Addressing the Digital Divide
Work Group Charter

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RELIEF & RECOVERY TASK FORCE

City of Portland

Revised August 2020

Addressing the Digital Divide Work Group Charter
August 2020

1. Problem Statement

The coronavirus has rapidly increased our dependence on technology. Many of us are working from home, homeschooling our kids with online resources, accessing resources online, and consistently checking apps for news updates. But for many Portlanders, particularly Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), individuals with disabilities, immigrants, women, seniors, individuals experiencing poverty, and others in isolation or at risk of digital exclusion (frontline communities) - the story is different. They have limited access to the Internet or no access at all. Many community members also lack computers, tablets or other critical hardware. They may also lack knowledge about programs for secure chat or video calls, online healthcare, banking, or online learning. And, these same frontline communities have heightened online privacy concerns.

The lack of reliable Internet access, devices, and digital literacy skills for frontline communities creates economic, social, and educational inequities. These differences describe the digital divide. The COVID-19 pandemic is growing the digital divide.

The digital divide also increases risk for frontline communities. Internet access at home can be the only safe way to access pandemic resources, healthcare, unemployment insurances, food assistance, rental assistance, and housing among other critical services. The ability to get and stay connected digitally from home is vital for our most vulnerable community members.

Many community members (and local governments) rely on trusted, frontline community-serving organizations to provide information and access to resources, especially during a public health crisis. Such organizations lean heavily on traditional community engagement tools: door-knocking, canvassing, 1-on-1 discussions, and community meetings at accessible times and locations. These tools are unavailable in a time of physical distancing. Frontline community-serving organizations are shifting to building digital communities (engaging residents digitally) and are partnering with the City through this initiative to deploy devices, internet connectivity, and skills training to those who need it most.

2. Frameworks

   a. Equity: The Addressing the Digital Divide Work Group functions under the direction and guidance of the City of Portland's Equity Toolkit for COVID-19 Community Relief & Recovery Efforts. Digital divide response actions have been evaluated through the toolkit's "Questions to ask before responding for policy or programmatic design and decisions"- See **Appendix A for questions and answers**.
   b. Privacy: Frontline communities have heightened concerns about online privacy, surveillance and exposure of personal information. Privacy protection will be operationalized in this work through application of the City's Privacy Principles to all data

collected from project partners. The interest and need for training on privacy and information protection and how to be safe online will also be considered in training development opportunities.

  i. Guiding framework: City of Portland's [Privacy and Information Protection Principles](#)

c. Open data: Data needs to be transparent and accessible to measure progress and stay accountable to the community. The Open Data policy will be operationalized in this work through a focus on transparency of project decisions and information created.

  i. Guiding framework: City of Portland's [Open Data Policy and Program](#)

3. Response/Goals

City agencies, community partners and technology stakeholders including companies and providers design and implement rapid digital inclusion actions in response to physical distancing measures required to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

These actions prioritize increasing digital inclusion for Black, Indigenouns, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, women, individuals experiencing poverty, and other community members in isolation and at high risk of digital exclusion. These priority communities will also be referred to as frontline communities.

Digital inclusion response actions should work to solve for four problems:
- Frontline community members do not have access to computers and tablets able to access the internet (computers and tablets are more flexible and functional than phones)
- Frontline community members have limited, slow or no internet connectivity
- Frontline community members need culturally-specific training for using computers and tablets, and accessing and navigating the Internet
- Frontline community-serving organizations need support to build digital community to engage and support frontline community members during the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery

Objectives

  a. Overcome Digital Divide: Community members need computers and tablets, assistive devices, Internet access, and training. Training must be provided in a culturally relevant way and in languages that meet the needs of these communities.
    i. Goal: Serve 3,500-5,000 community members with technology kits
  b. Build Digital Communities: Support frontline organizations to build digital communities with the individuals they serve, to do remotely what they would ordinarily do in person. This includes increasing access to training resources for organizations and support to implement digital inclusion response actions including distribution and implementation of technology kits. This may also include developing

and sharing best practices for community use of different meeting platforms and methods.

    i. Goal: Build 40-50 digital communities

c. Identify Resources and Capacity: Propose and advocate for funding and public policy changes. Identify and justify resources needed to scale up from initial pilot action. The digital divide existed before COVID-19. While our immediate work focuses on response actions, long-term investment during recovery and beyond are needed to address and not exacerbate digital divide inequities.

    i. Goal: Secure funding to increase the pilot to meet needs in Objective A

    ii. Goal: Identify opportunities to leverage CARES Act funds. Assess potential to create or perpetuate inequities depending on how future investments and capacity for partner organizations are created.

    iii. Goal: Identify lessons learned, opportunities for capacity building, and additional actions for continued COVID-19 response and recovery as well as long-term policy and funding to incorporate into the Phase Two of the Digital Equity Action Plan.

