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City of San Diego Named a 2022 ‘Digital Inclusion Trailblazer’

NATIONAL DIGITAL INCLUSION ALLIANCE RECOGNIZES CITY’S SD ACCESS 4 ALL PROGRAM FOR ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

SAN DIEGO – The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) has named the City of San Diego as a [2022 Digital Inclusion Trailblazer](#) for its efforts to close the digital divide through Mayor Todd Gloria’s SD Access 4 All initiative.

The City of San Diego is one of 32 U.S. cities and counties to earn the Trailblazer designation this year. Through the [SD Access 4 All](#) initiative, the City partnered with local internet providers and nonprofits to expand public Wi-Fi at over 300 locations citywide. More than 200,000 unique users logged on over 1.4 million times in the first year.

“Closing the digital divide is essential to thriving communities and opportunity for all San Diegans, which is why we launched SD Access 4 All. It’s our city’s recognition that internet access is essential to everyday life and can’t be just a privilege,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. “We’re grateful to our many partners who helped our IT team expand public Wi-Fi and provide new resources at libraries – from laptops to mobile hotspots – to get residents connected. This award is recognition of the enterprising spirit and cooperation that makes important initiatives like this get done.”

Trailblazers are judged based on six criteria showing a city or county’s digital inclusion leadership. These include having full-time local government staff, a digital inclusion plan, an open-access coalition, survey research, funded digital inclusion programming, and efforts to increase affordability of home broadband service.

The six criteria also provide cities and counties that are just getting started with digital inclusion an effective pathway to leadership in their community.

Launched in April 2021 with a \$500,000 annual budget, the [SD Access 4 All](#) initiative is a collaboration between the private sector and several City departments, including Economic Development, Human Resources, Information Technology, Library, and Parks and Recreation. The goal is to close the digital divide that has left an estimated 53,000 households in San Diego without internet access.

“The pandemic made clear how vital internet access is in our modern world as families struggled with online learning and many San Diegans were forced to work remotely,” said Jonathan Behnke, the City’s Director of Information Technology, which oversees the SD Access 4 All initiative. “We’ve seen tremendous usage of the public Wi-Fi, so we know there’s a significant need in our community for basic internet access. We plan to continue blazing the trail forward by creating even more opportunities for San Diegans to get connected in the years ahead.”

In addition to the public Wi-Fi expansion, the City also purchased hundreds of new laptops and 2,000 new mobile hotspots that patrons can check out from libraries. Mobile hotspots are easy to use and provide free at-home internet service.

SD Access 4 All benefited from several community partners to provide this public service. The [San Diego Parks Foundation](#) helped support public Wi-Fi at two dozen parks locations while the [San Diego Public Library Foundation](#) supported the Library’s 10 outdoor community computer labs and laptop expansion.

In addition, the City reached an agreement with Cox Communications on neighborhood Wi-Fi hotspots and with AT&T on the mobile hotspots – with both companies providing discounts on each service.

NDIA advances digital equity by supporting community programs and equipping policymakers to act. Working collaboratively with more than 800 digital inclusion practitioners, NDIA advocates for broadband access, tech devices, digital skills training and tech support. For more information on Digital Inclusion Trailblazers, visit digitalinclusion.org/digital-inclusion-trailblazers.

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