



## San Jose Digital Inclusion Fund Aims to Onboard the Disconnected in Real Time

San Jose formally launched its digital inclusion fund, the city's first, and believed to be the largest of its kind in the nation. It aims to bridge the city's digital divide over the next 10 years with "real-time" accomplishments that can help connect the roughly 9 percent of the city's population who don't have reliable high-speed Internet.

FEB 14 / BY THEO DOUGLAS (/AUTHOR/THEO)



San Jose, which last year **signaled** (<http://www.govtech.com/network/San-Joses-Telecom-Pacts-Expand-Broadband-Infrastructure-Digital-Equity.html>) that it would monetize high-volume small-cell deployments by major telecoms to fund digital equity, has made good on its promise with the launch of the city's digital inclusion fund.

The San Jose Digital Inclusion Fund (DIF), formalized on Tuesday, will partner the city with the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and marshal capital to bridge its digital divide — an estimated \$24.1 million in revenue over 10 years, from small-cell and fiber contracts with telecommunications providers AT&T, Verizon and Mobilitie. It's the

city's first such fund and is believed to be the largest initiative of its kind in the nation. The pacts with AT&T, Verizon and Mobilitie were approved by the San Jose City Council in June, and construction on small-cell sites began shortly thereafter.

Tuesday's **announcement** (<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/82746>) followed action by the **San Jose City Council** (<https://sanjose.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3847480&GUID=98722308-E69D-4390-80CD-80115D0EA66B&Options=&Search=>), including

adoption of a resolution authorizing the city manager to execute an agreement between the city and CETF to manage the small-cell usage fee revenue and “matching fundraising revenue allocations” that will be part of the fund.

The DIF is grounded in the realization that while access to high-speed Internet has become a must-have, approximately 95,000 San Jose residents — roughly 9 percent of the population of around 1.05 million — are “un-connected’ with no Internet access at home,” the city said in a news release.

With telecom and private corporate investment funding, the city intends to use the DIF to offer 50,000 San Jose households “universal device access” and connectivity at speeds of at least 25 Mbps for uploads and 3 Mbps for downloads, over the next 10 years. San Jose will also work to ensure residents earn and keep the digital skills proficiency levels they need to “stay ahead of technology” and enhance their quality of life.

In an interview, Mayor Sam Liccardo said DIF is not aimed at “recreating Google Fiber,” but is more about “providing access to low-cost plans, ensuring refurbished devices can get into the hands of kids who can use them” and expanding programs with community partners, to ensure low income students and seniors are part of the digital economy.

“We’re trying to get something done in real time that can help to narrow the already too-wide gap between those who are able to benefit from the prosperity of the tech economy here in Silicon Valley and those who are left behind,” Liccardo said. The city and CETF hope to stimulate additional private funding through engaging tech employers and foundations, he said; and “by demonstrating that we’re willing to match their contributions to support initiatives that they recognize as impactful.”

In a statement, San Jose Chief Innovation Officer Shireen Santosham said the DIF is “a premier example of what can happen with sincere public-private partnerships” and commended the city’s telecom partners and CETF.

The mayor said CETF has lots of experience “doing exactly what we’re trying to accomplish, and our mission and theirs are completely aligned.” He praised its CEO Sunne Wright McPeak for understanding “how to do this work and how to make it impactful.” In a statement, McPeak lauded the city’s efforts in “tackling the digital divide.”

This isn't the city’s only recent tech news. On Monday, San Jose **posted an RFQ** (<https://www.bidsync.com/bidsync-app-web/vendor/links/BidDetail.xhtml?bidid=2038057>) to prequalify vendors to provide “a range of innovation-related consulting services” for an upcoming project in digital service transformation consulting, as part of the city’s ongoing efforts to use human-centered design and agile methodology to enhance service.

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