**Pre-Tender ConnectTO Information Gathering Session for Phase 1 -
Edited Transcript from Webex Event on May 20, 2021 at 2:30 p.m.**

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to ConnectTO. We're very excited to have you here to talk to you about our pre-tender information gathering approach for phase 1.

So my name is Rhonda. I am a Management Consultant on the Digital City/Connected Communities team of the Technology Services division.

I'm excited to be here today as your host. I have the privilege of working with the ConnectTO team and working on this very exciting event for the City and we're all geared up for talking today. My role in this is going to be moderating the discussion and working with one of my other colleagues.

We will be helping out with the Q and A to make sure that your points are heard, and your comments are heard, as well as any questions answered in a little while.

Before we get started though, I thought we'll do a little bit of housekeeping. So, if I can have the presentation up, please.

Thank you. So, if we can move to the next slide. So it is a little bit of a different world that we're in, because of virtual meeting. Perhaps you are familiar with it because we've been working in this mode due to COVID for several months now, over a year. But we did want to go through a few reminders for everyone and also reassure you, if you are having any difficulties at all, that we're here to assist you.

So, the first thing is that the platform that we're using today is called Webex Events. So it has a few features that allow us to talk to one another virtually. You'll notice that you have panelists at the top, which I'll introduce to you shortly, and we have a screen that's showing you the slides that will remain up throughout the course of the event. And you'll also notice that you don't have your video on, so that is the process of how that works. There won't be a video for you and you're automatically muted.

The protocol will be here, if you do have a comment that you'd like to make, or you have a question that you'd like to post, we ask you to do one of two things. You can either type your question into the Q and A section, which you will notice down at the bottom right hand corner of your screen and we will be monitoring that throughout the event. Or you can raise your virtual hand, which is an icon next to your name in the participants list. Again, it's a button down at the bottom right, and you should see yourself in the list and you can raise your hand. There's literally a little hand button there for you as well.

So a few things, just to make note of. If you are having any audio or problems you can call in and listen, using the information that was in your Webex meeting event. We do want to again inform you that for privacy reasons, that's why your cameras are off and you'll be unmuted by default. I just wanted to make sure I cover everything for you.

We also want to remind you that you're not alone here, even though you may not see all of the attendees. So please refrain from sharing personal or confidential information that you may not want anyone else to know, of course, and we do have alternate approaches for Q and A, which I'll talk to you in a few a minutes as well.

There will be breaks throughout the presentation to take questions and answers even though we will be monitoring throughout. But we would ask that you hold your questions and comments until those points, if at all possible, throughout the event.

A few things, in terms of just code of conduct again, because it's virtual, it's a little bit different. But we want you to be personable, just as you would be in person, but we would ask you to address one thing at a time, you want to be direct and to frame your questions around specific topics that are relevant to what we're here for today.

Try to be brief and limit yourself to one question or comment at a time as there will be other opportunities for you and keep in mind that, as I said earlier, you're not alone here. Be a good listener keep an open mind and please be respectful. We are an inclusive public organization, and we believe in inclusion and equity, and everyone has a voice. So having said that we're excited to have you here. We appreciate that so, next slide please.

So you're aware, you may notice up at the top that there is a little red button that indicates this meeting is being recorded. We want it to make you aware of that and the reason for that is that we will be posting this online for future viewing and reference.

So that's our housekeeping points, but what I'd like to do now is, it's my privilege to introduce our panel here today.

So first, as I mentioned my name, but we have our panel today which includes, and I'll ask everybody to wave when I mention their name please. We have Lawrence Eta, who's Chief Technology Officer for the City of Toronto. Thank you, Lawrence. We have Alice Xu who is the Manager of Digital City/Connected Communities in the Technology Services division and we also have Tanvir Ahmad, who's a Category Manager in the Purchasing & Materials Management division.

And helping me today on some of the co-moderating of your questions is Hamish Goodwin. Also, a Management Consultant on the same team as me in the Technology Services division. So it's our privilege to be working with you today on ConnectTO. We're very excited as I mentioned, and to start our session off, it's my privilege to pass the virtual microphone over to Lawrence Eta, our Chief Technology Officer.

Thank you very much Rhonda and good afternoon everybody, it's great to have you here. We really appreciate you all taking the time to engage on this very important subject and opportunity for us to reach out to the community.

I'm going to start out with the land acknowledgement.

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Today we are here to discuss the digital equity and to look to the future of the type of place we want to live in. Reconciliation doesn't stop at the physical world: it extends to our digital spaces and beyond them. With that in mind, I would like to give voice to the words of Alexander Dirksen, a member of the Metis Nation, who delivered these remarks at Queen's University in November 2018. Alexander stated:

"There is so much wisdom in these territories and in the peoples who have been stewards of them since time immemorial. As we hold space today for dialogue on digital spaces, which so often feel ephemeral and borderless, it is critical for us to reaffirm the centrality of, and our connection to, these physical territories upon which we gather.

Meaningful change begins with recognition of technological innovation as a fundamental human endeavour. Technology is not a neutral force nor are digital spaces safe spaces for all, instead mirroring, replicating and at times exacerbating the real and pressing realities faced by Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities in physical spaces. A social justice lens must therefore be applied to all that we discuss, design and develop in the digital realm."

I'd like to again, personally, thank you each for attending.

We appreciate your time to help us build a solution that makes digital equity more achievable through the ConnectTO program. Go to the next slide. Thank you. So, the purpose of the meeting.

