Tech Executive Leadership Initiative

Anita Balaraman

Laura Ellena

Quaseer Mujawar

Aaron Ogle

Miro RabVass

To learn more about this project, please visit aspentechpolicyhub.com/teli

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

EDEN: NYC Digital Equity Index and Provider Accreditation

Making digital equity a competitive advantage for digital businesses

Photo by Kai Pilger via Pexels

BACKGROUND

As part of their 10-week policy training, the leaders of the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative spent 6 weeks working on a real-world government challenge. In teams of 4–5, the leaders proposed ideas to help the City of New York ensure that vendors awarded contracts through its record-setting investments in broadband infrastructure – which are further detailed in the City's Internet Master Plan (IMP) and request for proposals for broadband expansion – go beyond lip service and adhere to City's digital inclusion principles to meaningfully close the digital divide. Each team narrowed its focus to a specific part of the problem, conducted research, and developed solutions. Below is an overview of one team's solution: a digital equity index that would inform a provider accreditation process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To incentivize providers to improve equitable access to broadband and evaluate their progress, the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (MOCTO) should implement a rigorous and holistic summary of digital equity indicators – the 'Expanding Digital Equity in NYC (EDEN) Index.' The EDEN Index would enable MOCTO to consistently assess provider performance and accredit exemplary providers as "digital equity champions." MOCTO should couple the model with a public dashboard to communicate providers' accreditation status.

PROBLEM

As part of the City's Internet Master Plan, MOCTO would like to en-

sure that vendors adhere to the [City's Broadband Principles](#): equity, performance, affordability, privacy, and choice. There currently exists no way for the City to rigorously and consistently evaluate how vendors are adhering to the Broadband Principles. In addition, many current assessments of digital equity do not measure critical characteristics such as disparities in community technical skills or the value that communities receive from using digital tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To consistently measure how broadband providers contribute to digital equity, and to incentivize better adherence to the City's Broadband Principles, MOCTO should:

A. **Implement the 'Expanding Digital Equity in NYC' (EDEN) Index to holistically measure and report digital equity across providers.** The EDEN Index goes beyond just measuring broadband subscription rates by incorporating 5 metrics:

　　1. **Access** to fixed or mobile internet and telephone;

　　2. **Skills** such as adult literacy, academic enrollment, and entrepreneurship;

　　3. **Use** of technology and digital services, such as the use of e-banking or e-government services;

　　4. **Supportive environment** metrics, such as broadband affordability, access to financial services, and trust in technology; and

　　5. **Historical disenfranchisement** metrics such as housing instability, access to support services, and median income.

B. **Accredit companies as 'Digital Equity Champions' using an assessment derived from the EDEN Index,** and brand high-performing providers as 'equitable' companies using a badge system.

C. **Create a public dashboard** built using the [NYC Open Data Platform](#) that communicates the index and accreditation status for providers to all stakeholders.

For more information about this proposal, please see: (1) an [implementation plan](#), which provides further detail on using the Index and building the accreditation system; (2) a [ReadMe file](#) for constructing the EDEN Index; (3) [prototype dashboard](#) for communicating EDEN Index results to the public; and (4) sample information sheets for [companies](#) and [the public](#) to learn more about the EDEN Index and accreditation process.

Tech Executive
Leadership Initiative

ABOUT TELI

This project was completed as part of the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative (TELI), a 10-week skills-building initiative that prepares experienced technology leaders to engage effectively with public sector challenges. Learn more at aspentechpolicyhub.com/teli.

The Aspen Institute
2300 N St. NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20037
202 736 5800

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE