it's the same company. And we've listed just a few of our branded products and services that you might see around Spectrum TV, Spectrum Internet and Voice, Spectrum Businesses and Enterprise both deal with B2B, business to business customers. Spectrum Reach is our advertising sales arm as well as Spectrum Networks where you'll see TV networks and sports networks like New York One, as well as our Sports Net networks like LA Sports Net, Spectrum Sports Net in Los Angeles. So just give a quick snapshot of our overall company.

Next slide. So within our corporate social responsibility group, we run two major initiatives. One of them is Spectrum Housing Assist, where we work within neighborhoods and local communities to improve homes and communities and help with critical home repairs. But the one we wanted to speak about today is called Spectrum Digital Education, one we just launched early last year in 2017.

Next slide. So Spectrum Digital Education started with the overall commitment of a million dollars so support digital education and we support this in three different ways. One is financial support to nonprofits, which we'll talk a little bit more about today, which also helps to help nonprofits educate communities on the importance of broadband focus on families and seniors. We also provide PSAs to run on our Charter Spectrum systems and then direct engagement by holding webinars and workshops in local communities to help educate people about digital literacy, digital education, and areas that help people learn more about broadband period.

Next slide please. So why do we do this? Why do we decide to focus on digital education? There's lots, and lots, and lots of great areas we could have focused on but we wanted something that was going to be relevant to our business and to our community needs, and we just looked at some research. The research we saw from the Pew Research Center basically said that 25% of Americans don't have broadband in the home, which is a pretty substantial chunk, about a quarter of people.

But then we started looking at factors like age, and ethnicity, and income, and education, and certain geographies and that number even goes higher. So there's communities across the country that have 40%, 50% lack of broadband in the home, and some people, for financial reasons and for other reasons, people don't have it. But we said we can do something to try to address this.

Again, it's in line with what our business looks like and what our business focuses on, as well as what the community needs. Next slide. So what did we do? We created a grant and this grant, we said we want to help organizations do the work. We didn't want to create something on our own. We wanted organizations who are already out there, probably like many of the couple of hundred we have on the phone now, who are already out there serving local communities. We didn't want to do it ourselves. We wanted to work with someone who was already on the ground working with local residents.

The only caveats we had was that they had served in a local Spectrum market and must be a 501(c)3 organization. We created some criteria. We created a whole process around what we were looking for and it had to focus on families and/or seniors. Must be able to report certain metrics to us like the number of people impacted, the population served, the demographics. We wanted it to be in diverse communities. We wanted it to be an existing program, not starting something from scratch and already working with a

diverse population. Meet the unique needs of its community and align with the nonprofit's mission. And be lasting and meaningful. We didn't want something that wouldn't be impactful or just something simple but something that was going to be around for a while, or at least conceptually, people could still see the benefits of months and months from now.

Next slide please. So we created a landing page. We created an overall link and page, developed it from scratch and really put together an overall timeline, FAQs, other important information and data that help people to learn about it. So we created this page. We sent it out into all kinds of folks in the media, groups like Leon talked about, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, Broadband USA, thank you guys for helping to get the word out too. And we sent it out all across the country hoping we can get maybe 25 or 30 people would buy into giving some of the support we wanted to give and make a difference in our communities in the digital education space.

Next slide. So what happened? So we actually received 207 applications. They were all across the country in 32 states. We had over \$6.5 million requested from these organizations. And we wanted to take it slow. We decided not to reward the whole million the first time out. As I said, we're just going to see what's out there. Whittle it down with the committee, several groups of approvals within the company and finally landing on 17 recipients that we awarded almost \$400,000 to.

And these were large organizations. Some of them were Urban League affiliates and League of United Latin American Citizens, smaller independent nonprofits and all kinds of organizations. And they range in size, scope, geography, the locations where they are within the local communities, whether they were connected to other organizations. So we looked at all of these different types of factors in effect and again, went back to our criteria,

and said let's find the best organization which we think could do what they're asking them to do and they were awarded these funds and all of them have received their funds and out there working hard to get it done now.

Next slide. So we wanted to offer just a little bit of advice to nonprofit organizations. This is for our specific grant, some things that we've learned but also just overall, for any grant that's being applied for. And again, we had a team of people who were reading through each of these applications. Again, read the application thoroughly and the FAQs. It basically tells you what you need to know to write the application. We basically laid out the blueprint and made sure enough information was out there.