4. Activities

Pilot

The Work Group quickly designed and implemented a pilot to create new digital communities seeded by a donation of 100 Chromebooks. Chromebooks and internet access were distributed to 100 community members through 10 community-based organizations. The Frontline Outreach Team led the development of criteria to include an interest form and implemented a targeted outreach plan to test this rapid response model. The interest form was open from the evening of Thursday April 16 to the evening of Wednesday April 22. Fifty forms were received requesting 3,522 devices.

A review panel of four individuals who were members of multiple City bureaus with knowledge of the work and equity expertise, but no prior involvement with the work group reviewed all proposals and considered the following:

- Organization will use the Chromebooks to meet ongoing needs of the community that have been impacted by COVID-19 and support continuity of the organization's core services
- Organizations are able to distribute devices quickly and safely.
- Organization's ability to provide technology support
- Lack of Internet access for recipients

Eligible organizations were required to be a nonprofit located in Portland working with BIPOC communities, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, women, individuals experiencing poverty, and other community members in isolation and at high risk of digital exclusion (**Figure 1**). All

organizations had clear, compelling needs in addition to connection to services for the communities they serve (**Figure 2**).

FIGURE 1 | Communities served in digital divide rapid response pilot

ALL ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

FIRST TEN ORGANIZATIONS
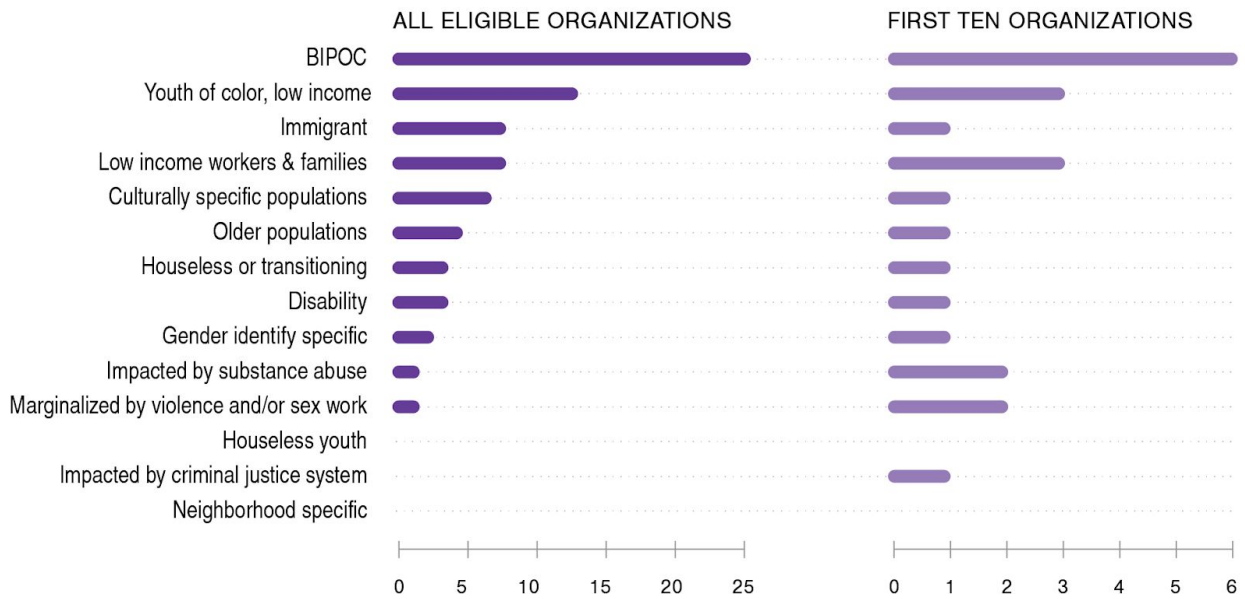
FIGURE 2 | Technology Kit uses and needs identified in digital divide rapid response pilot