As outlined, City of Toronto Council requested the Chief Technology Officer and the Chief procurement Officer to engage with the civic tech community and also users that would be consuming this service, which includes also anti-poverty advocacy groups. And we want to hear from you, and that's what the essence of the information gathering sessions is about.

We want to leverage your expertise in the community prior to the issuing of tender documents being finalized for Connect TO.

The current situation we're faced at is, as part of the ConnectTO phase 1, the City of Toronto will soon seek and select that 3rd party service provider in order to initiate the Internet and the network connectivity for those 3 identified sites in the 2021, through a tender, a procurement process.

As City staff, with my colleagues, we're all gathering information to help inform the ConnectTO phase 1 which will help build out those procurement documents before they are finalized and issued.
In the future, further ConnectTO consultation opportunities will be provided in 2021, 2022 and beyond. For example, the digital equity policy.

We'll move to the next slide please. So our agenda today.

There will be presentations by staff, which will include an overview of the ConnectTO initiative as well as the procurement process that the City of Toronto is about to embark on for phase 1.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions about the presentation before we move on to the information gathering portion of the session, which will be in the form of staff asking you questions to help inform us. We look forward to hearing from you as community and as experts to help inform and shape the way we highlight the requirements for the ConnectTO phase 1 within our procurement process.

So, I will now move to the next slide and I will hand it over to my colleague Alice who will present an overview of the ConnectTO initiative.

Thank you so much Lawrence and thank you to everyone for being here today. It's really nice to see so many, I wish I could say friendly faces, but I'm sure you have friendly faces on. I see many friendly names

and people we've connected within the past. It's a pleasure to have you here today.

So I would like to just go through a little bit of history of what brought us here today. So, in July 2019, City Council directed City staff to create something called a digital infrastructure plan, well it ended up being called the Digital Infrastructure Plan.

We went out to do some public consultation on this in October 2019, and we provided a report back to City Council in January of 2020 where we outlined how we'll approach creation of this plan as well as asking City Council to adopt certain working principles of this plan.

And so, working principles of that plan include principles, such as equity and inclusion, a well-run city, social, environmental and economic benefits, as well as privacy and security. And so these are the guiding principles that have been helping us shape the work for the plan overall.

But, of course, some extraordinary things happened in 2020, and it shifted us from not only looking at this as a plan to intersect with the City processes to, you know, so called rolling up our sleeves to actually work on some digital equity initiatives.

So for example, we initiated in June 2020, a digital canopy initiative that, sees free public Wi-Fi being provided through a donation to a number of tower neighborhood buildings here in the city. Throughout the rest of 2020 we also engaged in other initiatives, such as a Wi-Fi on Wheels pilot in parks. Working through donations, such as 500 smartphones that were donated through the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council, as well as doing some research for deeper understanding of the digital divide here in the City of Toronto with five different higher learning institutions, colleges and universities to examine that digital divide in its, you know, multiple number of contexts and textures.

So that brought us to a better understanding of the digital divide and a better understanding of how the City can participate in this space and really deliver outcomes to the community as we understand it may need.

So we brought a report to City Council in January 2021 which passed in February that gave us direction to do the work that we're here to do today, including, of course, a phase 1 approach, which I'll get into it a little bit later and you know, be speaking with you to get information from you this afternoon.

The outcomes that we're looking for are wide, we're looking to increase digital equity, which is by reducing Internet costs for vulnerable and underserved Torontonians.

Another benefit we're looking for is economic recovery. Connecting homes and businesses with high speed Internet, to help stimulate the digital economy and enabling working from home. We're looking for long term, fiscal health of the City by adding more value to the City infrastructure with existing assets as well as we're looking to continue the City's technology leadership.

How do we attract and enable future and emerging connected technologies here in the City?

We are looking at the ConnectTO program in three main ways. I'll get into that a little bit deeper right now.

The first way that we're looking at is embedding connectivity as an outcome for the way the City does its

business. So when we're looking at building affordable housing, retrofitting buildings, when we're looking at doing construction, or we're looking at repaving our streets; when we're looking at building and improving services. How do we actually recognize connectivity as a fundamental need for our residents and businesses and embed that into the work that we do?

So, things that we're thinking about doing are a dig once policy. How do we embed that into the way that we conduct our business from, what I consider to be the hard services side, a lot of the coordination to understand how to embed more Wi-Fi and public spaces, connectivity and city planning, etcetera.

The second, large bucket of work, as we think about it, is policy development and we'll be doing additional consultations on this and hope to see you there as well.

So this is where we are trying to really understand the digital equity policy as a city. We know it's not just a matter of access. It's, you know, what are some digital literacy elements we can embed into this? What does device access look like, what about adaptive technologies? What about, you know, web content, accessibility? We're thinking about this in a number of different ways, and we're doing different pieces of work to move that forward. And so that's also a large focus of ours.

But I think what you're here to talk about today, is this idea of a municipal broadband network. So, this is something that, we're not the first city to do this. Hopefully, not the last. Many other places in the world have done this and done this well, which is the idea about how do we leverage our assets, municipal assets, for the ultimate goal of better connectivity for our residents, especially those who are underserved.

And so in the middle here, is where we're describing something that's this partnership opportunity with a service provider. How do we work with them? Through a number of different ways to ultimately expand high speed Internet access for underserved Torontonians. And so we are here to start that conversation with you. Now I'd like to show you a little bit about the focus of today's session, which is the scope of phase 1.

