EAST BAY BROADBAND CONSORTIUM

GRANT 2 – YEAR 1
FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT

Start Date: 09/01/2016
Quarter: Q1
Date Report Submitted: 12/05/2016

CONTEXT

The East Bay Broadband Consortium (EBBC) is a regional initiative covering Alameda, Contra Costa, and Solano counties. EBBC has 41 formal organizational and institutional members and has been endorsed by 25 leadership organizations.

The Steering Committee for EBBC is composed of the Contra Costa Economic Partnership, the East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA), the Solano Economic Development Corporation (Solano EDC), and the East Bay Community Foundation. The Contra Costa Economic Partnership serves as fiscal agent for EBBC and Sustainable Systems serves as lead consultant to EBBC.

EBBC received an initial three-year grant from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), beginning in January of 2012. This grant was extended through 2015, using carry over funds. Using these funds during this period of time, EBBC has assisted the East Bay in making significant progress in:

- Improving Broadband Infrastructure in the East Bay and now embracing the goal of becoming a Gigabit Region.
- Bridging the Digital Divide using the Digital Inclusion Solution to provide low-income families with free computers, training, and tech support and low cost Broadband subscriptions.
- Launching a TechEquity Initiative to improve STEM and tech education for students, particularly students of color and women, and advance the diversity, inclusion, and equity profiles of tech businesses in the East Bay.

A powerful foundation has been laid, but very much remains to be done. To build on this foundation, EBBC has received a second three-year grant from the CPUC, beginning in September 2016. This is the first quarterly report for the new three-year grant.

EBBC is pursuing five goals: 1) Deployment; 2) Access; 3) Adoption and Utilization; 4) Mobilization; and 5) Management.

To assist in accomplishing these goals, EBBC is undertaking three initiatives: 1) a Broadband Infrastructure Initiative to establish Gigabit Broadband throughout the East Bay; 2) a Digital Inclusion Initiative; and 3) a TechEquity Initiative.

Although EBBC applied for funding to support all five goals and all three initiatives, the CPUC did not agree to provide funding to support the goal of Deployment and the Broadband Infrastructure Initiative. Therefore, this report will only address four goals and two Initiatives.

The Action Plan, Work Plan, and Budget and submitted to the CPUC are organized according to the four goals, as follows:

- Goal 1, Access, through the East Digital Inclusion Initiative.
- Goal 2, Adoption and Utilization, through the TechEquity Initiative.
- Goal 3, Mobilization, which addresses the East Bay Broadband Summits.
- Goal 4, Project Management and Coordination, which includes EBBC administration, support for the two initiatives and the summits, and reporting to the CPUC.

This quarterly report is organized to address accomplishments in relation to each of the four goals.

SUMMARY OF Q1/YEAR 1 RESULTS

The four goals of the EBBC Work Plan and Budget are listed below, together with the relevant activities that have been completed in Q1/YEAR 1.

GOAL 1. ACCESS: Utilize the Digital Inclusion Initiative to promote increased access to computers and Broadband among non-users.

To implement the Digital Inclusion Initiative, EBBC has partnered with the Tech Exchange (formerly OTX West) (www.otxwest.org), the leading computer refurbisher in the Bay Area. The Tech Exchange has a long history of partnering with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and, in its 20-year history, the Tech Exchange has placed close to 40,000 computers in homes, schools, recreation centers, libraries, and community organizations in Oakland and diverted 700 tons of e-waste from landfills.

EBBC and the Tech Exchange have collaborated on the creation of the Digital Inclusion Solution, which provides free computers, digital literacy training, and tech support for low income students and families and also assists these families to subscribe to low-cost Broadband (under $10 per month).

EBBC and the Tech Exchange are also collaborating on the organization of a SMART NEIGHBORHOODS initiative to provide establish Tech Hubs in public computer labs in Recreation Centers and other locations, installed and serviced by the Tech Exchange, to focus on digitally engaging neighborhood communities and supporting digital learners of all ages and levels of computer literacy.