ALL ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

FIRST TEN ORGANIZATIONS
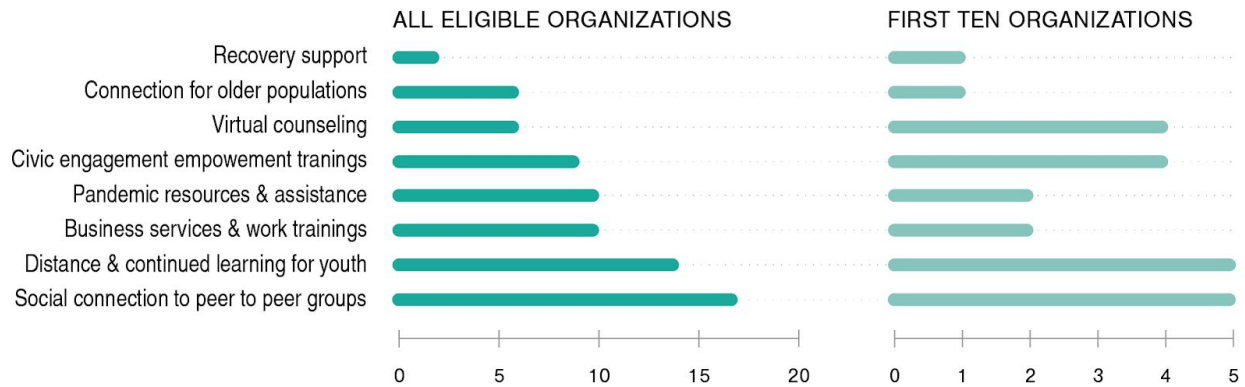
Additional lessons learned from the pilot:
- A variety of Internet access options -- at home, to the device, mobile hotspots -- may be needed to support connectivity across community members
- Many organizations had some technology staff and/or capacity to help support basic setup of devices
- Chromebooks were easy to use and met the needs of community members served
- Partner organizations generally described distribution and setup of the technology kits as easy, low impact. Estimates of staff time to implement including distribute Chromebook,

collect and report back data, and connect to Comcast Internet Essentials sponsorship averaged 13 hours to implement but ranged from:
- "not much time commitment was needed besides 10-15 mins to show each person what they needed to do to set up IE [Comcast Internet Essentials]"
- 10-15 hours total to implement
- up to 35 hours ("We also included the time to educate other staff members on the pilot in the estimate")
- Centering privacy
    - Automatic, pre-canned messages from the Comcast Internet Essentials application created confusion about personal data shared with the City through the billing process. To help address this:
        - Office for Community Technology staff created information sessions with Comcast
        - Notes about customer privacy were shared with partner organizations about what messages applicants will encounter and why these were occurring. These notes also included an outline of the process of what and how data is shared between Comcast and the City. Including how the limited data shared with the City is treated as confidential.
    - As of August 17, 2020, seventy-six questionnaires were received from pilot participants. Questionnaires asked about anonymous demographic data, home location, presence and nature of disability, internet needs, and digital literacy skills.
        - Sample size per each organization was small (10 recipients max). Some organizations/recipients returned questionnaires as grouped responses to further anonymize responses.
- Training needs can be informed by pilot recipient questionnaire responses. **Table 1** shows recipient answers to "Which of the following instructions would help you better use your new device?

Table 1 Pilot recipient answers about instructions to help better use your new device

Instructions	Selected by Number of Recipients
Job skills and professional development	36
How to use computer software programs (spreadsheets, graphic design, etc)	29
How to get certifications	29
How to be safe online	20
How to better search for information on the internet	20
How to navigate computers (keyboard and mouse skills)	14

How to use social media	14
How to use email	13
How to use language translation services	8
Other: How to do video calls; typing; how to connect to other devices	

Scaling up for CARES Act Implementation

The response pilot learnings were used to develop a CARES Act Local Relief Funds proposal for scaling up the Chromebook pilot. Community feedback from pilot organizations and Chromebook recipients and Digital Divide Work Group members were also coordinated to support and inform the proposal presented to Portland City Council.

On July 22, 2020, Portland City Council approved the CARES Act Local Relief Funds Ordinance including $3.5 million to support scaling up the digital divide response actions demonstrated in the pilot. New goals include:
- Provide 3,500 to 5,000 technology kits (devices, Internet, training) to communities
- Create new project to distribute assistive device technology to people with disabilities who are BIPOC, women, immigrants and living in poverty.

The Digital Divide Work Group will help oversee and implement the Tech for Transformation goals with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Office for Community Technology accountable for all CARES Act federal grant requirements. All CARES Act funds must be spent by December 30, 2020. Funds not spent by 12/30/2020 will need to be returned to the Federal government.