We are looking at three to four locations. We've described three in our report and City Council had also asked us to look at an additional one. So we're looking at three to four locations here in Toronto in the areas that are described here, to look for an opportunity through this procurement so that we can implement a solution to the community in the area. And what we're looking to evaluate out of this process is the, the physical connectivity and network, you know, how is the service management working as well as the business model in general.

So the outcome of this, as well as the other work that I just described, will inform how we go about future phases, and make recommendations to City Council.

So, in terms of timing we are, we're here now, we're doing this sort of formal initiation.

We'll be looking to issue the tender for procurement in the next month or so, pretty soon and we'll hope to have sites initiated towards Q3 of 2021. And we have a plan to report back to City Council with recommendations, not only how the phase 1 sites go as well as the other areas of work I described, back to City Council at the end of 2021.

So I'd like to pass it over now to my colleague, Tanvir, to give us some understanding of the sourcing.

Thank you very much. Good afternoon everyone. I just wanted to walk everyone through the, the sourcing process, and the sourcing vehicle we will be utilizing for this initiative.

So everyone on the call, they have been participating in various traditional kinds of sourcing approaches.

The City of Toronto, as part of their transformation, introduced and is utilizing the negotiated request for proposal approach. That is the one we will be utilizing, explaining what exactly this approach looks like, and how it is going to be really working throughout the process of solicitation.

The key features of this approved sourcing approach is going to be a non-binding proposal. What does this mean?

It means that when we will be launching the nRFP, which is the negotiated request for proposal, there will be no binding agreement for no contract A, no contract B, no legal obligation until a contract will be signed between both parties. And the second feature is the negotiations with the top ranked proponents.

So, as per the nRFP and the scope of work and evaluation methodology and the criteria, which we will be disclosing as part of the RFP documents, we will be ranking and rating the proponents' proposals.

And then as per the disclosed evaluation criteria, we will be inviting the top ranked proponents and will be opening up the negotiations with them.

So, the negotiations, when we are talking about the negotiations, the negotiations will be conducted for both operational and pricing aspects, and they will be conducted on a 1-on-1 basis.

So, please remember that this is a public procurement process and we are obligated, we are mandated, and we are making sure that we are providing the level playing field, an equal, fair and transparent opportunity to everybody in the marketplace, and these negotiations are subject to non-disclosure agreements which will be signed by both parties.

So that's why there is absolutely no fear that one's information is going to be disclosed to another one. So, that's the overview of the key features of the negotiated request for proposal vehicle we will be utilizing in order to complete this solicitation activity.

Next slide please.

So, the contract negotiations meetings, as everybody knows that we are living in a virtual reality and virtual environment. So, City of Toronto has been conducting virtual meetings across the board for the last over one and a half years. And this is exactly the way we will be conducting our future business.

The contract negotiations will be conducted via Webex. This is exactly the perfect example in the way we are conducting our today's session.

So that's how we'll be doing the virtual 1-on-1 meeting with the top ranked suppliers as per the evaluation criteria. And the City will be inviting the suppliers to enter into a negotiation, which will be related directly to the full disclosure of the nRFP.

So the negotiation, as I stated, will definitely include, but not be limited to, the supplementary information pertaining to the operational efficiencies and the clarifications and some of the additional aspects. If we are feeling that there are gaps, we need to identify what you need to really gather additional information to fill those gaps. And we may also request for improved pricing or performance terms as well.

So, those are the major key aspects of the negotiation and the terms which will be included, that we will be providing to the marketplace.

So the next slide is the high level nRFP lifecycle process flow. That's how this entire sourcing vehicle is going to be working.

So first, we will be releasing our nRFP sourcing event into the Ariba system, which we are utilizing for posting all kinds of solicitations these days. And then all the market proponents, marketplace, will be submitting their proposal through Ariba. Those Ariba submissions are very secure and nobody can look into those submissions until the event is closed in the system.

Then we'll be following the evaluation process. We evaluate the bids, and based on the evaluation level rank, we'll invite the proponents for negotiation. And then we will follow the city's process to seek the award recommendations and approvals from City authorities, and then the contract is going to be awarded.

And then the final stage is going to be the contract execution stage, and that's when both the parties will be forming the legal binding agreement.

So, the last slide I'm going to just quickly walk through is the detailed evaluation process we're going to be using in the nRFP procurement. So, within the nRFP, this is just to give an idea, there may be more than 4 stages but right now, overall there are 4 stages for the main part.

First is the mandatory submission for evaluation. The next one is we will be asking for the technical capability and technical evaluation, then there will be a pricing evaluation.

And then the other one, the last 1 is going to be the negotiation stage. And after the negotiation stage, based on the evaluation criteria, we will be following the process for obtaining approvals and the contract award and the contract execution.

So, thank you very much. This is this is pretty much like the overall overview of sourcing process.

Hey Tanvir, it's Rhonda. We have one question. I think this should be directed to you. One question in the Q and A forum. It says, are proponents limited to individual organizations, will consortium/joint venture approaches be entertained? If so can these approaches be negotiated during response?

I believe that question was for me, right? Yes. So, sorry, I missed the first part of the question.

All right, I'll repeat it. It says, are proponents limited to individual organizations? Will consortium or joint venture approaches, be entertained? And if so, can these approaches be negotiated during response?

So sorry, I missed the first part of the question.

Alright, I'll repeat it. It says, are proponents limited to individual organizations? Will consortium or joint venture approaches, be entertained? And if so, can these approaches be negotiated during response?

I'm thinking they mean is that something that you would include in your response?

So we will be putting together any questions pertaining to the legal agreement, or any other partnership that can be asked during the open period and at that time, we will be consulting with our legal team and dealing with that and responding back to you.

Okay, thank you. We have another question. This one is also directed towards you. I hope at some point, you can share where we, as members of the public will have visibility of the process, especially as it pertains to this the negotiated part of the negotiated RFP.

So it will be when we will be posting the document, the entire process of the negotiation and evaluation will be fully disclosed to the marketplace.

Okay, we've got quite a few questions now coming in so just I'm going to go through a few of them make sure that we're not repeating here. There's a follow up to the proponents.

This this may be for more content for Alice or Lawrence. It says, is there one proponent required for all three sites or can there be different lead proponents for each of the three sites?

And a related question ask, is there a target maximum or minimum number of Internet service providers that the City would like to work with during the pilot or phase 1?

So Rhonda, the question about, is there one proponent required for all three sites? No, we are fully looking forward to working with multiple proponent if that's the way that the procurement works out. In terms of maximum, minimum number of ISPs, I don't have a number for you, we will have to work it within reason.

There's a question on, how are the priority neighborhoods selected? So I think I should just touch on that quickly. We selected both on need, as well, as, where they're already existing City planning processes and or in community engagement processes that are ongoing.

For example, the neighborhood of Malvern is one that we've heard from over many years that the business community has had insufficient fibre connectivity. And so that was actually an ask from back in 2017 when we had the broadband study here in Toronto. The other neighborhoods are also selected on need, and certainly, we're not looking at the… One thing I want to be clear about is the way that we're approaching this right now. It's not going to be entire neighborhood areas as defined in the neighborhood strategy, it's going to be specific buildings or areas in the, I guess, neighborhood names that you've seen.

So, that's how, you know, we'll be looking at a high concentration of those who are living under the low income measure, and we'll be working with colleagues in other areas in the City who are much more qualified to make these needs assessments and have more data on these points to select the buildings.

Okay, so there's another question regarding the negotiated RFP process. The way it was described, made it sound like the City will only negotiate with a single Internet service provider at a time. Is that correct?

Yes, it will be. Yes, it will be ranked and we will be negotiating with the top ranked service provider one at a time.

Okay, for Tanvir again, this is regarding the visibility or the transparency again. Can you kindly expand on where the visibility would be available? Would it be real time? Where can we engage with the process, if we have questions as the negotiations unfold?

So when the nRFP will be posted in the marketplace, so we always give the marketplace, the question answer session the timeline and then during that question and answer timeframe or time, period, the marketplace can ask any questions pertaining to the scope or the process which is not really clear, and we are more than happy to really answer those questions. That is always done, like, during the nRFP or RFP open period.

Okay, and this may be a follow up. I'm sorry, I can't quite tell, if it's for Purchasing or Technology Services. Will the contracts be rivalrous, such that vendors gain exclusive access, or is the City open to positioning their infrastructure as a platform upon which numerous groups could deploy and experiment with different models of Internet service providers?

So, I think I'll try to take that question on and maybe I'll take a look to Lawrence to get his vision on this.

I just want to be clear that there is a very finite scope that we're doing for phase 1 sites with this procurement. This procurement is not the entire ConnectTO program overall, which is to say, you know, that we're using this as a learning opportunity to evaluate a number of different criteria, like I mentioned earlier, for testing out the business model, testing out community response like we're doing right now, testing out the service, etcetera, and that's going to inform us for a larger deployments in the future which will be different in scope than what we're looking at right now.

So, I think some of the things that that were mentioned in the question are definitely things the City is considering for the larger program overall but right now we're just testing the idea through this small scope engagement as phase 1.

Okay, thank you Alice. There's a question. Perhaps it was not understood, around, what about people who are on social assistance who don't live in tower buildings?

So we're not looking at just tower buildings for this phase 1. We're obviously looking at many different areas in City for the larger phase. But for phase 1, we're looking at different building types, we're looking at different attributes of buildings. So, I apologize if I misspoke about towers, we're not just looking at towers.

Thank you, there's a question that says are residents the marketplace?

I think I can take that the marketplace would be suppliers of the services.

And the other, there's another question, what would be the criteria for evaluation at the technical and pricing stages? Which, I believe would be part of the details in the RFP right?

Yeah, so I can shed more light on that for the marketplace. Right now, the way Alice mentioned in the presentation, that right now we are dividing the City into multiple areas and the zones.

So this is what is being contemplated on a high level, and it will be fully disclosed as part of the scope of work when we will be putting together a clear scope of work, including how the City's going to be divided. The entire City portfolio will be divided into various different zones. And then, at the same time, the evaluation criteria will be disclosed and we want to give equal opportunity to the marketplace.

And then we do not want anybody being restricted to bidding for all the areas, or that they are only limited to one area. So everybody will be open (to bid on each area). However, the evaluation criteria will be disclosed. That is how we will be evaluating each and every bid submitted for a particular zone and the area.

 I will pause right there and see if there will be any follow up questions. But the evaluation criteria is going to be disclosed as part of the RFP based on the scope of work and the portfolio division.

Okay, so I have clarification and I think this is going to be our last question for this portion and there will be further opportunity as well from a time perspective.

So Tanvir kept referring to feedback from the marketplace. I was asking about resident feedback and visibility opportunities. Can he clarify, please? I'm not talking about vendor access.

The, in terms of the procurement, so Rhonda I just wanted to answer the question right. So the residents access to the sourcing event, that's the question?