First Activity: The first activity under Goal 1 undertaken in Q1/Year 1 was to collaborate with the Tech Exchange to oversee current computer donations and pursue new computer donation sources.

The Tech Exchange received and refurbished 324 desktops, 250 laptops, and 146 monitors from 13 public institutions, private companies, and community organizations.

Second Activity: The second activity under Goal 1 undertaken in Q1/Year 1 was to collaborate with the Tech Exchange to implement the Digital Inclusion Solution through Tech Fairs to distribute free computers, provide digital literacy training, and sign up of new Broadband subscribers.

During Q1/Year 1, 804 families received free computers, digital literacy training, and tech support through 20 different Tech Fairs. In addition, the Tech Fairs signed up 177 new Broadband subscribers. A map of the locations of the families that received free computers is attached to this report as Appendix One.

Third Activity: The third activity under Goal 1 undertaken in Q1/Year 1 was to design SMART NEIGHBORHOODS, a program to provide tech education programing at computer labs in Rec Centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, etc. The SMART NEIGHBORHOODS proposal is attached as Appendix Two.

GOAL 2. ADOPTION AND UTILIZATION: Partner with tech education not-for-profits, tech businesses, and public agencies through the East Bay to undertake a TechEquity Initiative.

First Activity: In the first activity for Goal 2 completed in Q1/Year 1, EBBC participated as a Co-Founder of the TechEquity Collaborative and a participant in its Coordinating Committee. During Q1/Year 1, the TechEquity Collaborative launched its website (www.techequitycollaborative.org), assisted 7 companies to develop diversity, inclusion and equity strategies, and hosted a sold-out forum for tech workers on local issues in relation to education and housing.

Second Activity: The second activity for Goal 2 in Q1/Year 1 was to partner with Urban Strategies Council to launch the TechPathways website (www.techpathways.org).

TechPathways provides a framework that demystifies tech careers as diverse as engineering, visual design, and digital marketing, especially for young people lacking

regular, practical exposure to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) education. TechPathways also provides the information necessary to enable users to compare over sixty East Bay training programs where they can build skills for success, ranging from after-school programs to boot camps. The press release announcing the launch of the TechPathways website is attached as Appendix Three.

Third Activity: In the third activity for Goal 2 completed in Q1/Year 1, EBBC continued as a participant in the Tech Talent Pathways Partnership (T2P2) (formerly Building Pathways to Careers in ICT), a consortium organized by Urban Strategies Council.

EBBC was invited to join this consortium as its work overlaps with EBBC's Digital Inclusion and TechEquity Initiatives. T2P2 is developing a comprehensive approach to coordinating school districts, community colleges, workforce development organizations, and community tech education organizations in providing effective tech education, training and career placement. EBBC attended two T2P2 meetings in Q1.

GOAL 4. MOBILIZATION: Organize EBBC Summits to discuss what EBBC has accomplished and present plans for the future.

First Activity: The first activity under Goal completed in Q4/2015 was to initiate planning for the 4th EBBC Summit. EBBC will follow the same process for organizing the 4th EBBC Summit that has worked so well in organizing the first 3 Summits. The planning for the 4th East Bay Broadband Summit will be completed in Q1/2017 and the Summit will take place in the late winter or early spring of 2017.

GOAL 5. MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION: Provide project coordination and management support for the East Bay Broadband Consortium.

First Activity: The first activity under Goal 5 completed during in Q1/Year 1 was to provide financial and grant administration for EBBC, liaison with CPUC, and grant reporting. These objectives were all met. The EBBC Q1/Year 1 Tabular and Narrative Reports have been prepared and are being submitted.

Second Activity: The second activity under Goal 5 completed in Q4/2015 was to maintain and evolve web-based communications. Responsibility for the EBBC website (www.ebbroadband.org) has been shifted to EBBC Lead Consultant, Sustainable Systems, and Sustainable Systems has developed a new website format. The new website will be launched in Q2/Year 1. Sustainable Systems will also maintain the EBBC Facebook page.

