

The Town Link Digital Inclusion Program

Summary:

In 2020, as workplaces and businesses shuttered due to COVID-19 lockdowns, we were reminded that internet access is a fundamental right. It showed us that the internet is no longer a luxury — rather it is a necessity for us to connect to friends and families, access government services, achieve economic security and to be a full member of today's digital society. Despite the internet's importance, the latest data shows that 94,000 Oakland residents lack internet access and are [on the wrong side of the digital divide](#).

There are many reasons for the digital divide but several key barriers to internet connectivity include:

1. **Affordability** - The high cost of internet service limits access to high-speed home internet.
2. **Devices** - Many families cannot afford reliable computing devices that have internet connectivity.
3. **Digital Literacy** - Many of those in the digital divide are not comfortable with using a computer or going online.

To address these barriers, The Greenlining Institute, in collaboration with the City of Oakland, has developed a year-long program intended to:

1. Build digital inclusion and digital literacy through trainings and educational programs,
2. Build awareness around free and affordable broadband plans,
3. Provide computers and tablets to residents that lack devices, and
4. Provide \$100,000 in grants and technical assistance to 10 local organizations (\$10,000 per organization) with the goal of increasing internet adoption and digital literacy in priority communities and neighborhoods.

Eligibility:

We are looking to create strategic partnerships with 10 community based organizations to assist in conducting outreach. These organizations can be, but are not limited to:

- Community Health Organizations
- Direct Services Organizations
- Community Centers
- Local Chambers of Commerce

- Cultural Centers
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Any other local organizations that regularly work with priority community members.

Partner organizations for this project must also:

- Have demonstrated expertise, commitment and relationships in the Oakland community;
- Have strong organizational leadership and management, including demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusion within the organization;
- Achieve all deliverables outlined within a one-year time frame;
- Participate in training activities, and fulfill all reporting requirements outlined in the application and grant agreement;

Scoring Criteria:

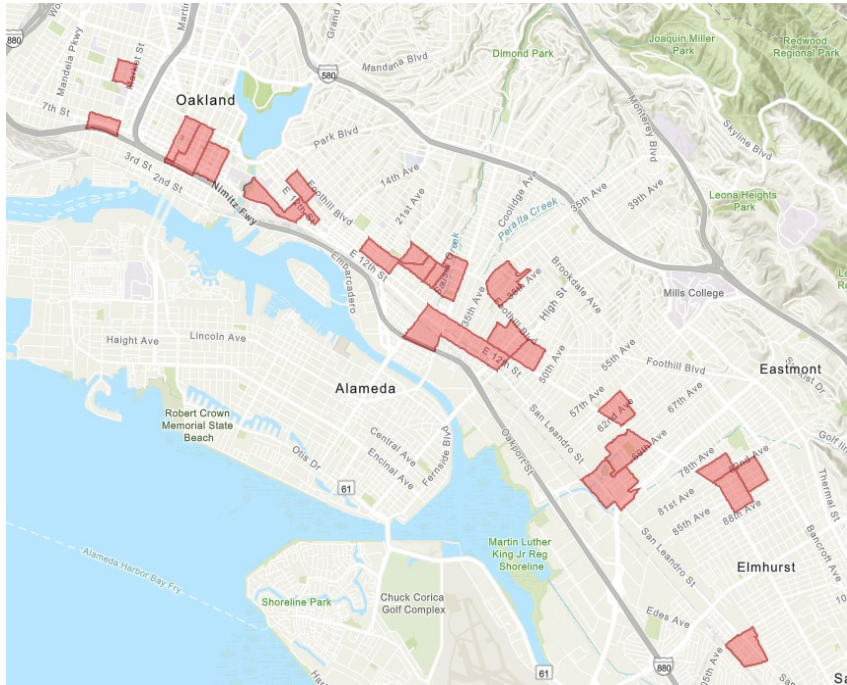
Approach and feasibility: Strong applications will clearly articulate a campaign concept and feasible plan for implementation.