Priorities for scaling up this work identified by Work Group members include:
- Maximizing functionality, cost and efficiency of purchase for base devices to meet the needs of as many individuals/families as possible
- Develop a mechanism for providing some operating capacity support for frontline organizations to implement this project
- Continue to center frontline leadership in the design and implementation of the project, not just outcomes
- Create funding opportunities for partner organizations to implement the assistive device and training components of the project

Other

Work Group objectives also include identifying resources and capacity to support additional response, recovery, and resilience actions to address the digital divide in frontline communities.

As more digital communities are implemented through scaling up the pilot, other response activities for the Work Group may be identified and amended in this Charter per Section 8. Long-term policy and funding actions identified and informed by this response work should be incorporated into the Phase Two of the Digital Equity Action Plan.

5. Work Group Structure & Responsibilities

Structure

Centering frontline leadership and equity in both the design and outcomes of digital inclusion response actions are priorities for the Work Group. In the pilot, Work Group subteams did a lot of the work directly and a "Lead Team" of City staff (BPS, OCT) and a frontline community partner (Suma) supported implementation. This allowed us to be nimble, responsive and incorporate different perspectives all while moving very quickly.

A new structure to support CARES Act project implementation has been adapted from the pilot structure to account for collaborative decision-making about how City funding is being spent. The restructuring acknowledges the difficulty in centering expertise from impacted communities while also preventing conflict of interest considerations so that frontline organizations are able to participate in grant and contract funding opportunities. The new structure still needs to maintain responsiveness as this is an immediate response project with a hard deadline of 12/30/2020 for all funds to be spent. The structure strives to create a City-facilitated space but not a City-owned space and to center frontline leadership and perspectives in project design, implementation, and outcomes.

Based on input from Work Group stakeholders active in the pilot, guidance from the City Attorney's Office and the Office of Community and Civic Life, the Work Group has created the new structure shown in **Figure 3** to support the Digital Divide CARES Act project implementation. The structure separates decision making roles about funds from stakeholder roles.

Changes in responsibilities for each team are described in subsequent sections. Other changes from the structure used during the Chromebook pilot include moving responsibilities from a Resource Subteam to the Executive Team and no longer having a Core Team. This helps simplify and add clarity to information flow and decision-making across the Work Group. If the need for a new subteam arises, the structure and charter can be amended (Section 8).
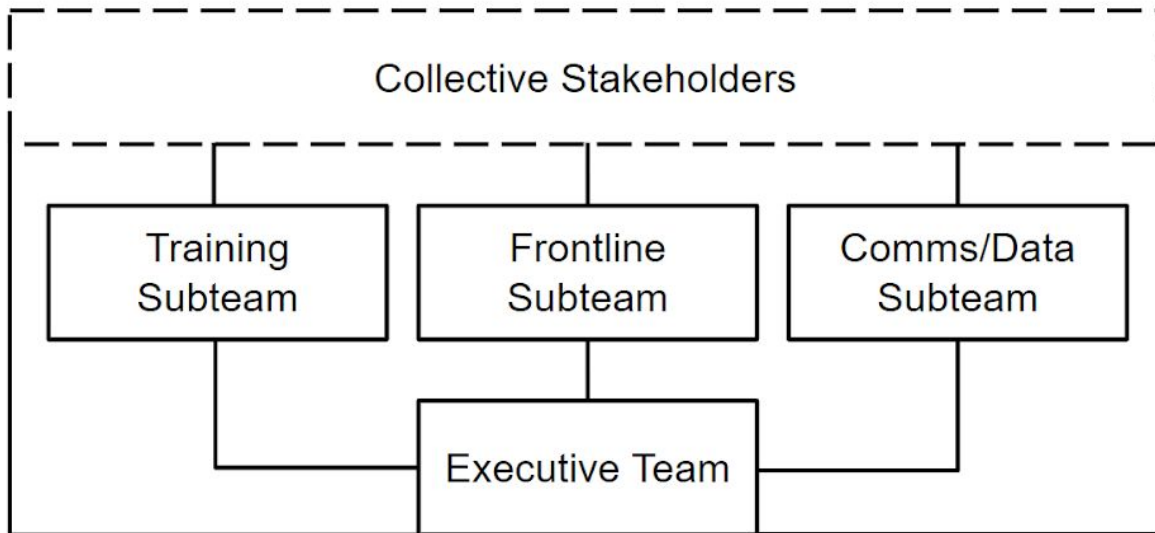
Figure 3 Addressing the Digital Divide Work Group Structure for Scaling up CARES ACT Response

Executive Team

Membership

The Executive Team is made up of 7-9 City staff and community members. Majority of members should represent frontline communities (be Black, Indigenous, Latinx, living with a disability or other group at risk of digital exclusion) or have experience with the needs of frontline organizations serving the BIPOC community. The small size allows the Executive Team to convene on a regular basis to facilitate rapid decision-making in response work.

