



The City of



Economic Development

MEETING NOTES

San Diego Promise Zone Digital Equity Meeting Notes

Thursday, November 21, 2024 | 2:30 PM – 4:00 PM | via Zoom

In Attendance:

City Heights Community Development Corporation (Sylvia Ramirez), **City of San Diego – Access 4 All** (Maiten Mowreader-Utreras), **City of San Diego Promise Zone** (Roosevelt Williams III, Zachary Engberg, Daniel Hamilton, Domanic Riley, Rebeca Nava-McClellan, Oscar Silva), **CTC Technology & Energy** (Freny Cooper & Sam Waddoups), **Elementary Institute of Science** (Sarah Tuakli-Cooper), **International Rescue Committee** (Adriana Garay-Serrano), **Logan Heights Community Development Corporation** (Lamar Jackson, Mika Marzette), **National University** (Danielle Stephen), **San Diego Black Business Network** (Prince Graham), **San Diego College of Continuing Education** (Kelly Henwood, Tavaris Franklin), **San Diego Futures Foundation** (Whitney Cottersmith), **San Diego State University** (Andrew Soliz, Susan Pace), **SBCS** (Chris Zures, Victor Gallardo), **University of California San Diego** (Raquel Aparicio), **XplorSTEM** (Vicki Meadows)

Meeting Notes:

Introductions, Culture Share, and Agenda Review:

- Raquel Aparicio welcomed everyone to the Digital Equity Focus Group, which would be hosted by Freny Cooper and Sam Waddoups from CTC Technology & Energy on behalf of the City of San Diego's Access 4 All initiative.
- Tying into the theme of Digital Equity, the culture share for this meeting asked participants to reflect on how the move to remote work through technologies such as Zoom has impacted their relationships.

Partner Announcements:

- **Andrew Soliz:** San Diego State University will be hosting several career fairs during the February to May timeframe on the following dates:
 - Feb 5 – 6: STEM Fair Day from 10 am – 2 pm
 - Feb 27: All Majors Fair from 10 am – 2 pm
 - Mar 13: Spring Business Fair from 10 am – 2 pm
 - Mar 24: Spring Public Health Fair from 10 am – 2 pm
 - Mar 25: Hospitality Job Fair from 10 am – 2 pm
 - Apr 10: Just in Time Career Fair from 10 am – 2 pm

Click the following links to stay connected to the San Diego Promise Zone

[Newsletter](#) | [Website](#) | [Email](#) | (619) 236-6700 | 1200 Third Ave, 14th Floor, San Diego, CA 92101

- Apr 24: Imperial Valley Career Fair from 12 pm – 3 pm
- May 28: Summer Career Fair from 10 am – 2 pm
- **Kelly Henwood & Tavaris Franklin:** San Diego College of Continuing Education will be offering free classes during their Spring 2025 semester that runs from January 29 – June 7, 2025. Enrollment begins Dec. 2, 2024, for classes in:
 - Automotive Repair
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Child Development
 - Digital Media & Programming
 - Healthcare
 - Hospitality & Culinary
 - Information Technology
 - English as a Second Language
- **Vicki Meadows:** XplorSTEM will be holding a STEM fair in San Ysidro to help interested individuals enter the BioTech field. Previous STEM fairs have also included students from Tijuana. Date is TBD, but XplorSTEM's last STEM fair was held in April. If interested in volunteering, please contact vicki@xplorstem.com.
- **Whitney Cottersmith:** San Diego Futures Foundation in partnership with SD Access 4 All will be holding Digital Literacy Tech on the Go classes at Skyline Hills Library during the month of December. Classes will be held from 10 am to 1 pm on December 14, 21, and 28.
 - Computers 2 Kids as part of Access 4 All's Digital Navigator program will be providing free one-on-one classes to help with basic tech support, affordable internet, and how to access low-cost computers. See attached flyers for availability.
- **Sylvia Ramirez:** City Heights CDC in collaboration with 211 San Diego will be hosting their free Winter Extravaganza on December 14, 2024, from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm at Teralta Park.
 - More information [here](#).
- **Domonic Riley:** The City of San Diego's Employ and Empower Internship Training Program will be hosting a Winter Civics program from February 11 – March 20, 2025. By the end of the program, participants will have a portfolio consisting of a cover letter, resume, professional email template, LinkedIn Learning account, and interview skills.
 - Open to 16 - 30-year-olds
 - Participants will earn \$19.47 per hour.
 - 10 - 15 hours worked per week. Both virtually and in-person.
 - Register by: Dec 20, 2024
 - Registration Link: <https://bttr.im/mc309>
- **Domonic Riley:** SD VOAD (Volunteers Organizations Active in Disaster) is looking for individuals or teams who'd like to volunteer to help refurbish homes damaged during the historic January '24 floods. If you'd like to help volunteer, you can sign up at the following link: www.togethersandiego.org.

