

Charlotte 2025: The Connected City (Saturday, March 21)

FACILITATORS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT I

Overview: Taking the lead from Google’s “fiberhood” movement, this conference considers what it means to build a vibrant, interconnected, engaged, information ecosystem. Fiber is a conduit, but what is the fabric that holds our families, neighborhoods, communities, businesses, and cities together? What does the connected city look like? How do we make technology relevant to the residents of our cities? Do our goals of universal adoption include practical policies for digital literacy and inclusion? The Saturday workshop is focused on building a road map for 2025, turning a vision for information technology into a sustainable action plan for Charlotte. ***The following questions are a guide for your group. Each group will report back after the breakout session to share key observations.***

1. Introductions – introduce who you are, your role, and your interest in digital literacy and inclusion.

For facilitators:

Add an icebreaker to the intro. For example: “Also tell us what would be your biggest problem if you found yourself in a situation where you were not connected to the Internet for one whole day.”

Aaron Deacon – (facilitator) KC Digital Drive

Jenny Matz – UNCC Community Relations

Dean Brodheg (?) – Corporate security (past); currently volunteering with AARP post-retirement

Tom Woodshire (?) – City of Charlotte

William Hughes - Oaklawn Park Community

J’Tanya Adams – Historic West End Partners

Amalia Deloney – Media Democracy Fund (day); Digital Equities Spokesperson for 28208 – not enough representation from the constituents who are most affected probably because the recruitment was done via internet. If you are not part of the digital conversation, you get excluded. (For example Swan, West Boulevard Coalition, Free Mo West, Wilkinson Corridor

John Lipke (?) – Susan G. Komen

Jeff Stoball (?) – City of Charlotte CIO

2. Within this sector, what do you believe to be the specific challenges for digital literacy and inclusion in Charlotte? What opportunities are unique to Charlotte?

For facilitators:

What are we already doing in this sector? Discuss existing action plans, working groups and activities. What’s working and why? What has not worked? What are existing gaps? Who are your constituents and what do you know about their needs?

Organizations that are not here but should be:

Swan

West Boulevard Coalition

Free Mo West

Wilkinson Corridor

Telecommunications companies

Town and city reps

Rural areas and those who have no transportation, low wage earners, children and teens,

Fast food organizers

Latino

NW school of the arts

Dentists

Five points Realty

JCSU
NWSA
Small black business sectors
Community college - CPCC
Cultural establishments
Rec centers
Local churches including those of non-Christian faiths
Politicians – mayor, city manager
Fire, police, military
Goodwill and other large non-profits
Disabled, elderly, handicapped
Entertainment including media
Latibatt Collard Green Museum
Charlotte leadership programs CBI, FFTC, Leadership Charlotte, ALF

What is civic engagement? Are those who are not here, civically engaged? Are they engaged digitally? Is this a catch-up?

- User versus sponsor (Next-door neighbor). The modes of civic engagement vary. How neighborhoods use technology varies. How do you use your time to be civically engaged? How do you optimize your time to be civically engaged?
- Step back from the language of civic engagement. What is the end goal for the community? The right to communicate is part of being human. If we want meaningful communication, we have to establish the baseline on which to build. We have to be careful of being too narrow – the residents of a community have to be brought to an equitable level.
- What is the value of what is being shared? People need to see what the return is. People are skeptical – why bother? Why should I care? They therefore remain in silos. If you don't engage then you never see the return anyway. Using the digital aspect helps because technology makes it more time efficient to share. The right to communicate vs. the obligation to communicate. The environment has to be created so that people feel that their contribution is of value.

3. What else do we need to know? What data would you need in order to develop a strategy for digital literacy and inclusion? What do you need to know about resources in our community? How can we most readily share this information?

For facilitators:

What do you need to know about the needs, barriers and challenges to digital literacy and inclusion in our community? Who can help us answer these questions? What other questions should we ask?

Asset inventory – what do we have in the community currently that are going after these digital inclusion or civic engagement? (In the after discussion, certain organizations were struck out because they were deemed as not being involved in civic engagement or digital inclusion)

~~Knight Foundation~~
~~Foundation for the Carolinas~~
~~Charlotte leadership programs CBI, FFTC, Leadership Charlotte, ALF~~
~~Neighborhood organizations~~
~~Packard Place~~
~~Bike stuff~~
~~JCSU — air, water, food initiative — Beatties Ford~~
~~NC Job Centers~~
~~Libraries~~
~~Makers Spaces~~
~~Rec Centers — community centers, cultural centers~~
~~Public Housing~~
~~Re-entry organizations~~
~~Advocacy organizations~~
~~Inter-faith initiatives~~
~~Alumni clubs~~
~~Neighborhood Business Services~~
~~United Agenda for Children~~
~~Crossroads Charlotte~~

Charlotte Community Cabinet
~~UNCC Urban Institute~~
IT-ology
Project Lift
Urban Institute
College of Communication and Informatics
~~Levine Foundation~~
Councilpeople
~~Envision Charlotte~~
~~Together Charlotte~~
Annual Charlotte Chamber of Commerce campaign
Ethnic driven constituents

Who connects these initiatives?

How many of them focus on the groups that are not represented? Few.

Initiatives need to happen in the community. Partnerships need to be formed between those who are doing the same kinds of things e.g. Knight, FFC, libraries. Organizations must understand the needs of the communities and what they already have in terms of resources. Get other voices from the community e.g. churches, and they can reach out in terms of being a church leader not as a community organizer. Use existing organizations to drive the conversation and initiatives. Think about all of the other attendant issues e.g. re-entry, single parent homes, education levels. Communities know what communities need. Digital literacy cannot happen without responding to the other needs. Correlation is not causation. Digital illiteracy as an outcome of other issues not the cause of it. We must make sure that we are measuring the correct problem, therefore we must identify what the problem is.

4. What would success look like in this sector? Draft a vision for the connected city to be shared in the report-out.

For facilitators:

What are the desired outcomes of your work as individual stakeholders? What is the desired impact of your collective work?

What will success look like in 2025 in terms of success in digital inclusion or civic engagement?

- Achieving parity in digital access utilization to utility utilization.
- A really connected, intelligent accessible group of engaged citizens - e.g. like in Singapore where libraries are super-cool!
- Rec centers, tech centers, social service agency combo
- Expanding the lifeline subsidy – NC law
- One stop shop – fewer silos – for digital training – action and cohesion
- Be able to walk around Charlotte and be connected – connectivity in public spaces
- Socio-economic mobility
- People need to be able to have access in their homes to do what is meaningful to them
- Stronger local grassroots organizations

Who is responsible to make this happen?

- We all do!
- City manager
- City of Charlotte
- A new umbrella organization
- Combo of leaders of the invested sectors – Duke, CHS, FOC etc.
- Libraries

5. How could we move this work forward to achieve that vision? What role can you play? Who else needs to be engaged?

For facilitators:

What recommendations would you make for ongoing working groups focused on digital literacy and inclusion? How would you like to be involved? Who are your strategic partners and what role could they play? Who is missing among your stakeholders and how might we involve them?