The mix of City staff and community members should range from:
- 3-4 City Staff (at least 1 from Office for Community Technology, 1 from Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, and 1 from Office of Equity and Human Rights)
- 4-5 Community Members

Executive Team members should be able to attend 75% of meetings scheduled through December 30, 2020. Executive Team will meet at least once a week (18 meetings) from August 31 through December 30, 2020. Executive Team members should also plan for 1-2 hours of work outside meetings to review materials and communications.

Note: The size of the Executive Team should be reconsidered if needed to maintain the frontline-majority and City-community ratios presented above. This note acknowledges there are multiple crises occurring and capacity to participate in decision-making roles for community

members, especially frontline community members, may be limited or change during the course of the program.

All Work Group members were asked about interest and capacity to participate in decision-making roles. Capacity considerations included requirement to attend a certain percentage of Executive Team meetings, impact on organizations you represent and compliance with City and State Public Official ethics and responsibilities. These responses informed Executive Team membership.

Roles & Responsibilities

Executive Team members are in decision-making roles about how City funds are spent. Therefore, all Executive Team members are required to follow the City's Code of Ethics and State of Oregon's Ethics and Responsibilities laws and complete the following online trainings:
- Public Officials Ethics and Responsibilities
- Discrimination and retalition Prohibited (Human Resources Rule 2.02)
- Introduction to Shared Equity Language

City staff will help coordinate invites to online training including a quiz and track compliance.

The Executive Team is responsible for the following work:
- Review recommendations from Subteams
- Review findings and materials from pilot project
- Make final decisions on technology kit contract and grant opportunity criteria and selection process
    - Designated selection panels, not the Exec Team, will make final decisions on grants and technology kit community-based organization recipients
- Make final decision on outreach plans
- Review all communications content with Communications & Data Subteam
- Review data analysis with Communications & Data Subteam
- Create guiding questions to be added to stakeholder subteam meeting agendas

Decision-Making Method

Quorum is defined as simple majority: 50% plus 1 or greater number of seats. If quorum is met by only City staff at a particular meeting, funding-related decisions will not be made, but deliberations can occur and shared with rest of Executive Team through meeting notes and updates at subsequent meetings.

Project manager will inform the Executive Team if a decision made does not align with CARES Act grant requirements or City requirements. Executive Team will then further deliberate to resolve such issues in decisions. Documentation of preferred decision versus final decision to comply with requirements and guidelines will be made in meeting notes.

Meetings will be conducted to foster collaborative decision-making using either:
- Robert's Rules of Order culminating in a majority vote;
- Consensus Decision Making (including Modified Consensus Decision Making). This option still requires a quorum and a final vote. For example, if there are no vetoes, all voting members' names are listed as "yay", and abstentions are also noted.
- Other decision-making model to consider RAPID decision making

Communications

Transparency is essential to Work Group operation and equity principles. To help maintain a public record, all email communications to and from Executive Team members about Digital Divide Work Group activity will cc the project's email address connectingportland@portlandoregon.gov.

All records of the Executive Team including formal documents, discussion drafts, meeting summaries, and exhibits are public records. Communications among members related to the subject matter of this Body should not be treated as confidential and may be subject to public records requests. "Communications" refers to all statements and votes made during meetings, memoranda, work projects, records, documents, text messages, pictures, or materials developed to fulfill the charge, including electronic mail correspondence by and among the members. The personal notes of individual members taken at public meetings might be considered to be public record to the extent they "relate to the conduct of the public's business," (ORS 192.410(4)). Members are not allowed to deliberate towards a decision over email, as public participation needs to be guaranteed through that process.

Executive Team members are required to notify the City staff project manager of verbal communications with interest groups and all communications with the media. Members are required to copy the City project manager and project email address on all written communications from/to interest groups (other than a group specifically represented by a member) commenting on the Work Groups deliberations. These communications will be included in the public record.

On rare occasions, some Executive Team members may ask or be asked to write position letters to external groups or governments in support or opposition of policy issues that are relevant to the purpose and scope of the Work Group. This is accomplished by first proposing the position to the City project manager. The project manager, in partnership with bureau leadership must approve the position before the letter has been drafted. The project manager and/or bureau leadership must work with the Office of Government Relations if the external communication is with a state, federal or tribal government. This process is required in accordance with Administrative Rule 3.01, which establishes the Office of Government Relations as the central coordinating body for this external intergovernmental outreach.

Subteam Membership

Participation on any of the subteams is open and may be fluid. Subteams will continually assess representation from frontline communities and make efforts to maintain and increase participation from frontline communities.

Frontline Outreach Subteam Roles and Responsibilities

Frontline Subteam members hold stakeholder roles, not programmatic or funding decision-making roles. This means the Frontline Team will help create recommendations and share experience that the Executive Team will consider when making decisions.

Frontline Subteam will inform/make recommendations on the following:
- Applications for technology kits (ease of response, selection criteria)
    - Assess guiding question to consider lessons learned from the pilot such as:
        - How to reach individuals not associated with a community-based organization?
- Considerations for developing a funding opportunity for assistive device technology purchasing and distribution including application of Privacy Principles to device selection
- Inclusive proposal review practices so frontline perspectives are at the table when applications are reviewed and funding decisions made
- Outreach practices to inform broad and diverse group of community-based organizations about opportunity to apply
- Make decisions about recommendations and/or questions to present to the Executive Team through methods described in Section 7
- Subteam members will set subteam meeting agendas incorporating guiding questions/requests from Executive Team, responsibilities listed above, and other suggestions from stakeholders

Training Subteam Roles and Responsibilities

Training Subteam members hold stakeholder roles, not programmatic or funding decision-making roles. This means the Training Team will help create recommendations and share experience that the Executive Team will consider when making decisions.

Training Subteam will inform/make recommendations on the following:
- Considerations for developing a funding opportunity for a partner to curate, develop, translate, and/or deliver training services for technology kit recipients including responsive trainings based on privacy concerns of different communities
- Review guiding questions and information from the pilot such as:
    - How best to provide language and cultural translations for existing training?

- How to select the most applicable training for general topics community members express interest in?
- Inclusive proposal review practices so frontline perspectives are at the table when applications are reviewed and funding decisions made
- Make decisions about recommendations and/or questions to present to the Executive Team through methods described in Section 7
- Subteam members will set subteam meeting agendas incorporating guiding questions/requests from Executive Team, responsibilities listed above, and other suggestions from stakeholders

Communications and Data Subteam Roles and Responsibilities

Communications and Data Subteam members will be involved in reviewing, editing and content creation decisions. Decisions tied to funding will not be made by these members. This role is different than stakeholder roles of Frontline and Outreach Subteams. Due to the nature of this role, participants cannot represent or be tied to an organization interested in applying for funding or technology kits from the project due to conflict of interest considerations.

All content will follow the review process established in the pilot to facilitate quick processes. Not all team members will be able to review each piece of content. For each task, a content lead and a review lead is identified (may be the same person).

Communications & Data Subteam Task Tracker Review Process
1. Executive Team review
   a. When content is ready from Content lead, it is shared with Executive Team members, typically with a 24 hour turnaround, lack of individual review will not stop the review process
2. Comms & Data Subteam review
   a. Content shared with all Comms & Data Subteam members, typically with a 24 hour turnaround, lack of individual review will not stop the review process
   b. Review lead incorporates feedback
3. Legal review
   a. Review by City Attorneys if applicable
   b. Review lead incorporates lega review
4. Comms lead review
   a. Content sent to Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Communications Coordinator for a final comms review and to coordinate review with JVIC
5. Joint Volunteer Information Center (JVIC) review
   a. Final review with the Joint Volunteer Information Center (JVIC)/ Emergency Center Communications procedures
   b. Review lead incorporates feedback

Responsibilities:

- Create, review and finalize external messaging and content from Executive Team and City staff following the review process
- Review data analysis methods and results
- Identify guiding questions about messaging or data analysis for either Frontline Outreach or Training Subteam to consider and develop recommendations

Collective Stakeholder Discussions

All Subteam members will come together periodically as Collective Stakeholders to share recommendations with each other and with Executive Team representatives (See more detail on this process in Section 7 General Operating Procedures).

Gathering as collective stakeholders will also allow for questions, ideas, and recommendations to build on expertise across a larger group than the individual subteams.

City Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Office for Community Technology are accountable for CARES Act grant funds and supporting the Work Group to meet objectives.

