

# ConnectTO

City of Toronto  
Technology Services Division





# Digital Equity Snapshot

# Why Digital Equity?

Access to the internet is increasingly recognized by countries and organizations around the world as an essential tool for participation in modern democratic society

The City is committed to reducing the digital divide by improving digital connectivity

Goal: Ensure that residents are connected – not divided – by technology



# Equity through Digital Infrastructure

Equitable access is at the heart of International, Federal, Provincial and Municipal digital principles

## Canada's Digital Charter Principles

Universal Access: All Canadians will have equal opportunity to participate in the digital world and the necessary tools to do so, including access, connectivity, literacy and skills.

## Ontario's Smart City Framework Principles

Put people first by ensuring that Ontarians are the primary beneficiaries and valued partners in the opportunities created by the project

## Declaration of Cities Coalition for Digital Rights

Universal and equal access to the internet, and digital literacy

Everyone should have access to affordable and accessible internet and digital services on equal terms, as well as the digital skills to make use of this access and overcome the digital divide.

## City of Toronto Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework

### Equity and Inclusion Working Principle

Digital Infrastructure will be used to create and sustain equity, inclusion, accessibility, and human rights in its operations and outcomes. Digital Infrastructure will be flexible, adaptable, interoperable and responsive to the needs of all Torontonians, including equity-seeking groups, Indigenous people, those with accessibility needs and vulnerable populations;

# Mapping the Digital Divide

## Mapping Toronto's Digital Divide

January 2021  
Sam Andrey | M.J. Masoodi  
Nisa Malli | Selasi Dorkenoo



34% of Toronto households are **worried about paying their home internet bills** over the next few months, with rates of worry greatest among low-income, newcomer, single parent, Latin American, South Asian, Black and Southeast Asian residents.

38% of households report download speeds below the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)'s national target of 50 megabits per second (Mbps);

### Reasons Why Respondents Have No Home Internet

The monthly cost of Internet service:	<b>49%</b>
No device that can connect to the Internet:	<b>25%</b>
Uses a mobile phone data plan instead:	<b>22%</b>
Has access to the Internet elsewhere:	<b>16%</b>

(n=43)

Figure 8:  
Proportion of Respondents with Home Internet Download Speeds Over 50 Mbps

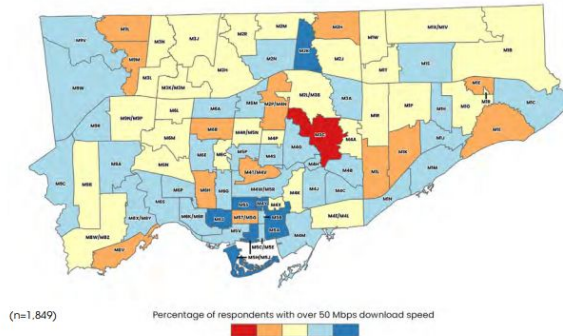
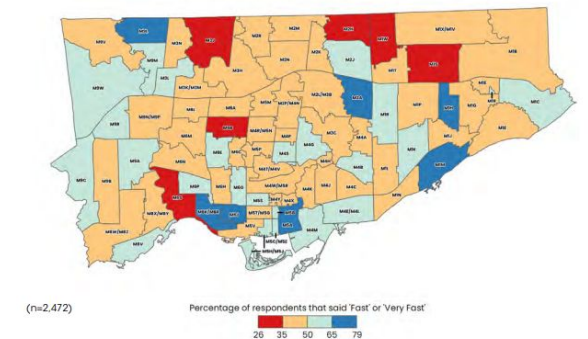


Figure 9:  
Proportion of Respondents with Fast or Very Fast Home Internet Service Relative to Needs



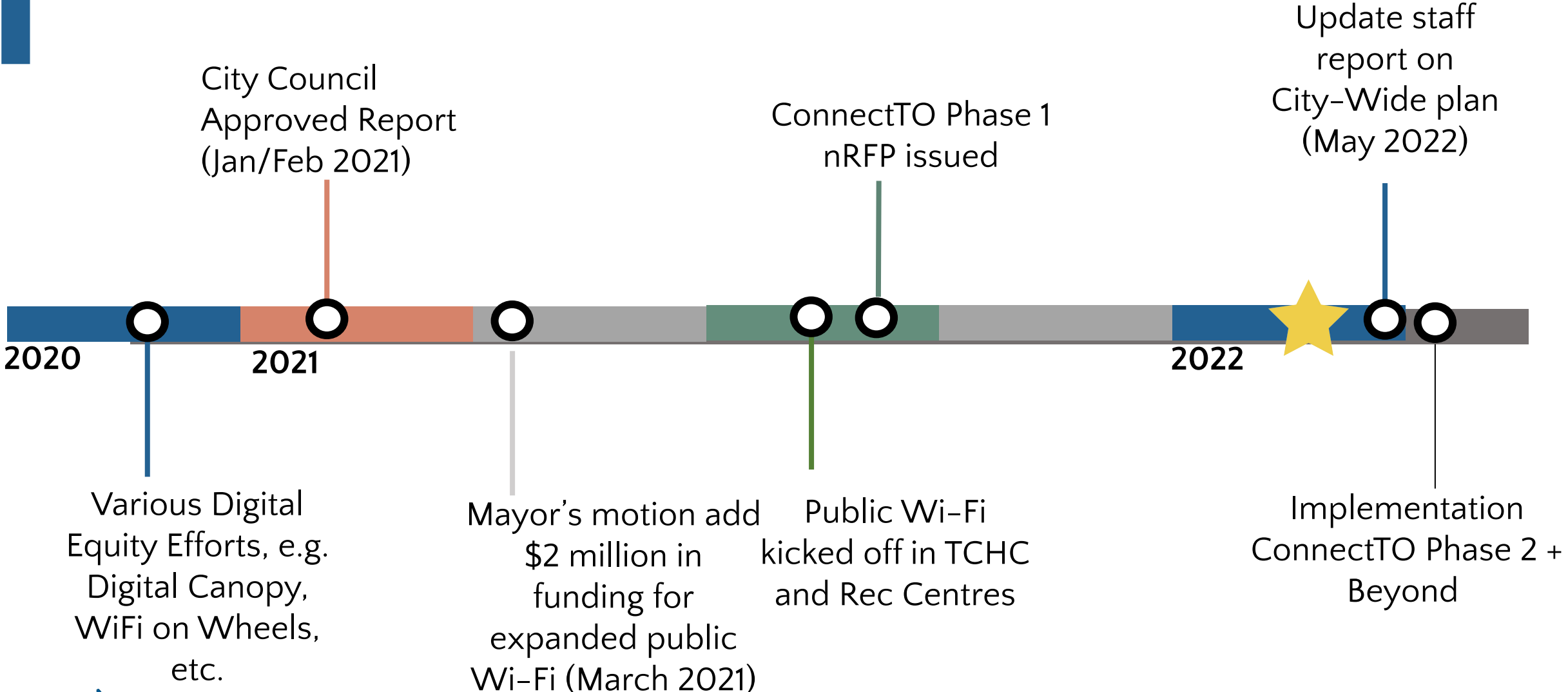
Half of Toronto's low-income households (52%) and of those aged 60 and older (48%) report download speeds below the national target of 50 Mbps





# ConnectTO Snapshot

# ConnectTO Roadmap



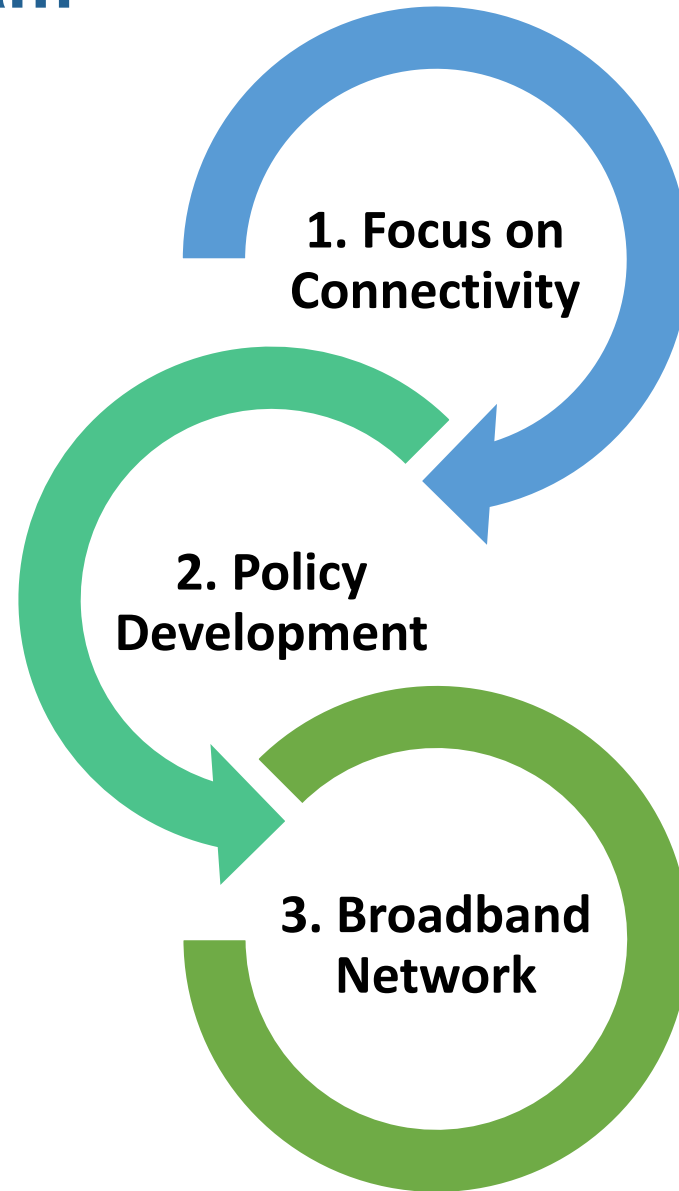


# ConnectTO Outcomes





# The ConnectTO Program



# 1. Focus on Connectivity

- Access to the internet is increasingly recognized by countries and organizations around the world as an essential tool for participation in modern democratic society.
- The City is committed to reducing the digital divide by improving digital connectivity.
- Goal: Ensure that residents are connected – not divided – by technology.

“Dig Once”  
Policy

Wi-Fi in  
Public Spaces

Connectivity  
in Planning

Connectivity  
& Affordable  
Housing



## 2. Policy Development

- The need for a comprehensive City of Toronto Digital Equity Policy has been identified as a policy gap.
- This policy will be developed as part of the Digital Infrastructure Plan, to advance a fulsome understanding of digital inclusion issues and the digital divide.

Research & Assessment

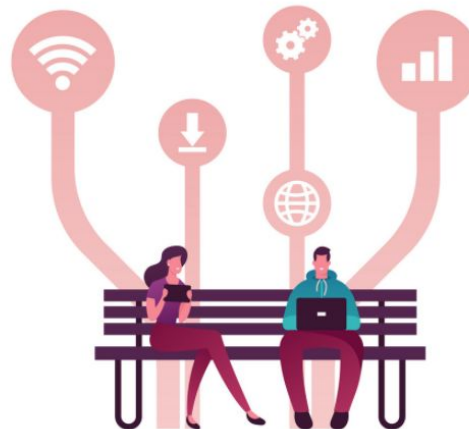
Device Access

Adaptive Technologies

Digital Literacy Training

Internet Access

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines



# 3. Broadband Network

## Expanded High-Speed Internet Access for underserved Torontonians

Reduce the digital divide by improving digital connectivity

## Partnership Opportunities

Co-Develop public/private collaboration

## Municipal Broadband

Leverage municipal assets to create connected digital infrastructure



Expanded Internet Access



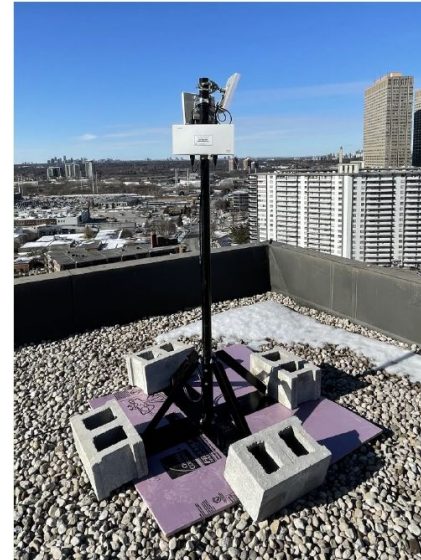
Public/Private Sector Opportunities



Leverage municipal broadband assets

# Public Wi-Fi – Connecting the Comm

- Digital access is provided to over 3,500 units and roughly 7,700 Torontonians in our Tower Neighbourhood buildings through Digital Canopy
- 9 youths completed 12-week Youth Learning and Workplace program, facilitated for the City through the CEE Centre for Black Youth Professionals.
- Approximately 300 City-owned locations are slated to be connected with public Wi-Fi by 2024.



*"I don't know where to start!!! \*Members names program staff\* have each played a role and have impacted my life in a way that they might sadly never fully understand. My words could express so much about how I feel but I'm utterly thankful!"*

*"Improved as a person for my personal life throughout my time in the digital canopy program, I also improved as a professional person as well."*

*"During a time when most people were isolated due to Covid-19, CEE has been a great source for my mental health and community. In the afternoons I appreciated the IT lessons that better helped me understand more about Technology and how the Internet works, these are such great skills that I'm happy to continue to use in my future and onwards. Thank you all!"*



# WiFi on Wheels

The City of Toronto and Toronto Public Library offered free outdoor wi-fi access through the BookMobile, 5 anchored devices (iPads), and staff, to select two parks in north west Toronto from August 4 - 8, 2020.





# Virtual Caseworker Initiative

## Total of 8 pilots testing a variety of scenarios:

- ✓ One-on-one case planning and supportive contacts
- ✓ Group workshops and information sessions
- ✓ Virtual Caseworker Booths set-up in two City Shelters for clients to connect with TESS staff (Ontario Works supports)
- ✓ Youth connecting virtually from mobile devices with City Youth Outreach Workers
- ✓ Staff and clients each connecting independently from home
- ✓ Low income residents applying for Ontario Works via Webex at the Applications & Support Centre (ASC)
- ✓ Virtual Caseworker Booth set-up at local library branch to support service access



# Digital Literacy in Communities



Toronto Community Housing, ConnectTO and the Toronto Public Library have partnered to bring the Community Librarian (CL) to TCHC communities. The CL Program in TCHC is funded by a donor through the Toronto Public Library Foundation. In addition to the CL Programs, the Balsam Foundation is also providing funding for 135 laptops to be distributed as part of the TCHC initiative. The entire TCHC program is to be delivered over a 3-year period, based on the receipt of these funds.

We're also exploring how Toronto Employment Social Services may be able to support digital access subsidies to help with similar pilots.





**Thank you.**