Third Activity: The third activity under Goal 5 in Q4/2015 was to provide organizational and administrative support for the two EBBC Initiatives funded by CPUC—the Digital Inclusion Initiative and the TechEquity Initiative. Both Initiatives are being implemented effectively.

The EBBC Steering Committee has met once during Q1/Year 1, overseeing:

- Collaboration with the Tech Exchange to receive computer donations, present Tech Fairs, and provide free computer distributions.
- Development of the SMART NEIGHBORHOODS proposal.
- Implementation of the program for the TechEquity Collaborative.
- Launch of the TechPathways website.

CONCLUSION

In its first four years, EBBC succeeded in:

- Improving Broadband Infrastructure in the East Bay.
- Helping bridge the Digital Divide in the East Bay, using the Digital Inclusion Solution.
- Launching a TechEquity Initiative to encourage diversity, inclusion, and equity in the Tech industry in the East Bay.

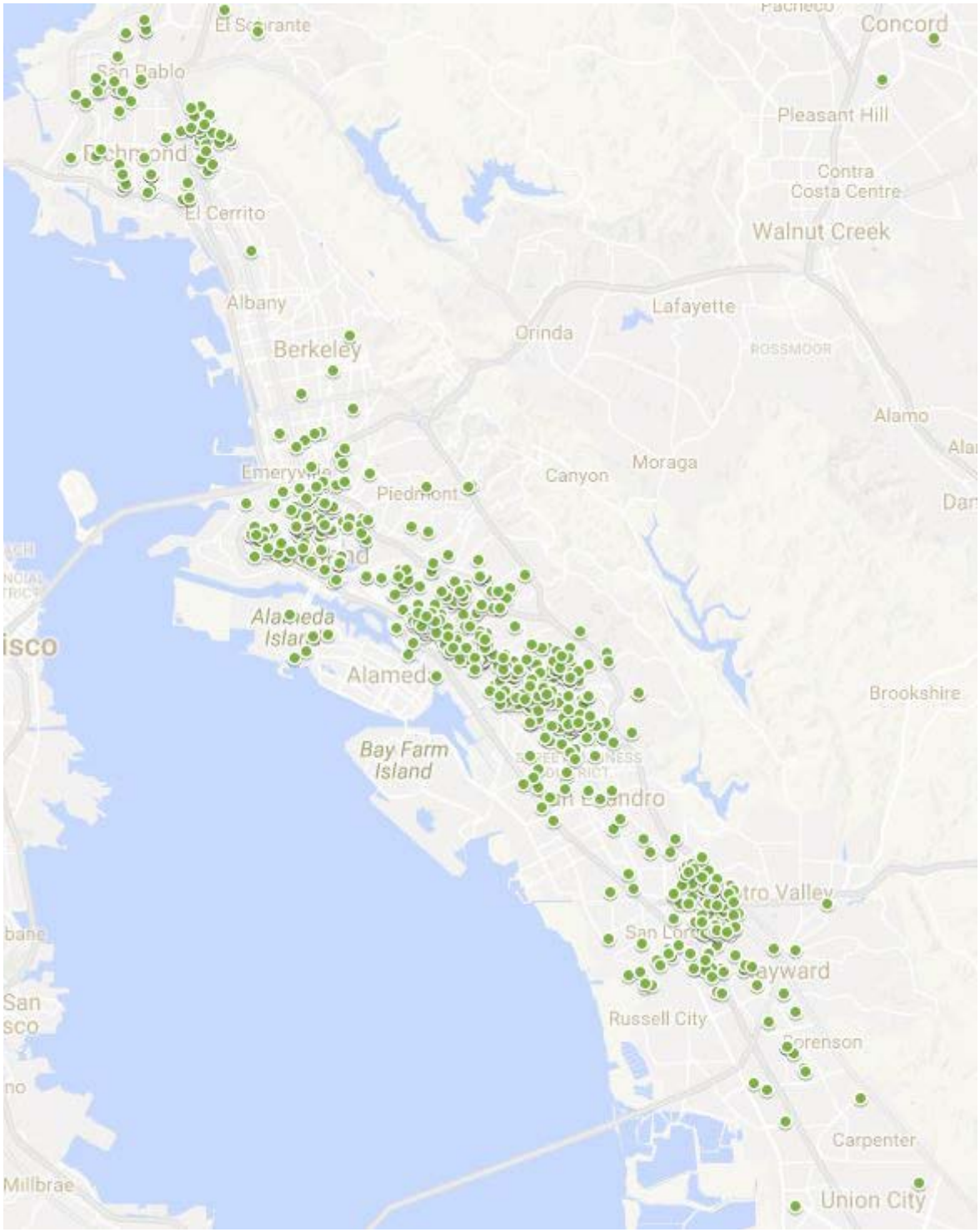
During Q1/Year 1, EBBC built on this foundation and succeeded in:

- Joining with the Tech Exchange to receive computer donations from many sources including Alameda County, Contra Costa County, so that the Digital Inclusion Solution can provide free computers to low-income families.
- Collaborating with the Tech Exchange to continue implementation of the Digital Inclusion Solution in Oakland and throughout Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, presenting the Digital Inclusion Solution in 17 Tech Fairs and other events, giving away 626 free computers, digital literacy training, and tech support to low income East Bay families, and signing up 172 new Broadband subscribers.
- Developing a proposal for the SMART NEIGHBORHOODS program that will begin with a pilot program that will utilize public computer labs at Oakland Rec Centers as Tech Hubs.
- Implementing the TechEquity Initiative including operation of the TechEquity Collaborative, recruiting corporate and individual members, hosting a very well attended forum, and launching the TechEquity Collaborative website.
- Joining with Urban Strategies Council to launch the TechPathways website that explains tech careers and provides a guide to over 60 East Bay tech education programs.
- Providing administration for the CPUC grant.

In short, EBBC is proceeding effectively in implementing the Action Plan and Work Plan it has submitted to CPUC.

APPENDIX ONE

Locations of the 804 Families Receiving Free Computers through the Digital Inclusion Solution in Q1/Year 1



APPENDIX TWO

SMART NEIGHBORHOODS:
Using Tech Hubs, Digital Ambassadors, and Tech Education Programs To Help Close the Digital Divide in Oakland and the East Bay

The Problem: Oakland and the East Bay have a significant digital divide in lower income neighborhoods. Lack of digital literacy is a significant factor contributing to lower academic achievement, unemployment and underemployment, diminished citizen participation in public affairs, and reduced quality and enjoyment of life.

The Assets: At the same time, Oakland and the East Bay have all the assets needed to address the digital divide, neighborhood by neighborhood. For example, in Oakland these assets include:

- Public computer labs in the City of Oakland Recreation Centers, Libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, and other locations.
- The Digital Inclusion Solution, coordinated by the Tech Exchange, which provides thousands of low-income families with free refurbished computers, tech support, and high-speed Internet subscriptions for under $10 a month.
- A robust program of computer education in the Oakland Unified School District and the Peralta Community College District.
- A large number of high quality tech education not-for-profit community organizations and successful tech for-profit companies.
- A network of Wi-Fi hot spots.

The Program: SMART NEIGHBORHOODS proposes to establish Tech Hubs in public computer labs to focus these assets on digitally engaging neighborhood communities and supporting digital learners of all ages and levels of computer literacy. The Tech Hubs, staffed by Digital Ambassadors and supported by tech education organizations and tech companies, will offer access to computers, digital literacy training, and a wide range of tech education programs.

SMART NEIGHBORHOODS can have multiple impacts in communities, specifically:

- For young people, the Tech Hubs can serve as a place to go after school to work on homework online, learn computer related skills, advance STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) education, and play educational games.
- For families, the Tech Hubs can create opportunities where they can learn together. Programming will include online safety, educational games, Internet searches for free or low-cost activities, healthy cooking, researching health and other insurance benefits.

- For job seekers, the Tech Hubs can provide information and training on how to apply for jobs online, create and update resumes, use LinkedIn, find online work, and participate in the gig economy.
- For older adults, the Tech Hubs can make available the basic digital skills they need to stay connected to their families, research health benefits, and overall reduce isolation and improve health and satisfaction.