We also encourage people to follow directions carefully. I think we had something that said use 500 words or less. There were a few folks who wanted to add a little bit more than that and it just wouldn't fit. And it just took more time away from them and it detracted away from the good things that they were doing.

And don't add extra things, attachments, unless it's allowed. These are just some of the simple directions. Use the designated email address for questions. Some people did that. They asked questions before they submitted the application. They looked to us for some guidance and we couldn't -- we didn't want to show favoritism but they asked the question and that may or may not have been clear on the FAQ. We clarified and answered those.

Have someone read over your application for grammatical and syntax errors. This seems to be a simple thing but you'd probably be surprised at the number of syntax errors or sentences that didn't make sense, or grammar errors that were in the applications that could have been easily fixed and adjusted. And

again, we don't want it to take away from the actual work that's being done but when you see those kind of things, it puts a little downer on it.

Don't significantly alter your program for the money. So there were lots of really good programs, but sometimes we could tell these programs were brand new. They weren't ones that were in the nonprofit scope. We could always go to the website and see what they already were doing.

But we want people to do what they already do. We just were trying to support and help. So don't follow the money is what I'm saying. Do what you do best and we would love to support you as you're doing what you do best. And then finally, just follow the deadlines and review the deadlines and follow those carefully. We found that there were some groups that submitted the application. We had a six week process. There were some that submitted two weeks before. They just had a better shot. We had a chance to review it. If they had questions to ask about it, we would already have it in our hand. If they went back and saw something that wasn't clear, they were able to go back and be able to change that and find something that may or may not be right. And we would answer questions. We would be clear. Like someone would say, well, can I attach this? No, you can't attach this. Or is this the right frame or the right thing. We couldn't tell you specifically but we can give you some guidance around that.

So these are just some simple tips, advice, we would like to give the nonprofit organizations and as we look to support other organizations in the future. I think we're on the final slide. So our next steps. So we are still planning to distribute additional funds this year. We haven't started that process yet. It will be sometime this summer but we want people to start preparing. Feel free to ask questions to us now. If you're interested in joining the email list where we can tell you exactly when it's coming out, exactly the deadlines, the dates,

other broadband and digital downturn tips, please do that. Please also visit our website that continues to give you additional information and updates. This is important to us. It's not going anywhere. Spectrum digital education is something that is valuable from our CEO on down. We also have an important program called Spectrum Internet Assist that provides low cost broadband for residents in low income communities.

These things are important. We see this as a valuable service and we want to continue to communicate what we're doing to the public and get the support and the collaboration from our nonprofit friends.

Emy Tseng: Thank you so much, Rahman and that's exciting news about the second iteration of your grant program. So our next speaker is John Speirs who is the Digital Inclusion Program Manager for the city of Austin, Texas. John manages and administers the city's implementation of its digital inclusion strategic plan by coordinating with local organizations, commissions, and public and private entities that are involved with digital and communications technology.

John also provides contract management for a portfolio of about \$400,000 in community technology services, including public access and digital literacy skills training and the city's grant for technology opportunities program, which we'll hear about shortly. In addition, John administers the Google Fiber Community Connections program, including the annual reporting and program monitoring, and facilitates strategic efforts with the Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission to identify opportunities to maximize program effectiveness.

Next slide. All right, and John, why don't you take it away.

John Speirs: Thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of the great work that is going on here in the Austin community, representing the city of Austin and out community partners. Next slide please.

Starting out with what is the need, what is it that we're solving. One of the very fortunate opportunities that we have here in Austin as a municipal organization is to fund an annual residential technology study currently in partnership with the University of Texas at Austin Moody School of Communications to evaluate and assess resident's access to technology resources and literacy and training programs so that we can identify unmet needs and barriers.

And you can see here some of the striking visualizations of where our home internet access and internet users are by ZIP Code. The darker shaded areas are those that have a higher use with the lower shaded areas having lower use and home internet access. Next slide please.

And so this is some of the further detail of the residential technology study information from our 2014 assessment. We are working with our University of Texas at Austin to deploy a 2018 study to 11,000 randomly sampled residents in our community to understand the same access adoption, but also in this iteration of the study, the potential gains for those residents that are connected to the internet and have home computers as far as what sort of life outcomes they are able to gain from that.

