



SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
**Department of Disability
and Aging Services**



City & County of San Francisco
**Mayor's Office
on Disability**

2021 Empowered San Francisco Technology Needs Assessment

Thriviving in Place

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Summary of Key Findings

With support from the Empowered Cities grant initiative and the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS), Thriving in Place (TiP) developed a city-wide needs assessment to understand the technology barriers and unmet needs of San Francisco residents with disabilities and older adults (60+) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results of this survey will help inform the City's strategy for bridging the digital divide and increasing the accessibility of digital programs and services.

Throughout this 6-month process, we engaged thousands of San Franciscans who faced significant technology challenges. The Project Team and Community Advisory Coalition surveyed 3,089 people with disabilities and older adults, held 9 focus groups with disabled people from marginalized groups, and interviewed over 40 local disability & aging leaders to identify the biggest technology barriers faced by disability communities. Our survey pool was narrowed down to 1,529 stakeholders who reported a San Francisco zip code.

Bottom line: our research among people with disabilities, older adults, service providers and their allies, uncovered overwhelming evidence that there is an urgent need to close the digital divide in San Francisco. The fact that 64% of the 1,529 survey respondents reported that technology was a barrier in accessing needed services during COVID-19, underscores how urgent this issue is.

Download the report for the 2021 Empowered San Francisco Technology Needs Assessment:

View an accessible and screen-reader friendly PDF version of the report. For accessibility, we included an interactive table of contents to navigate the report sections, as well as optimized the report for screen-reader users. [View the Report \(PDF\)](#)

Learn More: tipsf.org/digital-equity/

Key Findings

1. Access to technology was a vital resource in receiving various COVID related public services and information, as well as maintaining social connections during the pandemic. [READ MORE](#)
2. Affordability, unreliability, and concerns about online security were reported to be primary barriers to accessing the internet. [READ MORE](#)

3. There are digital challenges that go beyond access to devices and the internet. [READ MORE](#)
 4. During the pandemic, receiving medical services through telehealth (phone and video) was both vital and presented some challenges for residents with disabilities and older adults. [READ MORE](#)
 5. Receiving telehealth services was particularly difficult for Latinx/Hispanic/Latin-American community. [READ MORE](#)
 6. Providing free or low-cost assistive or adaptive technology (AT) and AT training would be helpful in making AT more accessible. [READ MORE](#)
 7. The need for Assistive Technology (AT) services (such as affordable AT equipment and training) was greater for certain communities who have historically lacked equitable access. [READ MORE](#)
 8. Public computer labs such as public libraries, community centers, or tech labs served as important sources of internet for the disability community prior to the pandemic, particularly for transition-age youth (ages 18-26), veterans, and people experiencing homelessness. [READ MORE](#)
 9. The importance of safe, secure and centralized public computer labs are essential technology services. [READ MORE](#)
 10. Customized digital literacy services are necessary for a community with varied digital knowledge and experience. [READ MORE](#)
 11. Lack of access to the internet is a barrier to employment and academic success. [READ MORE](#)
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Overview of Policy Recommendations

Based on conversations with stakeholders, CBO community leaders and the Community Advisory Coalition, we identified 10 policy recommendations to improve digital equity in the City and County of San Francisco. An expanded list of policy recommendations can be found in the full report.

Policy Recommendations

1. Prioritize improving free or low-cost digital connectivity for residents with disabilities, older adults, and multiply-marginalized communities. [READ MORE](#)
2. Develop a centralized hub to build awareness around existing digital inclusion programs, free or low-cost internet, devices and Assistive technology (AT), and digital skills training. [READ MORE](#)
3. Develop pipelines to increase funding and distribution of free or low-cost Assistive or Adaptive Technology (AT) in partnership with public technology labs. [READ MORE](#)
4. Increase digital accessibility standards for remote services, programs and events across the city of San Francisco. [READ MORE](#)
5. Boost investment in digital literacy programs, with a particular focus on language access, accessibility, and cultural relevance.
6. Create and implement measures to ensure that employment opportunities and accessible workplace technology are available for residents with disabilities. [READ MORE](#)

7. Pilot initiatives aimed at lowering barriers to telehealth access in partnership with affordable and supportive housing communities to equip residents with internet access, telehealth tools and digital literacy skills.
8. Invest in digital equity programs and community-led solutions for transition-age youth with disabilities (18-26), youth experiencing chronic homelessness and youth in the foster care system.
9. Develop digital stewardship models to include community members with disabilities, older adults and other disproportionately affected people and communities in the designing, building, and evaluating of digital equity solutions.
10. Continue to develop the Bay Area Regional Digital Equity Consortium to advance local, regional and statewide Digital Equity efforts and common alignment of policy recommendations.
11. Roll-out recommendations and manage the implementation of urgent initiatives that address the needs and barriers of San Francisco residents with disabilities and older adults. [READ MORE](#)