Digital Ambassadors: To staff the Tech Hubs, SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will recruit, train and support ethnically and linguistically diverse Digital Ambassadors from Oakland and East Bay communities. These Digital Ambassadors will help empower low-income, ethnically and linguistically diverse community members of all ages to gain the skills to connect independently and safely to the Internet. The Digital Ambassadors will provide:

- Community outreach: Making weekly presentations in the neighborhoods where the Tech Hubs are located and throughout the community to let people know they can go to the Tech Hubs for computer access and digital learning.
- Drop-in tech help: Being available at the Tech Hubs to answer questions and provide digital support.
- Coordination of partner programming: Working with tech education organizations and tech companies to offer more diverse and advanced tech education programming.
- Scheduling and promotion: Creating monthly calendars of events for the Tech Hubs that are shared widely through flyers, email, online promotion and speaking at community events.
- Volunteer coordination/orientation: Providing orientation to new volunteer trainers, recruited and trained to assist with scheduling, training, and reporting as needed.
- Tracking usage and community impact: Working within an evaluation system to track the usage of the Tech Hubs and their training impact.

SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will provide training to Digital Ambassadors through an initial series of workshops, and then ongoing with professional development opportunities as well as manager check-ins and team phone calls. The Digital Ambassadors themselves will gain valuable, marketable experience and skills and will build their resumes while they help individuals in their communities to bridge the digital divide and move from digital literacy to digital mastery. Digital Ambassadors will receive training in the following areas:

- How to work with new computer users.
- Internet safety.
- Online search and job search.
- Understanding benefits like CalFresh and SSI.

- Low cost Internet and device options.
- Adult learning styles.
- Community organizing.
- Cultural sensitivity.
- Conflict resolution.
- Other digital training opportunities and locations/options for further free/low-cost training.

The Pilot: To begin with, SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will be piloted with Tech Hubs in four Rec Centers in Oakland with advanced computer labs and high speed internet, which include: Arroyo Viejo, Manzanita, Golden Gate and Discovery Center West. One Digital Ambassador will coordinate the Tech Hub in each Rec Center and work an average of 32 hours per week.

In this pilot, SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will enable tech education organizations, such as Hack the Hood, Hidden Genius Project, Black Girls Code, Hack Reactor, Oakland Digital, and the Stride Center to present tech education programs, such as:

- Digital office, including proficiency with word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and Power Point.
- Web and social media, including website and social media design, maintenance, and utilization.
- Digital media, including video, music, animation, and game design.
- Coding to produce software and apps.

SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will also recruit tech companies to choose a Tech Hub and a neighborhood to engage with and provide volunteers and financial and other support. This model should be replicable and scalable. Once the model's viability has been established in the pilot, SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will seek to replicate it throughout Oakland and in other East Bay cities.

The Need: The need for SMART NEIGHBORHOODS is profound. Despite the growing importance of the Internet in American life, 28% of Americans do not use it at all,[1] and people with low incomes or disabilities, seniors, minorities, the less-educated, non-family households, and the non-employed tend to lag behind other groups in home broadband use.[2] Many studies have shown that Internet use increases both employment opportunities and income.[3] Digital competencies play an increasingly

[1] http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/2011/NTIA_Internet_Use_Report_February_2011.pdf.
[2] http://2010-2014.commerce.gov/news/fact-sheets/2011/05/13/fact-sheet-digital-literacy.html
[3] Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Smith, 2003; Crandall, Lehr, & Litan, 2007; Gillett, Lehr, Osorio, & Sirbu, 2006; Stenberg et al., 2009; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003.

critical role in job searches – 73% of unemployed Internet users reported going online to look for work, as did 52% of underemployed users.[4]

However, research on the use of LinkedIn and other online job search tools reveals a significant gap between those who demonstrate mastery in these tools and those who find them challenging, giving the digitally literate an advantage in the labor market.[5] Internet users also enjoy an earnings premium over nonusers, particularly those who have used the Internet continuously both in the workplace and at home[6] (occupations that require digital skills pay 18% more than those jobs that do not).[7]

Locally, according to the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth in 2015, 30% of Oakland youth (0-19) lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty level. Almost 35% lived in households that received public assistance (food stamps, Social Security Income, or cash). An Oakland Unified School District study in the Fall of 2014 found that over 14,000 students (40%) did not have a working computer or access to high speed Internet at home. It is estimated that more than 90% of these students are non-white.