Next slide. So that need is something that is really demonstrated by the residential technology study. This current formulation of the residential technology study has been something that has been implemented by the city every three years since 2011. Prior to that, when the city of Austin had franchising authority with its internet service and cable providers, that study

was done on an ad hoc basis to really understand what residents' access to information and communications technology was. And with that, we hope to start to understand what it is that we're solving for. And as a municipal organization, we serve in the role of conveners, collaborators, and coordinators. And with the city's implementation and adoption of a digital inclusion strategic plan in November of 2014 that really helped to set forth some of the core principles that we were really prioritizing being able to help our community partners work together to understand some of the problem framing that went into what those barriers were.

And you can see here that when we're talking about a core population to be served that 92% of our residents in Austin that were 18 to 65 in age identified themselves as internet users, while 55,000 adult Austinites identified themselves as non-users. And when we -- as Mayor Adler in this community always says -- one of our notations here is that we are known as America's most economically segregated city by a study that was conducted by the Pew Institute a few years ago.

And as he always says, that's the number one list we don't want to be on. And when you start to understand the granular demographics that go into the core population of those residents that are not using the internet to attain whatever life outcome they would like to that there's a tremendous opportunity there for educational fulfillment, for employment skills to be provided to that resident base, and to also understand the barriers that go into why those residents don't use the internet.

Here in Austin, the number one reason is the expense as far as the barrier. Half have privacy concerns and the next bucket is 42% had no one to teach them. That availability of trainers and assistants, and the wraparound services is very important and two in five just not interested. That notion of

engagement and relevancy to those populations is very important. Next slide please.

The city has administered a grants for technology opportunities program since 2001 and so this grant program provides organizations with funding to support human capital and also equipment to support digital literacy training programs, and that is something that we are currently funded at \$200,000 annually with grants between \$10,000 and \$25,000 for capital and operating expenses. And that includes a requirement that we have one-to-one matching funds. And the ability for organizations to demonstrate the leveraging opportunities from additional private foundation partners and philanthropies is very important, and the ability to also utilize volunteer hours as far as leveraged funds is something that we really advocate for our community.

Since its inception, GTOPS funding of a little over \$1.8 million has been provided. With the matching funds that comes out to about \$6.5 million that has been invested within Austin for our digital divide efforts from GTOPS. And the GTOPS grant is now supported by our digital inclusion strategic plan so that the ability for us to prioritize those programs that are supporting the increase in internet usage that are addressing our barriers to digital inclusion and those that have demonstrated a need for digital literacy training are those initiatives that GTOPS currently prioritizes.

We appoint a volunteer grant review committee panel to help review and recommend those organizations that are funded every year and we are actually in the middle of our grant review cycle for this year. Next slide please. We wanted to highlight some of the impact that is made here in Austin with GTOPS funds. So this is an example of a client here in our community and this was from our Goodwill careers and technology program. And this is something where careers and technology offered by Goodwill Industries using

the grant for technology opportunities funds provides Linux, Microsoft Suite, PC technician, A Plus and Network Plus certifications for low income individuals. And the core services that this program offers is to assess in a work based learning and placement environment case management and retention services, and connecting those disadvantaged individuals to career paths in IT. And it's really something that the target population are those that are living in poverty, undereducated, and facing other barriers to employment.

As many on this call know, Austin is really a prosperous community with abundant jobs available and many employers moving here. However, the opportunities to also train our local residents to get those technology jobs is a priority of the digital inclusion program. And the goal with the careers in technology program is to close the technology skills gap for low income individuals providing hard skill certifications and to prepare them to enter a career field in the 21st century.

So you can see here on the slide that Jerome is one of the students of that program facing homelessness, no home internet or computer, and training to obtain a computer hardware certification. He currently experiences a three to four bus hour commute to class and his quote is "You have to try and if you give up trying that's when things start to get bad." And so this is something where over 7,600 clients have been served since 2015 with GTOPS funds.