Promise Zone Updates:

- The Promise Zone announced the departure of Civic Engagement VISTA, Ian Hembree and the arrival of Oscar Silva. Oscar joined the team on November 4 and will be the new Civic Engagement VISTA. He will also support the Housing Affordability and Steering Committee meetings during his term of service. If you haven't had a chance, be sure to send a warm welcome Oscar's way.
- The Community Spotlight for the month of September is Renato Paiva, CEO of Access Youth Academy.
 - Renato's time as a coach and commitment to service inspired him to join Access Youth Academy and provide underserved youth with the opportunity to access the physical and mental health benefits of playing sports. Under his leadership, Access Youth Academy has grown from a small program to a transformative force in San Diego, that is helping young people in high-need communities reach new heights.
 - To submit a nominee for a future spotlight, use this google forms link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSehhcidTURu9Xb6lywuyh4z4y9JggDCFxmXdNgSheNjaDp8Hw/viewform?usp=sharing>
- The Consolidated Plan Advisory Board (CPAB) makes recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) awards and RFP criteria. The role of the CPAB is critical for providing public feedback on the City of San Diego's federal grant programs. Currently they have vacancies for seats from Council Districts 1, 4, 6, and 9.
 - If you know anyone interested in taking on this responsibility, they can apply here: <https://onboard.sandiego.gov/apply/board/3427>
 - For any additional questions, please contact CPAB liaison Nadine Hassoun (nhassoun@sandiego.gov).
- **Zachary Engberg:** On Thurs., Oct. 17, the Promise Zone hosted the first Career P.O.W.E.R. Hour at Outside The Lens. The theme, Put Your Best Foot Forward: Presenting Yourself to Employers, featured workshops on building a resume and online portfolio, mock interviews, and headshots with a mobile closet with the goal of preparing job seekers at our flagship Youth-Led Career Expo in March 2025.

Digital Equity Focus Group:

Freny Cooper and Sam Waddoups expressed that the goal of this Digital Equity Focus Group was to help the City of San Diego learn how to improve internet access and affordability. To that end, they asked participants of the Focus Group for their feedback on various aspects of digital equity.

- Do internet service providers' claims about speed and reliability matched expectations?
 - Freny indicated that additional bandwidth would be needed to reach the goals of the Broadband Master Plan, but a lack of bandwidth doesn't excuse existing poor service being provided by Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

- SD Access 4 All's internet speed test is being used to quantify the difference between advertised internet speeds and actual speeds.
 - COX Communications was identified by participants as a major offender in not reaching advertised speeds.
 - AT&T and Verizon were also mentioned by participants for having lower than advertised speeds.
 - Lamar Jackson stated that internet coverage is spotty in certain areas.
 - These areas are typically poorer or rural in nature and use outdated internet technologies such as DSL instead of fiber.
 - Sarah added that poor service prevents many individuals from utilizing video as they fear that their internet will crash.
 - Price gouging based on zip code was also brought up as a concern.
- Freny emphasized that internet access through smartphones does not help bridge digital divide, for many reasons, including:
 - Students have difficulty completing homework that requires digital submission.
 - Sarah Tuakli-Cooper brought up that parents with only a smartphone for internet are unable to complete online applications for children in afterschool programs.
 - Job applications unable to be completed by phone was also mentioned as a reason smartphone internet was insufficient.
 - Smartphones are also inadequate for virtual interviews, which 82 percent of employers utilize during the hiring process.
 - Rebeca recounted how large families may be unable to afford more than one home computer. For these families, smartphone internet may be the only option to allow multiple individuals to access the internet at once.
 - Adriana Garay explained that many immigrants rely only on their cellphone when they first enter the country.
 - Phone-use in immigrant families is also affected by patriarchal norms. Most immigrant women don't have access to phones as they are held by and limited to the male members of the household.
- Freny asked the group about internet affordability in and outside of the Promise Zone.
 - Whitney Cottersmith mentioned that seniors on fixed incomes are unable to afford internet.
 - The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) assisted many seniors with affording internet, but once it went away, they were forced to drop internet entirely.
 - Kelly Henwood of San Diego College of Continuing Education touched on a survey that the College conducted of its 2,300 students regarding internet affordability.
 - 39% said internet was too expensive or didn't work.
 - 7% said the internet was too slow.
 - Only 7% have a personal hotspot.