Meanwhile, Oakland is experiencing high-growth in tech jobs, which have grown 4-10% per year over the past 5 years. Large companies are relocating to Oakland; its startup scene requires significant hiring needs; and non-tech companies have tech jobs to fill. Yet, poverty threatens Oakland youth and their communities, making the effort to bridge the digital divide more pressing than ever.

In a crowd-sourced digital and gig economy, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area, job candidates' prospects increase greatly when they can navigate online platforms, fill in online forms, and enhance their online profiles – whether it be for Uber, Upwork, Care.com, Urbansitter.com, Craigslist, LinkedIn, Taskrabbit.com or any of the many sites that require a degree of digital literacy.

As many essential resources and critical tasks continue to move online, it becomes increasingly important to prevent underserved groups lacking digital literacy from falling further behind economically and socially by providing them with digital literacy skills.[8] Data show that adult learners who receive computer skills training are employed at significantly higher rates than those who do not receive digital literacy training.[9]

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[4] U.S. Census Bureau July 2011 Current Population Survey ("CPS") Computer and Internet Use Supplement
[5] Digital inequalities and why they matter. *Information, Communication & Society* 18:5, 569-582. Laura Robinson, Shelia R. Cotten, Hiroshi Ono, Anabel Quan-Haase, Gustavo Mesch, Wenhong Chen, Jeremy Schulz, Timothy M. Hale & Michael J. Stern. 2015.
[6] Make Money Surfing the Web? The Impact of Internet Use on the Earnings of U.S. Workers. *American Sociological Review* 73: 227-50. Paul DiMaggio and Bart Bonikowski. 2008.
[7] The Digital Skills Divide. *Inside Higher Ed.* Ashley A. Smith. March 6, 2015.
[8] Closing the Digital Divide: Promoting Broadband Adoption Among Underserved Populations. Katherine Bates, Lara Malakoff, and Stephen Kane; ICF International. Julia Pulidindi; National League of Cities, Center for Research and Innovation 2012.
[9] Evaluation Report: Impact of Northstar Assessment and Related Computer Skills Programming on Employment in CTEP Programs. Daniel Backman, Minnesota Literacy Council. 11/23/2015.

The Partnership: To address this need, SMART NEIGHBORHOODS is being organized as a partnership between:

- Oakland Parks and Recreation which has Rec Centers and programing throughout Oakland.
- The Community Technology Network of the Bay Area (CTN), uniting organizations and volunteers to transform lives through digital literacy.
- The East Bay Broadband Consortium (EBBC), a regional effort, pursuing Gigabit Broadband infrastructure, widespread Digital Inclusion, and equity in the tech industry in the East Bay.
- The Tech Exchange (formerly OTX West), a computer refurbisher that provides free and very low-cost computers and Broadband access to low-income students and families and installs and maintains computer labs.
- Get-Connected Oakland, a multi-agency Oakland collaborative, including the Mayor's Office, the Oakland Unified School District, the Libraries, Public Housing, and Parks and Recreation, which is committed to connecting everyone in Oakland to high-speed Internet

The concept for SMART NEIGHBORHOODS emerged in meetings held by Get-Connected Oakland. The Oakland Parks and Recreation Department, EBBC, and the Tech Exchange recognized that the computer labs in the Rec Centers that have been newly refurbished and are being maintained by the Tech Exchange could provide enhanced digital access in Oakland neighborhoods. To initiate implementation of this idea, the Park and Recreation Department agreed to make four Recreation Centers available for the pilot in the Winter/Spring of 2017 and EBBC identified CTN as the best group to lead this new program.