Next slide please. And that is something that one of the initiatives for our digital empowerment community of Austin, who are the community practitioners organizations and nonprofits, educational institutions that are helping the city to implement the digital inclusion strategic plan are spearheading efforts to facilitate networking among digital inclusion interested organizations, really setting forth that front door to co-participation and setting the city's digital inclusion strategy. And really encouraging the

development of nonprofits working towards digital inclusion. The design thinking behind all of this is really providing the core resources and training to those organizations doing that work so that they can be successful and really understanding how they can better articulate, evaluate, and develop their programs serving not only client needs but fulfilling the ability for them to leverage additional funding opportunities from not only the city of Austin but from private foundations and others rendering the opportunity for them to increase in scale their programs, and to explore opportunities to heighten our vision.

We have a number of ecosystems, as we call it here in Austin, that are doing work within the digital inclusion field, and that is something that there is a strong alignment to a lot of our workforce development initiatives, a lot of the STEM education initiatives, and a lot of the private sector efforts with regard to the prototyping and the opportunities that those testing of those prototypes can yield to our underserved segments of the community. And really, the implementation of the digital inclusion strategic plan is a truly community effort and the role of the city is just to help collaborate and convene, and again, coordinate those, but really, the opportunity for us to empower our community practitioners that are really the front lines of this is one of our goals. And we do that through the resources and funding provided by GTOPS and through our other programs that we administer, including our Google Fiber Community Connections Program, and our Public Access Computing contract.

So with that, thank you for the opportunity to highlight the great work that we're doing here in Austin.

Emy Tseng: Thank you so much and thank you, Leon, Rahman, and John for your presentations. We'll now go into the question and answer section of our

webinar and I will turn it over to Karen Hanson who will facilitate this session. And I see that we've already received questions on the question box, but please enter more. So thank you, Karen.

Karen Hanson: Thank you, Emy and thanks to all of our great presenters. I'm going to ask questions that have already come in. I'll start with Leon and this question asks you to put on the hat of a digital inclusion program and the question is, how should someone who's with a digital inclusion program approach their local community foundation for funding? How should they position their work and what kind of information do you think they should look to provide to have the best chance of success?

Leon Wilson: Karen, great question and thank you for the question however put it out there. I get that question a lot and the analogy that I use is the Jerry Maguire approach where Jerry is saying help me help you. And what I mean by that is every foundation has their core focus areas that they fund, be it education, be it hunger, homelessness, you name it. I would challenge you, if I was wearing that hat as a digital inclusion provider, is to think about how can you help them in that particular space. How can you help them with their social mission because at the end of the day, every foundation, we don't do the work. You're not going to see us out there building homes for Habitat for Humanity. You're not going to see us out there actually teaching and all that sort of stuff.

We provide the funding and the air underneath your wings for you as providers to do the work. So how are you helping us with our mission to help you. So if you can connect the dot as to the role and the impact and influence that digital inclusion might play for that particular focus area, if we come with some potential numbers about -- and helping educate that funder on how it would benefit them to, again, amplify their work by looking at digital inclusion as another cog in their wheel, another piece in their puzzle to really

strengthen their existing grant making effort as opposed to treating it as a one-off endeavor. That's what I would recommend.

Karen Hanson: Thank you, that's great advice and it sound like you've had a lot of experience with that, so we appreciate that. The next question I'm going to pose to Rahman and I'll go in order of the panelists who we heard from. We had some questions with some folks wanting more information on your program. How can someone know if they're eligible and have you established priorities for your grant funding in certain markets or is it the same across the country?

Rahman Khan: Thank you, Karen. Great question. No, we haven't established any specific markets. We take requests from anyone around the country that's in one of our markets. The requirement is that they have to sit in a certain market, or they have to serve people in our Spectrum market. And the way to find that out is if you go to our home page, spectrum.com, and there's a place on the home page that you can put in your street address and your ZIP Code. And it's just basically the way we market to customers, but if you go in there and tell your street address and ZIP code, and once you click the button, it will tell you whether or not you're in a Spectrum footprint. So we can serve you based upon that.

Karen Hanson: Awesome, thank you. Now, for John, we have a lot of questions for you about how Austin was able to incorporate money into your city budget for your program for the GTOP grants. So we have questions, for example, is the money coming from tax revenue or is it coming from telecom fees, or what's the source of the money for your grant program?

John Speirs: So a little bit of background here. In 2001, when the grant was first funded with a recommendation by the Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission, that Commission is appointed by the

Austin City Council. And at that time, there was a lot of activity in Austin with emerging technologies and private sector organizations growing and scaling those opportunities.