Responsibilities include:
- Execute all contracts and grant agreements with Office of Management and Finance and external partners
- Ensure compliance with CARES fund requirements
    - Analysis of reporting data requirements (Due the 7th of each month)
    - Analysis of equity accounting data tracking to share with Office of Equity and Human Rights
- Publish contract/grant opportunities including technology kit interest forms online
- Apply Privacy Principles to data collection from recipients, technology kit interest forms, and grant funding applications and/or request for proposals
- Apply Open Data Ordinance to data collected for grant and content created through Work Group to be transparent, measure progress, and stay accountable
- Manage contract/grant opportunity submissions
- Coordinate selection process and review panels
- Notify recipients
- Manage relationships with grant & contract recipients including accounting and reporting needs
- Provide public notice of meetings and materials
- Support meeting notes including issues discussed, areas of agreement and remaining issues on which agreement is not reached
- Schedule and run meetings
- Manage base device repairs/pickups with Emergency Coordination Center, recipients, and device manufacturer

7. General Operating Procedures

Stakeholder and Executive Team Interactions

To ensure a clear, accountable, and even process for stakeholders to share recommendations and experience with the Executive Team, the following methods will be used:

1. Template presentation for Subteams to use during Collective Stakeholder meetings to share recommendations and discussions
2. Template form for submitting recommendations directly to Executive Team
3. Standing agenda item for Collective Stakeholder meetings where stakeholders can share their own or their organization's own experience

Executive Team will provide guiding questions to Subteams to seek experience and recommendations back on to inform final decision making. Subteams may also add their own agenda ideas for subteam meetings within the responsibilities described in Section 6.

Executive Team members may also participate in Subteams. No funding-related decision-making will occur in these meetings even if a quorum may exist. If funding-related recommendations are formed in subteam discussions, these must be shared with the whole Executive Team through the three methods listed above.

Meeting Logistics

Public Meetings and Records

Meetings of the Executive Team, Subteams, and Collective Stakeholder discussions are open to the public.

Executive Team meetings will be publicly noticed with dates, times, and digital access information shared online at smartcitypdx.com at least 48 hours prior. However, City staff will aim for best practice to provide notice a week before.

Meeting notes for the Executive Team are required and recommended for subteam meetings.

Agendas

Executive Team meetings will hold a standing agenda item for City Staff to report out and review day to day decisions that City staff have needed to make for project implementation. City staff will make decisions using the guiding principles in the City's Equity Toolkit for COVID-19 Community Relief and Recovery Efforts and additional priorities informed by the Work Group in this charter. Other agenda items will include reviewing recommendations submitted by

stakeholders (presentations, forms), added by Project Manager to meet project needs, and requests from Executive Team members.

Frequency and Attendance

Executive Team and Subteam meetings are likely to occur once a week through December 30, 2020 to support rapid response and project implementation. Teams can assess tasks and determine if meetings need to increase or decrease.

Participation from all subteam members is not required for Subteam meetings. These are general stakeholder discussions and open to any interested participants.

Executive Team meetings should strive to have a quorum present depending on current membership totals. Due to the rapid response nature of this work, an Executive Team meeting may still occur without a quorum but final decisions about funding cannot be made.

Project manager and other support staff will attend Executive Team meetings. Project manager and support staff will also attend subteam meetings.

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

This section is applicable to Executive Team members only during any Work Group meeting:
- A public official is required to make an announcement of the nature of a conflict of interest each time the issue giving rise to the conflict of interest is discussed or acted upon.
- The announcement needs to be made on each occasion when the public official is met with the conflict of interest, and the public official must disclose the nature of the conflict of interest.
- For example, an elected member of the City Council would have to make the public announcement one time when met with the conflict of interest, but only one time in each meeting of the City Council. If the matter giving rise to the conflict of interest is raised at another meeting, the disclosure must be made again at that meeting.
- Bureau liaison and/or staff are obligated to record and keep all conflicts of interest that are announced during each meeting.
- If it is found that a member did not disclose a conflict of interest, staff must alert the Bureau Director of the instance as soon as the incident is known.
- Any potential or actual conflict of interest noted by staff will be included in Work Group materials

Membership

The Work Group acknowledges multiple crises occurring in Portland communities and there may be limited capacity to participate in the Executive Team and Subteams. Besides the

Executive Team membership goals shared in Section 5, membership and participation is flexible and individuals can join, cycle out, and rejoin as is needed for their capacity.

8. Charter Revisions

Executive team may vote on edits or additions to this charter. Recommendations for charter revisions can be shared through the recommendation processes outlined in Section 7.

