



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of

Date: Feb. 11, 2008

To: Committee of the Whole

Referral to: N/A

Subject: Strategy to administer the Wireless Minneapolis community benefits in 2008.

Recommendation: Approve recommendation for how the City of Minneapolis should: develop a 2008 (interim) process for managing the Wireless Minneapolis community benefits, including the development of 2008 (interim) standards and protocols for the Wireless portals and a process for soliciting requests and allocating community benefits to nonprofit organizations.

Previous Directives:

Prepared by: _____
Sara Dietrich, Communications Director

Approved by: _____
Steven Bosacker, City Coordinator

Presenters in Committee: Sara Dietrich

Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval ___ Date _____
- Civil Rights Approval Approval ___ Date _____
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval ___ Date _____

Financial Impact

- No financial impact
- Action is within the Business Plan

Community Impact

- Neighborhood Notification
- City Goals
- Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning Code

Background Information

In 2006 the City of Minneapolis signed a 10-year contract with US Internet to build and manage a wireless network across the city. US Internet Wireless is currently in the process of constructing the wireless network. As part of the contract the City negotiated a comprehensive set of community benefits that go far beyond what any other city in the country has negotiated.

Digital Inclusion Fund

One of the most significant community benefits the City received as part of the contract with US Internet Wireless is the establishment of the Digital Inclusion Fund. US Internet Wireless contributed \$500,000 as seed money to establish the Fund and 5% of the network's pretax revenues will go to the fund. In total, it is expected that about \$11 million will go into the Digital Inclusion Fund over the 10-year life of the contract.

The Digital Inclusion Fund supports efforts to bridge the digital divide in Minneapolis (and surrounding areas) by providing qualified organizations with financial resources to promote technology literacy programs serving people with disabilities, low-income, new immigrant, displaced worker, senior, and new-technology users.

The Minneapolis Foundation administers the Fund, and the Digital Inclusion Fund Advisors, a volunteer group of community, stakeholder and technology representatives, have been convened to set priorities and make funding decisions. In January the Digital Inclusion Fund awarded its first nine grants totaling \$200,000 to organizations across the city for programs to promote technology access and technology literacy.

Other Wireless Minneapolis community benefits

In addition to the Digital Inclusion Fund, there are a number of other community benefits spelled out as part of the contract with US Internet Wireless. Those include:

- A Minneapolis "civic garden," is a set of Web sites that people in Minneapolis can access free of charge, even if they don't subscribe to the service.
- A set of Wireless "community" portals that are the "entry" points for folks who are logging onto the wireless network. Anyone who has a computer with wireless capabilities will be able to access these community portals, even if they are not a paid network subscriber.
- 100 free wireless accounts to be awarded to nonprofit organizations.
- \$15,000 in annual Wireless Minneapolis monthly subscription vouchers for volunteers who are offering training in Community Technology Centers.
- Up to 5% of the City's geographic area, including some parks and plazas, designated as free WiFi zones.

While the contract with US Internet Wireless includes those community benefits, there is no structure, standards or policies developed to guide their use and implementation.

Strategy Recommendations

To capitalize on the community benefits immediately, it is recommended that the City engage the members of the Digital Inclusion Task Force and the Digital Inclusion Fund Advisors for a limited tenure (2008). Their assignment would be to:

- Develop interim guidelines that direct how the 100 free non-profit accounts will be allocated in 2008; solicit requests for free accounts from non-profits that meet these guidelines; and make recommendations for recipients of 2008 accounts.
- Develop interim guidelines that direct how the \$15,000 in volunteer service vouchers will be allocated in 2008; solicit requests for volunteer vouchers from non-profits that meet these guidelines; and make recommendations for recipients of 2008 accounts.
- Develop interim "acceptable use" guidelines for content on the community portals and in the Civic Garden and make recommendations for community portal and Civic Garden content for 2008.
- Develop recommendations for how the City of Minneapolis should address community involvement and oversight of the community benefits and the City's community technology agenda.