Sorry, to remind everybody too, if you want, you can actually ask a question by raising your hands and directing, you know, saying your own question to the panel, that's up to you. We're certainly happy to continue doing what we're doing.

Sorry Alice, go ahead.

Yeah, so I think Rhonda, I agree if people want to ask the questions themselves, instead of us reading them out loud I think we're happy to have that discussion.

Somebody on the chat said it's hard to follow because you cannot read the questions, if you'd like, you can say, please post my question and then we can, as soon as we respond to it, everyone can see the question.

So we're just trying to keep your privacy in mind by not posting the questions. But as soon as we answer a question, the question and who's asking the question will show up. Just want to let you know, that's sort of how this application works.

I wanted to clarify my understanding of the question around feedback from the marketplace. So my understanding is, and Tanvir please confirm, there is no opportunity for the community to partake. Like the community, not the market community, right, for the community to partake in the procurement process after, you know. That's not something that that happens in the procurement negotiation process.

This is correct. As I mentioned, it is going to be a 1-on-1 discussion and submission and negotiation with the service provider.

Okay, thank you.

There's a question regarding budget, which I think we will probably be able to address in the information gathering portion of our discussion. Alice, perhaps it would be time to move forward.

So Rhonda, I think, yeah, we want to hear from everyone. We definitely don't want to miss out, but it's hard to do with this format. We can't really see your expressions. We can't really tell if you're comfortable with us moving on. Right? I wish I could see you. So I just wanted to just yeah, if it's okay, we'll move on now. But you can always let us know in the chat if, you know, if there's something else you want to talk about. But just in the interest of time, I think it's, it's a good idea. We do have a number of questions we'd like to gather your thoughts on.

There is one raised hand, Hamish if I can ask you.

Yep, that person can go ahead and ask the question.

Can you hear me? Okay great. Hi. My name is Curtis. I'm not really sure who is here. I'm wondering if other members of the communities that I identify with are here because it would be nice to get a read on them. Although this a public forum, it feels like I'm just engaging kind of like 1 on 1 or maybe watching a little panel presentation and I'd just like to make some, just a quick question about the format and you'll probably answer yes, this is because it's privacy, but, I just noticed that, you know, normally in public forums, when people make statements, they make it, like, in and amongst the other members of the public that they represent, or are a part of. They make them in view of their colleagues, they make them in view of experts and all of those interactions are visible to all of the other attendees. This is why it's called a public forum rather than a private forum. But just because of the affordances of this Webex, we cannot tell who is here, who is asking what questions, which questions are asked but not answered or how each question is answered, et cetera. So I just, I've noticed this new change in the Webex lately. And I just wanted to kind of make a question as to whether you had thought about that.

So, thanks, Curtis for the question. So, as I mentioned, we're happy if you ask a question and say, please post my question, we'll just respond to it with something. Then everyone can see the question, and we'll work on that fiercely in the background as this is happening. I want to say I've seen the questions come through. We're answering just about every question that we've seen, and I can tell you also that there are other people in the chat saying that they hear you and they agree with your comments. So I hear what you're saying.

We, you know, unless we get agreement from all 31 people who are here to say, hey, you know, please post my name. Please, please post my questions. The way that we want to embed privacy through this process is to, sort of, by default, not display that information.

I understand it's not what you were expecting and I'm sorry that it's not a good experience so far for you, but, I hope that answers your question and we have a sort of a little bit of a workaround.

Great, I'm starting to see people saying that they want their questions to be posted. Maybe they can tell me what questions they want me to post and we will be able to, once we answer it. Even if we don't answer the question in the chat, it will just show up, is what I'm trying to say.

Okay, there's a lot of questions around the areas, Alice. That may come out as we talk about the items

that we were going to be explaining that in the information gathering, I'll leave that up to you.

One person is asking around displaying comments, so some people are asking for that, but I don't know how we can say if everyone is okay with that.

Okay can I just ask, I've just I've seen a question come through. I'll try to answer it. Is it showing up on people's screens? The question is from Stewart.

There's something that's contradictory, are each of the three areas considered for separate nRFPs or is the City only going to talk to one best qualified bidder for all three? Please post this question to public.

I don't know if people can see that question in the public view. The way that we're trying to work on this plan is to separate out the sections so that there will be multiple opportunities for people to bid on either one or all three or four of the areas so that we are able to then negotiate and have an outcome, that is multiple proponents, if that makes sense.

We're not going to put them all together and negotiate, like, all four at the same time if we get multiple proponents. I hope that answers the question.

There's a question regarding with the decision not to position the city as an ISP as its own right. Was this informed by guidance from the City's legal department or was this decision based on strategic barriers?

I don't know if Lawrence wants to start giving us his strategic vision here.

I can certainly start off, Alice, and you can build on. Thank you for the questions. I think if we look at the actual report that we focused on was about the City's ability to leverage strategically and influence in terms of access and affordability.

The City's intent was essentially not to look into being an Internet service provider.

Our focus was on how do we utilize our assets to try to ensure that within the marketplace we can focus on improving access in terms of penetration and also more importantly affordability.

So, that was a strategic direction. We wanted to participate based on the fact that we are an urban centre and there is definitely feedback in terms of access and fibre in different locations.

So, we were more focused on what is the best outcome and what we've heard and what we continue to hear through the pandemic, is whereby enabling of affordability and utilizing the City to make a difference in terms of leverage was our strategic focus. Alice, if you want to build on that.

