

# City of Sacramento

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2020-00918, **Version:** 1

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**Title:**

**COVID-19 Response: CARES Act Framework and Agreement: Digital Equity Response Program**

File ID: 2020-00918

**Location:** Citywide

**Recommendation:**

Adopt a Resolution: 1) approving the Digital Equity Response (G02610100) Program; 2) transferring \$750,000 to the Digital Equity Response Program from the allocation for the Digital Divide Program in the Federal CARES Act Fund (Fund 2704); and 3) authorizing the City Manager or City Manager's designee to negotiate and execute a CARES Act grant agreement with United Way California Capital Region (UWCCR) in an amount not to exceed \$750,000 for the implementation of the City's COVID-19 Digital Equity Response Program.

**Contact:** Maria MacGunigal, Chief Information Officer, 916-808-7988, Information Technology Department.

**Presenter:** None.

**Attachments:**

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Coronavirus Relief Fund Programs
- 3-Agreement
- 4-Resolution

### Description/Analysis

**Issue Detail:** On May 12, 2020, Council conducted a workshop discussing a Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) framework and funding priorities, and on May 26, 2020, Council adopted a general framework for funding priorities. During the workshop, Council expressed overall interest in funding programs and projects that provide small business assistance, get people back to work, offer opportunities for youth enrichment, address homelessness and housing issues, and support families impacted by this pandemic. The deadline for expending CRF funds is December 30, 2020. Given this

short time frame, Council requested staff identify projects and programs for immediate CRF funding and implementation that reflect the City Council's commitment to support digital equity and inclusion in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many households and individuals in Sacramento face unprecedented challenges due to the isolation and economic conditions arising from efforts to reduce the number and severity of COVID-19 infections. The lack of access to digital resources isolates some individuals and households from resources, services, and social emotional support while the Sacramento County stay-at-home order is in effect. The Sacramento COVID-19 Digital Equity Response program will specifically target individuals who lack adequate access and resources due to COVID-19, have needs which are unmet by existing resources, and historically face barriers to digital resources and knowledge.

The Information Technology Department sought applications for programs that will extend and enhance access to the internet, computer equipment, and digital skills and knowledge to underserved community members and households affected by the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic. On July 29, 2020, staff issued a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and Request for Applications solicitation inviting organizations to submit proposals to implement the City's COVID-19 Digital Equity Response Program. Six organizations submitted proposals. Staff evaluated the proposals and concluded the proposal from UWCCR best met the City's requirements for implementing this program.

The UWCCR will work in partnership with the City, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), internet and equipment service providers, and the community, to provide services to families and individuals affected by COVID-19.

This program will provide up to 10,000 qualifying Sacramento City households internet connectivity, up to 1,000 individuals and families with computers or hot spots at no cost to the individual or family, and digital literacy training and outreach for community members, seniors, individuals with limited English skills, and children in eligible households.

The overall design of the program will consist of working with key stakeholders and community-based organizations to identify unconnected households through a coverage & mapping exercise. Utilizing the available data and working with partner organizations to gather community feedback, UWCCR will develop a multi-faceted program that has three interconnected phases that include assessment, program delivery, and evaluation and program effectiveness. To achieve these goals, the program is based on a community-based approach. Given the wide variety of needs in the community, this approach first asks the community what their needs are and develops the programming around meeting those needs. For example, a family with school aged children can have vastly differing needs than a senior who has never used a computer, or a college student who is struggling with inadequate bandwidth. Asking the community and developing a data driven approach to program development will allow for better program delivery, effectiveness, and sustainability.

The draft grant agreement with UWCCR (Attachment 3) describes UWCCR's planned activities. Staff will work with the City Attorney's Office to finalize the agreement, consistent with the terms approved by Council.

**Policy Considerations:** The City has been impacted by the global pandemic. Establishing programs and budgets that include federal CARES Act funding is consistent with City Council action relative to state and federal grant awards.

**Economic Impacts:** None.

**Environmental Considerations:** The report does not constitute a "project" as the activity will have no significant effect on the environment and is a continuing administrative activity. It is therefore exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3);15378(b)(2)).

**Sustainability:** Not applicable.

**Commission/Committee Action:** Not applicable.

**Rationale for Recommendation:** Digital access in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is a prerequisite for not only full and meaningful participation in our economy and society but has become a necessity for access to basic health care, food, and social services. To address the immediate needs related to insufficient or lack of digital access exacerbated in the wake of the pandemic we proposed to initiate a project to help individuals and households in immediate need of access to the internet, computer equipment, and necessary knowledge to participate digitally.

Executing a CARES ACT grant agreement with UWCCR to establish a Digital Equity Response Program will allow the City to provide economic relief to its residents impacted by COVID-19. The establishment of a Digital Equity Response Program will bring much needed digital resources and opportunities to so many of Sacramento's residents who have lost their jobs due to layoffs and/or closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and will enable students to access the tools they need to participate in distance learning.

**Financial Considerations:** On April 21, 2020, the City received \$89.6 million from CRF to address impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. An allocation of \$1.05 million was previously approved for the Digital Divide Program which is included as a part of the CARES Act Program (G02610100). Staff recommends retransferring \$750,000 from the Digital Divide Program to support the Digital Equity Response Program. To date the City Council has approved a little over \$68.7 million for programs and projects, excluding other recommendations in this agenda. The CRF Programs schedule reflecting Council's allocations through August 11, 2020, is included as Attachment 2.

**Local Business Enterprise (LBE):** Not applicable.