

# SA DIGITAL CONNECTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A San Antonio and  
Bexar County,  
Public-Private-Community  
Collaboration

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## SA Digital Connects Launches Advocacy Effort

*Organization's leadership, board members, and community supporters advocate for funding to address digital inclusion in San Antonio and Greater Bexar County.*

SAN ANTONIO (October 11, 2021) — SA Digital Connects announces that it is engaged in an advocacy effort to secure funding that will address the initiatives outlined in the Community Plan and Roadmap. The aspiration is for San Antonio and Bexar County to become a nationwide leader in business, workforce development and economic growth through digital inclusion. With the extensive work that has already been done, and the financial commitment from the local public and private sector, San Antonio and Greater Bexar County are “shovel ready” to pursue these objectives and make use of future funding/opportunities. The proposed initiatives aim for the following in every household:

- **Availability:** Reliable access to speeds of 100/100 mbps
- **Affordability:** Adequate service at annual cost no more than 1% of household income
- **Device access:** Devices that meet technical requirements for basic applications
- **Adoption support:** Everyone knows how to get access and feels motivated to do so

“The partnerships have been created and work has been done to make effective and responsible use of available funds for digital inclusion,” states Luisa Casso, Manager, Corporate Communications, Toyota Motor North America and Chair of the SA Digital Connects Board. “But it will take a great deal of hard work and heavy lifting from all parties involved to meet our goals set forward in the Roadmap and Plan.”

Implementation of the aspirational goals will not be possible without a significant and meaningful investment from the Texas Legislature, County and City to close the digital divide. SA Digital Connects is committed to acting with an equity-first mindset, focusing initially on the areas with the greatest need, and with an aim to achieve these goals community-wide within 4 years.

Any appropriated state and federal funds would be directed to the City and County; they will determine how much of that funding will be designated for key digital access and equity projects/initiatives impacting households, students, older adults, veterans, people living with disabilities, workforce, telemedicine, and the justice system.

“With the development of the Plan and Roadmap, our community is ready, and we plan to engage everyone for activation. We are grateful to our business community for getting us started and sticking with us, and we look forward to turning to SA Digital Connects to guide us into the future,” said Brian Dillard, Chief Innovation Officer, City of San Antonio.

It will be the ongoing role of SA Digital Connects to ensure that the City and County have the required investment and key stakeholder involvement to meet the timelines, milestones, and overall objectives that have been identified in the Plan and Roadmap.

“The City of San Antonio and the Bexar County have mobilized and invested to support this plan and roadmap. We look forward to the allocation of local, state and federal dollars to implement the plan, but if we do not act now, we could lose this opportunity,” states Laura Cole, Bexar County BiblioTech Director.

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To lead this effort for SA Digital Connects, **the organization welcomes business and community leader, Marina Alderete Gavito, who will assume the responsibilities of founding Executive Director today.** Marina has worked for two of San Antonio's Fortune 500 corporations, USAA and Rackspace, and has demonstrated leadership in community initiatives that impact all parts of the city and county, such as TechBloc, VIA Board of Trustees, and the Bexar County Child Welfare Board.

"I am excited to bring my private sector tech and innovation experience to the SA Digital Connects team," said Gavito. "The SA Digital Connects plan is going to take the entire community's engagement and support, I am honored to lead the charge for the public-private-community collaboration. As the heavy lifting begins, I thank everyone in advance for their support and enthusiasm for this critical work!"

Achieving the SA Digital Connects goals will require cross-stakeholder support, engagement, and implementation. All stakeholders must come together and leverage their unique expertise to sustainably close the divide:

- **City, county, state, and federal policymakers** must prioritize sustainable funding
- **The private sector** needs to champion the need for digital investment
- **Service providers** need to ensure solutions can be provided affordably and reliably
- **Community organizations** can elevate the needs of the community
- **Educational entities** need to expand digital/tech curriculum
- **Philanthropies** can invest in ongoing research, data collection, and execution

The complete SA Digital Connects Digital Equity Community Plan and Roadmap is available on the community portal, which was unveiled to the public on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, at [www.sadigitalconnects.com](http://www.sadigitalconnects.com); or by emailing [connect@sadigitalconnects.com](mailto:connect@sadigitalconnects.com).

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## About SA Digital Connects:

SA Digital Connects is a public/private/community investment and unincorporated nonprofit dedicated to the implementation of the San Antonio and Greater Bexar County Community Digital Equity Plan and Roadmap that will lead to future action steps; including timelines, milestones, key stakeholder roles, and required investment for execution. With this roadmap, our community is "shovel ready" to make effective use of federal, state, and local funding for key digital access and equity initiatives impacting households, students, older adults, veterans, people living with disabilities, workforce, telemedicine, and the justice system.

The SA Digital Connects Board of Directors serves as the governing body of the unincorporated nonprofit. The Board is chaired by Luisa Casso, Manager of Corporate Communications and External Affairs for Toyota Motor North America. Vice Chair is Brian Dillard, Chief Innovation Officer for the City of San Antonio. Laura Cole, Executive Director of BiblioTech serves as Secretary.

## SA Digital Connects Executive Director Hiring Committee:

- Luisa Casso, Toyota Manufacturing Texas, SA Digital Connects Chair
- Brian Dillard, City of San Antonio, SA Digital Connects Vice Chair
- Laura Cole, Bexar County, SA Digital Connects Secretary
- Romanita Matta-Barrera, greater: SATX, SA Digital Connects Fiscal Agent and SA Works ED
- David Robinson, Jr., Weston Urban, Community participant
- Dax Moreno, Verity San Antonio, Community participant
- Rob Alfieri, Adobe, Community participant
- Candelaria Mendoza, COSA Innovation, Coordinating project
- Anita L. Fernández, OCI Group, Community Advocate on project
- Diane Warren, Bounceology, Consultant on project