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San José Launches Digital Inclusion Fund to Close the Digital Divide

San José, Calif. –Mayor Sam Liccardo today announced that the City of San José has authorized the creation of the San José Digital Inclusion Fund (DIF). This initiative, funded through private corporate investment and the largest of its kind in the nation, will provide programs and grants to the community to close the digital divide in San José.

“San José aspires to be the city where the opportunities of innovation empower all residents and communities, especially those historically underserved and marginalized. Access to reliable, high-speed internet service has become a necessity, not a luxury but the reality is 95,000 San José residents are ‘un-connected’ with no internet access at home. Today that changes,” said Mayor Liccardo. “The Digital Inclusion Fund will ensure that residents have access to appropriate technology, whether for homework, career opportunities, or healthcare, and access to digital literacy programs, so all San José residents are equipped for an increasingly digital, 21st century world.”

The Fund will be supported by the revenue from the small cell usage fees paid by telecommunications companies to upgrade broadband networks that lay the groundwork for 5G in San José. The City of San José and the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) will raise additional private funding.

“It is always a good day when we can expand technology options in the capital of Silicon Valley while ensuring that no resident of our city will be left on the wrong side of the digital divide” continued Mayor Liccardo.

The City has chosen the CETF, a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to close the digital divide in California, to manage the fund. The City will create an advisory board composed of local stakeholders to administer and allocate the estimated \$24 million in grants for digital inclusion programs.

“The Digital Inclusion Fund is a premier example of what can happen with sincere public - private partnerships. We are truly appreciative of our telecom partners for working with

the City to take this pioneering step and are thrilled to be working with the California Emerging Technology Fund,” said San José CIO, Shireen Santosham. “The CETF’s previous work with community-based organizations and other local stakeholders to get un-connected and under-connected households online across California makes them the ideal partner to do that for San José.”

“The California Emerging Technology Fund commends the vision and leadership of the City of San José in tackling the digital divide with such commitment and focus. San José is a trailblazer in digital inclusion and a model of what is possible to ensure that the digitally-disadvantaged are the innovative entrepreneurs and skilled workers to attract investment and ensure economic prosperity in Silicon Valley,” observed Sunne Wright McPeak, the CETF President and CEO.

Over the next 10 years, the Digital Inclusion Fund will connect 50,000 San José households with universal device access and universal connectivity at speeds of at least 25 Mbps upload/3 Mbps download; and ensure those households achieve and sustain the appropriate digital skills proficiency levels to stay ahead of technology, thereby increasing quality of life outcomes in education, workforce, healthcare and more.

The DIF aims to begin grant allocations as early as this fall, with city programs and community organizations competing for the grants, ideally encouraging more innovative and demonstrably successful initiatives.

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BACKGROUND

The Digital Inclusion Fund will improve academic performance, attendance and post-secondary attendance for San José students by giving them increased broadband access at home and through public access points; increase the number of San Joséans who can apply for jobs online, which is the most prevalent way to apply for jobs, and increase their skills through digital career development programs; and help seniors access programs and services that help them more easily communicate with their doctors, and better connect them to the resources they and their families can access digitally.

The Fund will also help lower the price of services plans for residents and increase the number of families buying/receiving donated, refurbished devices.

The City has defined 5 program streams to reach the Fund’s goals: Access, Device, Awareness Campaigns, Building Digital Literacy Skills, and Innovation Pilots.

- Access Programs will help diminish the number of students who have to sit in parking lots to do their homework because they need to access to free wi-fi offered by businesses and increase the number of people who can search for and apply for

jobs online resulting in greater opportunity and living wages. Some of the proposed programs include:

- Library connectivity programs for the community;
 - School2Home program expansion for San José elementary and middle schools to institutionalize workforce development.
- Device Programs will support residents in getting access to the various resources that are available to them through programs designed to increase the number of families that can buy/receive donations of refurbished and donated devices. Some programs include:
 - Expanded library device check-out pilot;
 - Tech Community device donation and refurbishment programs.
 - Awareness Campaign Programs ensure that all residents know about the resources and opportunities available to them. Projects include:
 - Community sign-up days throughout the community to increase awareness and utilization;
 - Using libraries and community centers for direct outreach and education to residents.
 - Digital Literacy Skills Building will allow residents to take full advantage of the technologies available to them to better themselves, their families and the community. Projects will include:
 - Expanded existing library digital skills programs, including programs like the Coding5K Challenge to ensure San Joséans have the skills to reach their potential;
 - Senior mobility, technical support, and ease of use programs which will decrease social isolation and increase access to healthcare providers and resources;
 - Parental and child safety concern programs to protect our residents;
 - Health Care Education coordination, applications, and other health information so the community can be as healthy as possible.
 - Innovation Pilots invite further innovation in the capital of Silicon Valley that adhere to the San José philosophy of balancing innovation and community priorities. Projects will include:
 - Matching fund programs for tech companies known for innovation and operating in San José.

Why the California Emerging Technology Foundation (CETF)?

The CETF is a statewide, non-profit organization whose mission it is to close the digital divide across the state. No other state has a similar organization dedicated to this mission with a thoughtful approach that starts with universal broadband access.

They have had extensive experience starting and managing these types of projects.

The CETF has a lean management approach, an urgency to addressing digitally inequity, a capacity to scale quickly, and a track record of convening diverse stakeholders – from elected officials and policymakers to civic leaders, broadband providers and community-based organizations – to address closing the digital divide.

In San José, the CETF will use a similar approach to ensure that the Digital Inclusion Fund is uniquely suited to address the challenges in San José. The solutions will be local and customized.

How will grants be made?

As the City and the CETF kick off the process, they are looking to get the first \$1,000,000 in grants out to grantees in the fall of 2019 based on current permitting and cash flow estimates.

Each grant round is 9 months long:

- 3 months: Announcement and Launch of Digital Inclusion Initiative
- 3 months: Community Awareness Outreach and Fact Finding; and
- 3 months: Request for Proposals and Award of Grants.

For further detail, please see the documents on the [public website for the City of San José](#)

About the City of San José

With more than one million residents, San José is one of the most diverse large cities in the United States and is Northern California's largest city and the 10th largest city in the nation. San José's transformation into a global innovation center has resulted in one of the largest concentrations of technology companies and expertise in the world. In 2011, the City adopted Envision San José 2040, a long-term growth plan that sets forth a vision and a comprehensive road map to guide the City's anticipated growth through the year 2040.

About the California Emerging Technology Fund

The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) is a statewide non-profit organization with the mission to close the digital divide in California by working with existing government and community organizations to accelerate the deployment and adoption of broadband, a generic term for high-speed internet infrastructure and access. The CETF was directed to be established by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in 2005 as a public benefit from corporate consolidations. CETF is a unique organization in the nation in purpose, focus, structure, track record, and accountability. The CETF reports annually to the Legislature through the CPUC.