Appendix A: Digital Divide Response & the [City of Portland Equity Toolkit for COVID-19 Community Relief & Recovery Efforts Guidance](#)

Questions to Ask Before Responding for policy or programmatic design and decisions

1. *What communities (BIPOC and vulnerable communities - disability, national origin, and gender) will be impacted by our recommendations?*

   The priority population for this initiative is Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and individuals with disabilities. The prioritization of technology kit distribution will also consider intersectionality. For example, BIPOC community members and people with disabilities who are women, immigrants and living in poverty.

2. *What are the historical relationships with impacted communities? How do we work to rebuild broken trust?*

   The needs of these priority groups will be met through the existing, trusted relationships with frontline-serving community organizations that are already serving these communities in this time of crisis. Our pilot builds digital communities between frontline organizations and the individuals they serve so they can do remotely what they would ordinarily do in person. By building digital communities, we improve access to pandemic services and communication channels between community members, frontline organizations and local governments. Prioritizing resources to support the partner organization's operational costs will be important in scaling up the pilot project to meet these commitments.

3. *In what ways have we authentically engaged and informed impacted communities? In particular, multicultural communities whose primary language is not English and/or undocumented community members.*

   The Addressing the Digital Divide Work Group's Frontline Outreach subteam has focused on targeted outreach to members of the Black, Indigenous, people of color and disability community to share the pilot project interest form and to participate in the Work Group sub team structure.

Work Group recruitment efforts and restructuring for scaling up the pilot are continuing to assess representation in decision-making, stakeholders, and how to center frontline community leadership.

4. *What internal and external factors (policies, practices, procedures, organizational structures) are perpetuating existing inequities or creating new ones?*

The digital divide is greatly exacerbated by the lack of systems or subsidies for broadband access in the home, not treating affordable and reliable broadband as a basic utility like water, electricity, etc. We understand that our project is offering an immediate, short term solution in response to Covid-19 and the critical need to be online, with a fully functional device like a Chromebook, to receive basic health information, critical services, apply for employment, apply for financial assistance, etc. This is a response plan focused on meeting immediate needs. The Work Group will be exploring ways to leverage CARES funds to support additional or longer-term investment.

Longer term, we will support a community conversation about the role of the City of Portland and other public agencies in ensuring affordable, reliable internet access. The City of Portland is working with Multnomah County and Multnomah County Libraries on both a broadband feasibility study and Phase II of the Digital Equity Action Plan. Evidence from the pilot and information provided by our community partners have demonstrated that while the need is great now due to COVID-19 and the need for physical distancing, the City and its partners need to find a longer term solution to close the digital divide to increase outcomes particularly for the BIPOC and disability communities.

5. How will impacts be evaluated? What's the feedback loop that will allow us to implement changes based on learnings and intended or unintended results?

We will build on the learnings from the initial Chromebook pilot as we scale this work, including processes for understanding the work of frontline organizations applying for technology kit distribution, collection of general (and anonymous) demographic information about technology kits recipients in the community, and evaluation of the effectiveness and accessibility of technical trainings curated or created to support community use of devices and connectivity and the development of digital community with frontline organizations.

The goal is urgent with significant impact in the BIPOC community and for those living with disabilities. The work group will be developing specific metrics related to the needs met, timeliness of distribution of kits by community organizations, number of kits distributed, etc. as part of this Covid-19 response work.

6. Does the recommendation being made ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences for BIPOC and vulnerable communities – disability, national origin and gender?

    Feedback from Chromebook pilot recipients and partner organizations has been universally positive. Access to devices and internet have had an immediate positive impact for both frontline community serving organizations, and the community members they serve. We do not anticipate harm or unintended negative consequences from this work, but will be vigilant about evaluating our impact. Making our processes in the Work Group structure to design and implement the project as clear and transparent as possible will support accountability. We aim to create City facilitated spaces where community partners and City staff can interrupt processes, mistakes can be acknowledged and learnings are applied.

    We are aware that distribution of technology kits places a burden on community organizations, but the experience from the pilot is that organizations are willing and able to take on this work, that the benefits far outweigh the costs. As we scale the number of devices, however, we recognize that community organizations may need more support to implement this program and are looking into creating grants/contracts to support operational capacity of partner organizations. This support and design of our technology kit selection process need to consider methods to make sure all organizations that serve our priority communities are able to participate no matter the level of existing organization funding, staff, and structure. We also recognize the need to develop methods to reach individuals in our priority populations that are not affiliated with a community-based organization.