Going forward, CTN will serve as the overall coordinator and not-for-profit fiscal agent for SMART NEIGHBORHOODS. It will recruit, train, and coordinate the activities of the Digital Ambassadors. Oakland Parks and Recreation will provide the computer labs and publicize the program. The Tech Exchange will maintain the computer labs and provide technical support. EBBC will assist in recruiting the participation of tech education groups and tech companies. Get Connected Oakland will serve as an advisory committee for the project.

Evaluation: The organizers of the SMART NEIGHBORHOODS project recognize the importance of evaluation and will develop a framework for effectively evaluating the program and its impact on neighborhoods and communities as the program itself evolves. Since SMART NEIGHBORHOODS will be serving a range of community members it will have a range of outcomes. Initially, the program will track:

- The training sessions that the Digital Ambassadors participate in and the number of young people who participate in those sessions.

- The number of people from neighborhoods who use the Tech Hubs.
- The number of outside tech education programs that are presented in Tech Hubs and the number of people who participate in each one.
- The number of people who get connected to the internet in their homes with a device.

As the SMART NEIGHBORHOODS program grows, it will pursue partnerships to develop ways to track:

- Youth: increases in their understanding of STEAM subjects and digital technology and use of digital technology for school and community projects.
- Families: expansion in their digital mastery in identifying and utilizing educational games, free or low-cost cultural and recreational activities, healthy cooking, researching health and other insurance benefits, and opportunities for effective public engagement.
- Job seekers: increases in their abilities to use technology independently to search for and apply for jobs and increases in their incomes because of their new skills.
- Older adults: generation of feelings of being connected and less isolated and empowerment through the development of new digital skills.

Community Technology Network: Based on its experience and record of success, CTN is the right organization to coordinate SMART NEIGHBORHOODS. CTN started as a program of CompuMentor (now TechSoup Global) in 2001 as a regional collaboration of technology and community empowerment professionals. In 2008, CTN became an independent 501(c)3 agency. They have developed a robust network of 30 training sites in San Francisco through a partnership with the Department of Aging and Adult Services.

CTN already serves Oakland in several ways. CTN provides digital literacy opportunities through Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA) locations (Merritt Crossing, Strawberry Creek Lodge, and Arboleda); and at Oakland Public Library branch locations (81st Avenue, Asian branch, Cesar E. Chavez, Dimond, Eastmont, OPL Main, Melrose, and Rockridge).

Through its Ready, Set, Connect! program in association with the Oakland Public Library, CTN provides digital literacy education for 20 at-risk youth in Oakland each year. These young people develop tech, digital media, public speaking, marketing, and other skills through service learning and leadership opportunities.

Sustainability: To implement SMART NEIGHBORHOODS, the SMART NEIGHBORHOODS partnership will seek financial support from the City of Oakland, foundations, and tech companies.

The cost of the program for each Tech Hub is $27,000 per year, which includes $23,500 in salary and fringe for each Digital Ambassador. Overall coordination and administration will cost $75,000 per year. Therefore, launch and coordination of the program and a pilot that includes four Tech Hubs for one year will cost $183,000.

Tech companies will be encouraged to select and support a Tech Hub financially, with volunteers and in other ways.

The Opportunity: SMART NEIGHBORHOODS can be a way to make a significant contribution to improving neighborhood life at a modest cost. Tech Hubs and Digital Ambassadors can address the digital divide, neighborhood by neighborhood, helping students do better in school and engage in safe educational after-school and summer activities, families acquire the many benefits that come with digital literacy, job seekers to find a variety of employment options, and seniors become more connected and utilize new digital skills.

Long term, the Tech Hubs at the Rec Centers can connect with computer labs in libraries, schools, and community centers and the Digital Ambassadors can help all the residents in different neighborhoods realize the full potential of digital interconnection.