Yes, so the way that we're looking at the issue at hand is based on the research, it's based on other community discussions we've had outside of this public forum. And the general consensus, I think, from the community and from our research is that there's ability to access high speed Internet in most of the areas through fibre optics already in the City. And the reason that we are seeing a disconnect, the reason that we're seeing a digital divide. is based on the cost, right? So, we're seeing and there are some areas like, I mentioned, in the Malvern community, where we hear from the businesses that, you know, there's fibre being laid across the street, but internet's not able to come to the area that's needed.

So there's both situations happening. But I think largely speaking, our understanding is the cost of the internet is high enough that is prohibiting people from engaging fully and prohibiting them from having higher quality, higher speed Internet.

So, what we're trying to do as a city for public benefit is to close that gap and to leverage our assets to be able to direct better where we want the service to be.

So, again there's a question here about the approach. And I can just tell you right now that there is no current funding model, there's no capital operating budget dollars that's put towards this effort right now. So, what we're trying to do was leverage city assets as well as leverage assets from City agencies, et cetera through agreements, to put into this partnership to invite the service providers so that we can have a voice in where high speed Internet is offered at an affordable price here in the City.

So, Alice there's a question regarding, what last mile technology is the city anticipating will be employed by participating Internet service providers? The timeline seems short for building out any robust high bandwidth delivery infrastructure.

Yes, I agree. So the City is not, being prescriptive in the technology. I mean, there are some technologies I'm anticipating, but I don't want to preclude people from putting in their proposed technology. So, we are welcoming any technology that can ultimately satisfy our goal, which is reliable, high speed internet for underserved communities at an affordable cost.

So, how they deliver that specific technology, we're not dictating that. And that is a question coming up in the info gathering session, guided questions. So please, let me know if I can post your question. There are lots of questions coming through and I'm posting the ones that specifically say you can post my question and name, thanks.

So, I'm going to recommend that if we can, Alice, if we can move along to the information gathering portion, where we will solicit some input, that's a little bit more focused and if we didn't get to your question, or if you have more questions, please feel free to email digitalfeedback@toronto.ca. We'll be happy to follow up with you, and plus there is another opportunity where we can raise our hand, our virtual hand, if you'd like, at a certain point.

So, Alice, if I can suggest that for you, please.

Sorry Rhonda.

Are you going to ask these questions?

Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. Just like we practiced anyway. I'm sorry. Yeah. I've been very busy on concentrating on these questions, popping up fast and furious.

Okay, so the first question we wanted to pose is, you know, what entities are well positioned to deliver the municipal broadband networking and services.

A key requirement we're highlighting here, is that the program is again, not position the city as an ISP competitor. It's meant to complement the current landscape by filling the gaps. Specifically, to provide underserved areas with affordable, high speed Internet, and so we've listed some things here for your

consideration.

Should it be only well known and trusted Internet providers, under contract through the city? Should it be multiple service providers based on meeting coverage needs as long as they adhere to a certain specific quality of service? As well, of course, other things like privacy requirements. Should it be knowledgeable subscribers, students, volunteers through grassroots organizations, and sort of on the job training organizations, a combination of the above, none of the above and or something else you can think of?

So, I don't think I've seen any questions pertaining to this question so far in the chat or are there any hands I'm missing?

Curtis, I can't tell you if you have a question about this, or if your hand's raised from a previous question?

Curtis's hand was raised from a previous question.

Okay, I see two other hands. Hamish do you mind asking them to speak?

Okay, you have the microphone.

Can you hear me?

Yes, we can hear you.

In terms of the choices you have listed, is there a way poll them on the screen somewhere? I don't see it. If not, how are you taking feedback on the bullet points? Is it that we just have a new chat or we raise our hands or what? That's my question because I don't see a poll at least on my screen.

So there is no poll, we're taking notes and we're trying to get a consensus from the group. It is hard to not be able to see your faces, and all you're able to do is sort of type into the chat.

But, for example, I've seen a couple people putting in answers. Some of them are saying, all of the above some of them are saying a combination of all the above.

So, if you don't mind putting your sort of response here. I want to again, let, you know that we are going to post a very similar opportunity for you to what I'm going to display here through these questions in our survey online that's going to be open, starting tomorrow for a couple of weeks and so you're also welcome to give you feedback that way. If you want to give some sort of more methodical feedback.

Right now though I was hoping to, just have a conversation, really collect your feedback through this more casual, I guess, informal way while taking notes on what people are saying.

Hamish, I see another hand.

Good afternoon, Alice. Hi.

Hi.

Exciting project that you've got planned here just looking at some of the issues or opportunities you're

looking for comment on. I think the first one, in terms of trusted Internet service providers I think you really need to broaden that because I think we all know there's Rogers and Bell and Telus and so forth and you know, I think they have something to offer about recent rulings, allowing third party access to existing networks. There's a lot of other players, whether they're Tech Savvy or Vianet, or any of the others that are showing up through a lot of the broadband building that's been going on through Swift and other initiatives across Ontario. I think offering them an opportunity to participate is probably going to be better for the City in the long run. The second thing is, I don't think there's any one provider that can provide coverage in any, and all areas of the city. We know that today, just based on tower locations, and there's tremendous gaps in the City.

Even for enterprise providers today, I mean, Scarborough Business Association will tell you that there are many members who, as a business, can't even access Internet, whether it's good quality or poor quality or expensive or not. So, I think you really want to make sure it's inclusive. There's a lot of talk about fibre as being the mode of delivering services. I think one of the things, whether it's in this particular area or another is that 5G is coming. 5G will provide some things for the City to consider, such as the density of which you can provide coverage and the cost structure of 5G for subscribers will be substantially less, based on the economics of the technology. So I think that's something you definitely want to look at as part of the process, whether it's in the first phase or phase 2. But I think all of those are important.