- 10% use Wi-Fi at school.
- Freney brought up options for free internet located across the City, such as library Wi-Fi, the Lifeline program, low-cost internet plans, and hotspot rentals and inquired if residents of the city knew about them.
 - Danielle explained that library hotspots are not always available or in good working condition. Many of the hotspots break easily and it's not easy to reserve hotspots as they may not be available at a location near to where someone lives.
 - For those without access to reliable transportation, library hotspots are not a realistic option for accessing the internet.
 - Rented hotspots are also shut off after a period of time if they are not returned or checked out again prior to due date.
 - According to Adriana, navigating websites to find low-cost plans is difficult for immigrants who lack English proficiency.
 - Google Translate isn't a solution to this problem as many immigrants happen to be semi-illiterate.
 - Lamar responded that of the options Freney listed, the most used is the Lifeline program. He also brought up that many low-cost plans had restrictive data caps built into them that could leave unknowing customers with a large and unexpected bill at the end of the month.
- Have individuals inside and outside the Promise Zone been made aware of low-cost computer programs offered by the City and its partner organizations?
 - Zach postulated that many low-cost computer programs were ineffective due to the lower quality computers wearing out too easily. He thought that factor alone made any digital equity program unsustainable in the long run.
 - Kelly Henwood mentioned how SD Unified used to have a device checkout program that was funded by COVID relief funds. Now that those funds have run out, they are relying on Computers 2 Kids & the San Diego Future Foundation to keep program functional.
 - Whitney Cottersmith of SDFP explained that they have launched an online store to make their low-cost computers available to more customers, but shipping costs have made them unaffordable for most.
- The last question that Freney posed to everyone is if digital skills classes were effective at imparting digital skills or if there were areas where they could be improved?
 - Whitney explained that there are needs for languages other than English. SDFP can't teach in many highly requested languages such as Vietnamese, Chinese, and Russian; they can only teach Spanish in a limited capacity.
 - Popular classes are smartphone use and basic computer literacy.
 - Adriana mentioned that 80% of new immigrants have very low or 0 digital skills. They can't use email, recover passwords, or sign PDFs.
 - As a counterpoint, she stated that many immigrants are eager to learn if classes are available in their native languages.

- Additional languages she thought it was important to have classes in are Ukrainian, Pashto, Arabic, and Haitian Creole.
- Danielle felt that many digital literacy programs started at too high a level of competency for many individuals to grasp. Programs should focus on fundamentals instead of Excel.
 - Whitney responded that SDFP considers Excel an intermediate skill.
- Sarah thought that digital literacy teachers need to come up with a different concept for technology proficiency levels.
 - An example she gave was that many kids can pick up on a new technology quickly but have no idea what a file is.
 - Lamar added that many companies in the job market have an expectation that you already possess certain basic digital skills.
 - He recounted how many kids can't sign onboarding documents, navigate job boards, or fill out applications; they only have a casual skillset for social media, which doesn't properly prepare them to send emails with proper grammar.
- As the Focus Group came to a close, Maiten Mowreader-Utreras of SD Access 4 All asked participants to complete the paper survey and internet speed test and distribute them to the people they serve.
 - Freny instructed Domanic to attach the paper survey and internet speed test flyers to the Digital Equity announcements email.
 - Digital Equity announcements were sent out on December 3, 2024, with flyers attached.

Wrap Up and Adjourn:

- Co-chairs thanked those who attended the meeting and encouraged them to leave any feedback through the Digital Comment Box: <https://forms.gle/FAbFjw4ZUuAd3Uiy6>

Meeting Conclusion:

- **Meeting Day for Next Month:**
 - Thursday, January 16, 2024, Jobs & Education | 2:30 to 4:00 PM via Zoom
 - Thursday, January 23, 2024, Economic Activity | 10:00 to 11:30 AM via Zoom