Focus on Priority Communities: Applications that effectively target and focus on priority communities and community members will receive higher scores. Priority community members and neighborhoods are those that are less likely to have broadband access¹ or live in Oakland Equity Zones or low-broadband adoption neighborhoods (see maps below). These priority groups include:

- [Residents of Oakland Equity Zones](#) or [low broadband adoption neighborhoods](#)
- Low-Income residents (\$51,500 or less)
- Unhoused Residents
- Latino Residents
- Re-entry populations
- Immigrants and English second language residents
- Senior Residents
- Black Residents
- Indigenous Residents

¹ See [CETF Annual Survey 2019](#) and the [California Public Utilities Commission Broadband Gap Analysis](#)

Oakland Equity Zones Map:



- For a closer view of this map please use this [link](#).

Oakland Low-Broadband Adoption Map:



- For a closer view of the adoption map please use this [link](#).

Proposal Criteria and Deliverables:

The Greenlining Institute is looking for local Oakland organizations to help close the digital divide and connect the 94,000 Oakland residents that lack internet access to computers, digital literacy services and affordable internet. In particular we are looking for organizations that can do the following:

1. Develop and Implement a Digital Inclusion Education and Outreach Campaign

We ask partners to use grant funds to develop an outreach and education campaign to educate Oaklanders and build awareness around the following digital inclusion programs and resources:

- [The Emergency Broadband Benefit](#) (EBB)
 - The temporary EBB program provides low-income families with up to \$50 off per month on home internet service.
- [OakWifi](#)
 - The OakWifi program was launched this year and provides Oaklanders with free access to hotspots across the city at up to 25 Mbps speeds.
- The [LifeLine Program](#)
 - The LifeLine program provides low-income residents and community members that participate in certain programs like SNAP and Medi-Cal free and reduced price access to phone service. [LifeLine providers](#) use the same networks from providers like T-Mobile and AT&T and provide services such as 6GB of smartphone data, unlimited texts and calls for free to qualifying customers.
- [Low Cost Internet Plans](#)
- [Affordable Computers from The Tech Exchange](#)
- Oakland Workforce Development Programs
 - As part of this project we will help connect Oakland residents to 3-4 workforce development organizations that offer advanced digital skills training, paid apprenticeships, and pathways to high paying job opportunities. We will familiarize partners on these workforce opportunities and ask that partners identify qualified community members and refer them to these programs.

The campaign should effectively reach 150+ Oakland residents. A campaign can encompass a wide variety of timeframes and activities so long as the campaign effectively increases awareness and engagement around the resources listed above among priority communities. This can include holding community events or competitions, training organizational staff and integrating education around these resources in existing services,

establishing drop-in hours and help desks to enroll community members in low cost programs, hiring and engaging trusted messengers or “[promotores](#)” to get the word out, recreating and distributing this informational content in more engaging ways, art projects and more. We encourage applicants to use the campaign and grant funding as an opportunity to build or deepen their focus on digital inclusion in their existing community work and relationships.

Partners can opt to focus their campaign around a combination of the resources they find most appropriate for the communities they serve (for example, OakWifi may not be available in all neighborhoods). Partners are also invited to use their campaign to collect survey data, distribute laptops and recruit participants for EveryoneOn’s Digital Literacy services (see below).

The Greenlining Institute and EveryoneOn will provide partner organizations and their staff with ongoing support that includes informational materials and training sessions that cover best practices for outreach, challenges with low-cost services, lessons from previous efforts as well as a comprehensive explanation of all programs and resources.

2. Recruit 15 Participants for Digital Literacy Courses and Distribute Computing Devices

We ask partners to identify and recruit a cohort of 15 Oakland residents that have digital literacy needs and are motivated to complete a 4-6 week [digital literacy training program](#) provided by EveryoneOn. Partner organizations will have an opportunity to provide input on the curriculum and lessons provided. Participants in the digital literacy course will have access to technical support, training and education on how to use a computer and the internet.

We ask partners to commit to meeting every 1-2 weeks during the planning and recruitment process. During the planning meetings we chat about recruitment goals and scheduling the classes, device procurement/distribution, curriculum/lesson plan, measurement and evaluation needs and other logistical details.