Thanks, Tim, point taken.

Thanks Timothy, I'm going to put you on mute and go to the next person, which is Bianca.

Hi there. Can you hear me?

Yes, we can.

Cool. Thanks for taking this kind of a process on. It's new and it's going be bumpy, so I think I also want to confirm, what Curtis said as well I think from a process perspective, there's bumps there for us to talk about, but just want to say, thank you. My question relates to this underlined word, deliver, because Alice, I don't want to pre-empt your future questions, but maybe I think this is a good idea. Can you go back to this slide that looks at the procurement and you had a question there that said, why change? So, this question here about why change? You've got two rationales. One is to gain the best value for taxpayers and another one is to improve supplier relationships. I just would say, from a community perspective and I'm not sure if this ties to the word, deliver, public control, and public influence on the governance. I mean, how the public is at the table in a process like this is something that I would probably guess most of the people on the call care about, and would hope would be represented, and it's not in the rationale for the approach. So, I'm just wondering, you know, when you say best deliver, like where does this sort of community influence over governance sit? Because I feel like we're skipping that and we're moving into very traditional frames of supplier, vendor and City relations.

So, thank you. I can, Alice, can I take on to that? Aright, so yeah, absolutely. Very, very great question.

So, I guess the answer is right there, like, when we say the value for taxpayers. So, when we are talking about the improved supplier relationship, because unlike in the past, if we are using the approach where they used a closed procurement process, where we are just putting together a scope of work and getting a low cost winner. I'm just giving a straightforward approach, it is not really likely that we are. We are adopting an approach where we will be discussing and negotiating with the multiple service providers, as

on the next slide we mentioned that it will not really be limited to, but we will be asking for supplementary information. That's how it will be bringing more value-add for the public. Because end of the day, we are serving to the public and therefore, when we are negotiating, we are negotiating and discussing with the vendor on what additional value add features they are going to be putting on the table, which will benefit at the end of the day to the public, and that will be part of the final deal without the additional cost that they will be presenting to the City.

So that's how we are envisioning this and this process. We are taking and it is giving us the opportunity to unfold some of the added features and benefits we can additionally get from the service providers and bring for the City of Toronto and public at the end of the day. I hope I answered your question.

So, at this point, I'm going to ask a question if anyone here would object if we open up the chat in response to, the request has been made where people want to see what people are doing. We may not be able to moderate all of it, so it would be open, but you would be able to see what people are saying.

Okay, that's simply reading them back or posting your question. So if anyone has an objection, if you could let us know, otherwise we will give direction to our virtual event host to open up the chat, please.

And I was going to clarify, we're talking about a chat versus the Q and A piece, so if I could.

Are we talking about Q and A. Are we talking about chat? I'm a little confused.

Do we have a chat? I, thought, I don't see a chat.

There isn't a chat feature right now.

I think we should open up the Q and A, I think everyone's been doing great asking questions and I think people are trying very hard to put things into a question so I think if we open it up. Oh, there is a chat now.

I just made the chat open.

Yeah, okay. That's great. I think people are, I haven't seen anything that says do not open the Q and A's. So, I think we should open up the Q and A's. This is very exciting. And then we can also open up the chat. I think if people want to chat, let's do that too. It's 26 people, it's not that many people.

There was a question that I posted just now, asking, would the City consider disqualifying or somehow de-ranking large ISPs and telcos, given that they have not served low income needs well? A large telco could bid this as a loss leader and block any community initiatives from the offset. Please post. So I don't know if Tanvir can speak to that or we can take that back.

I guess we need to take that back, we need to follow City policies and as I said that earlier that we are here to provide the open, fair and transparent opportunity and level playing field to everyone. So we need to really take it back. And then then we can, we can get back to following the process.

There is a previous question. They didn't say to post it publicly so I didn't but the question was, is it possible for an organization not ready to bid on this project at this time but be able to access the city infrastructure? They can experiment with new technology can deliver low cost Internet as these

technologies are quite promising, but we do not have enough time to prove it out.

I wonder if, you know, if Lawrence can speak to the vision overall. Again, it's a little bit hard to have this conversation because we're talking about a pretty finite scope of phase 1, of this portion, that's going to inform the larger approach overall. But we do have an interest in enabling City infrastructure for public good. So, you know, whichever way that Council directs is due to be able to achieve that is, is what we'll be doing. And that includes the possibility of when the larger deployment happens, more opportunities to engage with City infrastructure.

So. I was just on the first slide of the guided questions. I see more questions being posted. Are people able to see the questions now?

I am not sure. If everyone is okay, again if there's no objection, we can post them as they come in. Happy to do that. I can do that Alice, unless anybody objects, I'll do that, so that we can get answering. You may want to, in the meantime, move on to the next question. I think we're going to have to. I think people will be providing us their feedback on the specifics perhaps afterwards, which would be fantastic.

Sure.

Okay, so we'll work on that in the meantime.

And then the next one is regarding community gateways and establishing those.

Okay. Tanvir, there's a question about will the proponent and proponent details be published, following open contracting and open government principles?

So this is when we say that we will be posting, so our process is open and transparent. So, we will not really be openly posting until everything is going to be decided and finalized like who participating and who has, in fact, submitted their bid and for what. That is the part of the process. If that is the question, we will post at the end that we are finalizing the contract and who are in the running at that time.