For More Information: To receive more information and to discuss the SMART NEIGHBORHOODS program in greater detail, please contact:

- Kami Griffiths, Executive Director/Co-founder, Community Technology Network, 650-784-1156, kami@ctnbayarea.org
- James Nixon, Principal, Sustainable Systems, Lead Consultant, East Bay Broadband Consortium, 510-377-7224, jameshurdnixon@gmail.com

APPENDIX THREE

Urban Strategies Council Launches TechPathways Web Resource Prepping East Bay Youth for Tech Careers

New one-stop site bridges knowledge gap on tech career options and local training opportunities

OAKLAND, CA--November 29, 2016—Urban Strategies Council, a leading organization alleviating East Bay poverty via data-driven research, policy innovation, and advocacy, is introducing techPathways in partnership with the East Bay Broadband Consortium, Raizlabs, Digital Strategies, and the East Bay Economic Development Alliance. The new website, techPathways.org, which launches on November 29, aims to bridge the knowledge gap among youth and underserved populations on tech career options and local training opportunities through an easy to use interface.

TechPathways provides a framework that demystifies tech careers as diverse as engineering, visual design, and digital marketing, especially for young people lacking regular, practical exposure to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) education. "We have simplified the latest professional requirements of Bay Area companies to help youth relate their strengths to available jobs, and understand the skills they need to succeed," says Steve Spiker Director of Research and Technology at Urban Strategies Council.

The site also enables users to compare over sixty East Bay training programs where they can build skills for success, ranging from after-school programs to boot camps. The data was compiled through an opt-in survey of leading Bay Area organizations providing training for three age groups: children, teens, and young adults. The site facilitates skill exposure for all ages, but most importantly at the critical juncture before high school graduation and as early as middle school. Many of the listed training opportunities are free of charge or offer significant financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf has stated that East Bay is an area where tech can act as a bridge to reducing inequity, as opposed to the role it plays in San Francisco and Silicon Valley. She has supported new initiatives in Oakland like the Tech Equity Collaborative and OpenOakland, programs specifically aimed at transparency and efforts that support building a tech workforce that reflects the diversity of the local population. As the City's Director of Equity and Strategic Partnerships, Jose Corona, explained, "it's partners like Urban Strategies Council we support in launching initiatives such as techPathways that actively build a more equitable future for local youth."

The web resource launches at a pivotal moment of East Bay tech sector job growth as large, publicly-traded, tech and financial companies expand their current operations, and small startups seek more affordable rental rates outside San Francisco and Silicon

Valley. The East Bay tech sector currently employs nearly 61,000 workers in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, with the creation of 26,000 new jobs expected by 2022.

Despite high demand for skilled tech workers, tech companies report difficulties recruiting qualified candidates for openings, particularly from minority backgrounds. In Oakland, 13.5% of tech workers are African American or Latino, though these groups comprise 55% of the city's population. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for young adults of color ages 20-24 remains 22% for Alameda County and 17% for Contra Costa County; well above the average for their white counterparts and averages for the Bay Area as a whole.

The techPathways website was in soft launch phase this summer and is now live. For more information or for companies and partners looking to get involved visit techPathways.org or call 510-893-2404.

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About Urban Strategies Council

Founded in 1987, Urban Strategies Council has focused on improving outcomes for children and families in Oakland and the East Bay for more than 28 years. The mission of Urban Strategies Council is to eliminate persistent poverty in the Bay Area by working with partners to transform low-income neighborhoods into vibrant, healthy communities. We leverage research, policy, innovation, collaboration, and advocacy to achieve equity and social justice.

About East Bay Broadband Consortium

The East Bay Broadband Consortium (EBBC) is an East Bay regional initiative organized to improve broadband deployment, access, and adoption in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties through a collaborative regional approach.

About East Bay EDA

The East Bay Economic Development Alliance (EBEDA) is the regional voice and resource for strengthening the economy, building the workforce, and enhancing the quality of life in the East Bay.

About Raizlabs

Raizlabs is an award winning mobile design and development company with national experts in Boston and San Francisco. Its vision is to improve lives through design and technology. Raizlabs has built over 100 apps across industries and platforms with a focus on award-winning iPhone, iPad, and Android products.

About Digital Strategies: Digital Strategies is an Oakland-based consulting firm that advises social enterprises on digital solutions. Their expertise is in marketing, analytics and app development, as well as tech ed curriculum development.