



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY
<https://tinyurl.com/SmallCellsSLC>

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Sylvia Richards
Budget & Policy Analyst

DATE: October 18, 2022

RE: Digital Equipment Donation Program – Surplus City Computers

Item Schedule:

Set Date: Oct. 18, 2022
Briefing: Oct. 18, 2022
Public Hearing Nov. 10, 2022
Potential Action: Nov. 22, 2022

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE

As Council Members may recall, the Digital Equity Policy was adopted in September of 2020. Working with Youth & Family, the City's Innovation Team developed a pilot Digital Equipment Donation Program to address digital inequity within the community. One of the policy action items calls for "increasing digital access via reliable and affordable devices". In September of 2021, IMS and Youth & Family Services (Y&F) began Phase One of the pilot program and donated 18 surplus computers, keyboards and mice to families and individuals who currently use their services.

As part of Phase Two, IMS is proposing the City donate its refurbished computers to community organizations which serve families and individuals with digital resource needs. The organizations will then distribute computers through their existing computer donation and digital literacy programs. According to the Administration, working with the community organizations will increase the volume of computers being dispersed. Currently, there are 146 surplus computers which are available for donation. As indicated in the transmittal, 25 of the 146 will be donated to Youth and Family Services to support individuals and families being served through their programming.

Goal of the briefing: Review the benefits analysis and the draft resolution authorizing the computer donations. Identify questions and requests for additional information.

The City Council needs to hold a public hearing for the Public Benefits Analysis, as well as adopt a resolution authorizing the donation of City computers to benefit disadvantaged communities and low to moderate income families through a digital donation program.

In prior years, the City accumulated between 300 to 500 computers (laptops and desktops) and sold them to TNT Auction for a net loss considering staff time. (See cost analysis in the Administration's transmittal.) Instead of selling the surplus computers, IMS and Youth &



Family obtained approval from the City Council to donate the equipment to individuals in need.

BUDGET IMPACT

As indicated in the transmittal, IMS and Youth & Family currently have adequate staffing resources for Phase Two (current phase); however, future phases may require additional resources. When asked for an estimate of the budget impact in terms of additional staffing resources and funding needed for future phases of the program, the Administration indicated they plan to continue using the IMS apprentice program to prepare the computers. They believe the apprentice program gives participants a positive experience, and the intent is to continue this into the future. Additionally, distributing the computers to participating organizations will not require a lot of staff time, and they feel they have capacity for this round. They will, however, monitor community interest. At present, there is no one assigned to lead these efforts, so this may be an area of need in the future.

METRICS

With respect to measuring program success, the Administration will be using questionnaires to track the distribution of the receivers. The application requests the following information from the organizations distributing the computers:

- a) A brief overview of how the distribution process and digital literacy program was accomplished
- b) Zip codes of computer recipients
- c) Age of recipients

Council staff asked what criteria will be used by community organizations (if any) to distribute the computers. The Administration indicated they are assuming that the community organizations are working with a variety of individuals from differing backgrounds who qualify for their services and as such they did not want to be overly specific. This is an area where they will evaluate moving forward. The two-page (draft) application is included as an attachment to this staff report.

POLICY QUESTIONS

- ***The Council may wish to request an annual briefing (or written briefing) detailing the results of the questionnaire and responses from the organizations distributing the computers.***
- ***Does the Council have any feedback for the Administration regarding the attached draft application?***
- ***The Council may wish to ask IMS for an update on the expansion and availability of free Wi-Fi networks throughout the City, and specifically available for families who may not otherwise have internet service.***

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to the transmittal, the “2020 American Community Survey found that 13.3% of households in the City don’t have computer access, and 5.3% don’t own a desktop or laptop. About 10.9% rely solely on their cellular data plan to stay connected.” Additionally, the Pandemic brought digital inequity to the forefront as schools and many other organizations

went digital, making it difficult for individuals and families without computers to apply for jobs and benefits, identify Covid testing sites and access school instruction.

The Administration further indicates that Westside neighborhoods lack home internet connections, especially among lower-income and the elderly. “Roughly 18.5% of Westside households are without an internet subscription or broadband of any type, and 28.2% of households are without a desk or laptop.” As noted in the transmittal, the proposed Digital Equipment Donation Program will help to bridge the digital gap by providing refurbished computers, as well as resources on how to access low-cost internet service. The Council may also wish to note that refurbishing the computers and laptops will reduce the City’s electronic waste, which supports the Administration and Council’s intent to reduce electronic waste.