The city has been committed to digital divide issues since 1995 when it provided seed funding to help start the nonprofit known as Austin Freenet. Many of you are familiar with that organization and that was really an ability for the city to help address those residents that did not have computers or the ability to learn or navigate the internet to address this new thing known as a city website that was launched in 1994.

So with all of that, there was a strong community presence and a very engaged representation on that commission to continue to prioritize the necessary resources within city government to address the digital divide. So it was really the leadership of the commission to spearhead the vision of the grant for technology opportunities program that is currently funded within the city's general fund. It is not something that is an allocation from any sort of franchise revenue or tax and it is really embedded within the city's general fund. And that is something that was a priority of the commission to support the implementation of that program and it is very important for us to continue to be good stewards of that funding by continuing to report and generate the necessary impact of those funds and the number of clients and residents that are served through the trainings that are offered.

Karen Hanson: Well, it sounds like Austin could do the country a great service if you could get other cities to follow your lead. So hopefully, those who are listening can take some of your lessons learned and apply them in your communities. So I'm going to go back up to Leon with another question that we have for you and it's a bit of a potential paradox as a funder. You mentioned the notion of embedding requests for digital inclusion funding into other types of requests

or other types of programs that might have funding available. And yet, I think communities often hear from funders that they are expected to stick within the parameters of the funding that's available.

How would you advise communities to approach that little paradox?

Leon Wilson: Thanks, Karen. I think what you're implying is where from the funder's standpoint, we're not trying to fund everything under the sun or turn the grant into a junk drawer where everything is included in there and you kind of dilute the effects and the impact of that grant. Again, I keep going back to squarely identifying where digital inclusion can play an impactful role in an existing grant. So I'm not advocating for putting a square peg in a round hole just because all you have is a square peg and you want to do something with it, and you're trying to find it a home.

I'm saying where you authentically are seeing an opportunity to push the envelope just a bit more than your run of the mill funding. Again, I go back to what we have here at the Cleveland Foundation where we're doing a lot of funding in our K through 12 and we want to prepare them for job literacy. Everybody is talking about STEM and so forth. But at the end of the day, when a lot of our kids and the classroom is being digitized and how they get their homework and how parents have to go online to look up material and do all that kind of stuff. If we're not trying to at least put a placeholder in there to address the digital inclusion impact of that or how that is influencing that grant.

It does have to be authentic. It does have to have a natural fit and not just trying to cram something else in there because you're trying to just fund something under the umbrella of digital inclusion. Definitely take the time to find those funding opportunities and it might require a series of conversations

and education because not a lot of foundations get this just yet. And so it might require more time on the education and awareness and influence before you get to might this be something you'd be willing to fund, how can we support you, how can you park an additional 10% of the grant dollars to go towards this particular effort. That's what I would say.

Karen Hanson: Thank you and that reminds me of a previous webinar you spoke on where you mentioned how important it is to build the relationship with the funder before you ask for the funding. And I think that gets me to my next question for Rahman, actually. As I asked Leon to put on the hat of a digital inclusion program looking for money, I would actually ask you the same question but perhaps what advice would you give to a local program that's trying to build relationships and look for funding from their local or regional representatives? Do you have any particular advice that you would offer them as they try to help get more support for what they're doing?

Rahman Khan: Our program is run out of our national office. However, there are individual communication teams and government affairs specialists in respective markets as well as just employees from all parts of our business in respective locations. One of the things that we typically ask on our applications, whether it's this grant for digital education or for any application, is basically if you have a relationship or if you were recommended by someone else or if you know someone else that is involved.

And so we give you the opportunity to tell us that. And that's basically because if you have a standing relationship, and there were a couple of people, at least that I remember that mentioned that in their application, it actually helps because it shows that it's not a brand new type of relationship. It's an ongoing continued collaboration and opportunity for working together. So if there are people in your local markets that you have a relationship with, please

indicate that. And if you're looking for someone. If you email us at that email address we provided earlier, we'd be glad to put you in touch with some of our local communications or government relations teams in those local markets that you can talk to more about respective projects we have going on in those certain areas.