Once the training is underway, we ask partners to meet on a weekly basis for the duration of the training so we can share updates from the instructors, troubleshoot any challenges and ensure the training is being carried out as planned.

The Greenlining Institute will provide partner organizations with at least 15 laptops sourced from [The Tech Exchange](#). These devices come with a one-year warranty and technical support. Participants in the digital literacy program who need a device should be provided one from those available to the organization and will be able to keep them at the conclusion of the program. Partners can request up to 10 additional devices to provide to community members that need them for internet connectivity.

3. Collect 100 Survey Responses from Oakland Residents

We ask partners to collect at least 100 survey responses from Oakland residents. This survey will ask residents to describe their experiences with Oakland internet providers, the type, cost and speed of internet services they subscribe to, their satisfaction with those services and additional information such as how they connect to the internet and their experiences, if any, with the OakWifi program and other affordable internet plans.

4. Complete a Project Report

At the conclusion of the program, we ask that partners draft a short report describing the campaign, feedback from staff and participants, and data, challenges or lessons for other organizations that may do this work in the future. This report should include at least one human interest story from a participant or staff member associated with the project that highlights how they were affected by the campaign or program and describes any of the successes from the project.

Application and Project Timelines:

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| July 6, 2021 | Application Released |
| July 6-August 6, 2021 | Applications are received and reviewed on a rolling basis. Non-winning applicants will be notified periodically. All applications are due by 11:59 PM PT on August 6, 2021. |
| August - September 2021 | Finalists are selected, interviewed, and asked to submit more detailed information on their project plans. This includes the implementation plan, proposed metrics, timelines, high-level budgets and action steps to achieve the deliverables. |
| September 2021 - October 2021 | Grant agreements finalized and winning applications are announced. |
| October 2021 | Partners begin work on their campaigns. |
| September 2022 | Partners complete program deliverables. |

The Town Link - Application Questions (submit answers on the [google form](#)):

Organizational Information:

- Basic Information: Name, Email, Organization, Website
- Which of the following communities do you currently serve? (check all that apply)
 - Unhoused
 - Re-entry
 - English-Second Language
 - Low-Income Families
 - Youth
 - Adult
 - Seniors
 - Black
 - Latinx
 - Indigenous
 - Other
 - If other, please specify:
- What is your organization's mission statement?
- What work does your organization currently do in Oakland?
- How do you currently connect with and do outreach to your community? (Ex. Direct services, workshops, community events, worship services, food distribution, etc.)

Project Overview:

- **Executive Summary:** Please provide an overall summary of your strategy and approach to this project. This should enable a reviewer to generally understand how you plan to achieve each of the deliverables listed above as well as the communities and populations your project will serve. This section should summarize the methodology of your campaign and should not contain general information such as your organizational background.
 - 1. Develop and Implement a Digital Inclusion Education and Outreach Campaign
 - 2. Recruit 15 Participants for Digital Literacy Courses and Distribute Computing Devices
 - 3. Collect 100 Survey Responses from Oakland Residents
 - 4. Complete a post-project report
- **Geographic Focus:** Which parts of Oakland will you focus on?
- **Organizational Fit:** Provide a summary of how your organization's unique resources, skills, expertise, relationships or existing work can help achieve the goals of this project.

- **Recruitment Strategy:** Several of the project deliverables require partners to identify and recruit Oakland residents that have digital literacy needs or are a good fit for workforce development opportunities. How will you identify and recruit these individuals? How will you evaluate or know if they are a good fit for these programs?
- **Sustainability:** The City of Oakland is pursuing long-term strategies to partner with the community to provide digital literacy services and close the digital divide in Oakland. Are there potential pathways to long-term sustainability, either with existing or forward-looking funding from public and/or private potential funders to continue and expand implementation of this project in the future?

Submitting an Application:

Applications are received and reviewed on a rolling basis. Non-winning applicants will be notified periodically. **All applications are due by 11:59 PM PT on August 6, 2021.** Applications should be submitted through the [google form](#). If your organization is interested in applying, or if you know an organization that may be interested and would like more information, please contact De'Zhon Grace (dezhong@greenlining.org) and Vinhcent Le (vinhcentl@greenlining.org).