Karen Hanson: That's great. Thank you for that offer and I'll just remind everybody that we will be making all of these slides available along with the transcript and the recording seven days after the webinar. If you can go back to our website and look for the slides where those email addresses can be found. And now I have another question. I think this is probably best suited for John, but if Leon or Rahman have ideas, please chime in.

We have a question that asks, we're looking for advice on job placement after digital training. Could you suggest partner organizations or anything else?

John Speirs: That is a question that is something that's generated by our community partners all too often and really one of the opportunities that we have been working through here that I can speak to on this call is actually a prototype in which we are helping to take the information from those clients within training programs, mostly A Plus, C Plus, and Net Plus certifications, and really compile a list to then submit to Dell.

Dell has an entry level IT support specialist position that they have been recruiting from the client base that is being trained from those very programs that are provided funding from GTOPS. So that is something that we are helping to facilitate some additional connection to the private sector here in Austin and that is really one of the number one pieces of feedback that we hear is the abundant opportunities that exist to connect those individuals into job placement or even to get them exposed to interviewing experience, to help

them understand what it is that they can present themselves in that setting with and that is really a continuing objective for us to really further develop and scale what that current prototype with Dell is to additional private sector organizations.

But I think that this engagement with private sector from the nonprofits that are doing that work is very important and that is really a full-time job and capability but organizations like the city are helping to streamline that in some regard so that we can ensure that all of our partners in the community, whether they're a grassroots organization with a small amount of funding can do that or a large scale program.

Karen Hanson: That's great and it actually reminds me that I want to share another idea for the audience, which is to take a look at a funding guide, a federal funding guide for broadband programs that Broadband USA has published annually for the last couple of years. It has information about sources of funding for both digital literacy as well as infrastructure and you'll be able to find the link on our website.

And I think another innovative funding opportunity or potential partnership could be with the local American Job Center, which is the former one stop shops which are funded through the Department of Labor and the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. They might have resources that could be leveraged such as public access centers and there is a link that I'll share using the chat function to find the local one stop as a potential partner.

I'm curious, John, do you partner with your local American Job Center?

John Speirs: Here in Austin, I'm not aware of any partnerships from the City of Austin organization but I am sure that one of our community nonprofits has a partnership with them.

Karen Hanson: Okay. Well, that's just a potential tip.

Rahman Khan: Let me just add too, wanted to put a plug in for our company as well. We are one of those private sector companies and we're always looking for people who are technologically savvy, and you can go to jobs.spectrum.com to look for those roles as well. We have about 93,000 employees now and we're looking to hire another 15,000 to 20,000 over the next couple of years. So we're always looking for folks like that. We consider ourselves a broadband a cable company but also a technology company.

So people that come to us with those skills already have a leg up and that's the kind of folks we're looking for. So please go to our site and check us out.

Karen Hanson: Excellent. Thank you so much. We're getting close to the top of the hour and we want to respect everyone's time. Do any of the panelists have any parting words they'd like to share before we close out?

Leon Wilson: I'll just wrap up by saying for the last question, as a foundation not only did we bring the funding dollars where you talk about trying to help people get jobs or land jobs, but because of our leadership role and the position that we play in the community, we're the ones that can also bring the corporations to the table and understand the funding that we're doing in workforce development and digital inclusion, and why they need to play an instrumental role in partnering with the local foundations community to help increase the employability and make all of our residents employed and have meaningful wage jobs.

So it's all about connecting the dots and it's all about helping the foundations and the philanthropic community in your respective city better understand the relevance and importance that digital inclusion plays in their backyard.

Rahman Khan: I'll just say thank you for the opportunity and looking forward to connecting with the nonprofits over the next year or two and continuing to spread the message of digital inclusion and education.

Karen Hanson: All right, well, thank you to all of our panelists, to Emy Tseng, my colleague, all of you in the audience for the great questions that you raised today. As a reminder, the presentation from today's webinar will be available on our website within seven days. Broadband USA is available to assist with technical assistance, to help expand broadband capacity and promote digital inclusion and broadband adoption. For more information, please email us at broadbandusa@ntia.doc.gov or visit our website for more information and to access our toolkits and publications.

Our webinars are always scheduled for the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 2:00 pm Eastern. Thanks so much for joining us today and please join us again on February 21st for a webinar on public Wi-Fi. Thanks everybody.

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