Okay I appreciate that. We are at 3:40pm, the session is only supposed to be 90 minutes and I, we really want to gather some input into the rest of the questions so, if it's okay with everyone, I'd like to move on to a few more questions. There will be sometime at the end for us to discuss, sort of, the more general questions I've seen throughout the chats.

So the next question is around models that are appropriate to fund the network. As I mentioned before, the City does not have approved capital or operating budget at this time to implement and operate a municipal broadband network. We're looking for innovative and sustainable funding models and large part of this is putting in City assets as our input into the partnership. So we're looking for your input on, how do we ensure, these models are fair and provide affordable reliable services for end users?

Do you think they should all subscribers should pay equally? Subsidies, maybe, applied between subscribers of different means? Sponsorship from businesses? Donations from individuals or businesses? Advertising? Grants or investments from other levels of government? A combination of these? None of these? Here are my top two or three? Open to your thoughts.

I'm just noticing Gabe has his hand raised, so I'll turn the mic on for Gabe.

Hello, can you hear me?

Great, my thought on this one is could this not be a question for the ISPs themselves to solve if there was a sort of, like understood base rate based on, I don't know what, based on some criteria that would essentially like, offload this question to the participating ISPs and allow them then to figure out what works best for their customers, their business model, their organizational model?

That's a good point. Yep.

Anyone else want to put their hand up? Or chat? Oh, another hand.

And just to reminder to those that have their hands raised, if you've spoken and are finished, you can lower the hand again. So Bianca is next.

Cool. Okay. And just quickly for any of these questions, I just want to reiterate the suggestion that public governance be designed in as a requirement because everything that's being discussed right now is that it's putting it either in the hands of the vendor, or in a negotiation. Neither of which result in public control or power. And so the question that was answered earlier from me didn't really get to the governance element of that. So, I would just like to suggest in whatever these models are, to introduce a requirement for community or public governance, because it's not here right now from what I can see. So, that would be a wonderful inclusion, as you continue with requirements writing.

Great. Noted, Bianca. We have some ideas on that. Yeah, that's great.

So, the next person with their hand raised is, I apologize if I get your name wrong, Augustre.

Thank you. I was trying to work and listen to you at the same time, but, I did not hear much, but all I want to say is I think that this is a very good thing seeing now that so much learning is being done online because of all of this that's going on and so many students who do not have access to Wi-Fi. Sometimes they have it and they can't come on because they have so many siblings that need to use that same Wi-Fi that it doesn't work. So, a lot of these children are just falling behind because they're not able to connect to actually do any really kind of schooling for them to able to learn effectively. So, I think this is an excellent thing to do. Hopefully it reaches the people that truly that really, really need it. That should have been, like yesterday from last year or a way time to go because, you know, you've seen the disadvantage that's happening now with having the online learning and not having the capability to log in and not having Wi-Fi and the Internet connection in this time, in schooling it is very bad. It's not good for those who are disadvantaged. So I hope this make a great difference. Thank you.

Thank you for that comment. And next with their hand raised, Timothy. Go ahead, Timothy.

Yeah, thanks. Thanks again, looking at the state of COVID and where everybody is today, I think it would be a hard idea to get sponsorships or subsidies or donations. I think a lot of Internet service providers, and others stepped up at the first, part of COVID and donated bandwidth and so forth. But even advertising is interesting these days in terms of revenue sources. A fourth utility, that's what the Internet is. It's a basic human right. And I think we need to approach provincial and federal governments as well.
There's hundreds of millions of dollars, actually, billions of dollars being spent on broadband, putting fibre to people's homes in southwestern Ontario and other parts of Ontario. I think that this would be a great

area to get a contribution. And the City itself spends a lot of money on people, much needed, in terms of putting people in hotels and homelessness and other hundreds of millions of dollars being spent. The actual cost to deploy broadband service on a usage basis is probably about three dollars a day, per user. So I think that that is something that could definitely be built into all levels of government's budgets. And I think that's where you should look. I think to make it sustainable, long term, you're going to have a tough go of it, if you are going to be requiring sponsorships and advertising dollars in the long-term.

Okay, thank you.

I don't see any more hands and I don't see any more questions specific to this in the chat. I actually, you know what, there's a question that says, let's say bell charges, $100 per month for regular subscribers if they turn around and offer $50 for ConnectTO access. Will they be asking for $50 for subscribers from the City?

So my answer to that is no, there's no budget, you know, right now for a subsidy for this from the City perspective, and that subsidy hasn't been given by other governments or other levels of government either. So it would not be a sort of a subsidy approach at this time.

Okay, so I think I'm happy to move on to the next question, which is, what types of services should we use, should we offer? This came up earlier in the discussions about the type of technology. So we wanted to let you know that the program, again, is meant to complement the current landscape, and services that are comparable to those broadly available to the marketplace will be required. So, for example, a minimum requirements could be the 50/10 megabytes per second speed as defined for broadband by the CRTC.

So for consideration, to inform this procurement. Are you only interested in DSL or cable modem? Fibre to home? What about public Wi-Fi hotspots for buildings similar to the way that retailers to offer them? Are you thinking about high speed, wireless Internet access? A ConnectTO branded mobility offer? Or any of those, none of those, or something else?

I don't see any hands. There's something in the Q and As, somebody has said building and public Wi-Fi hotspots are notoriously inadequate in terms of performance and reliability. Seems like a thumbs down for that.

Someone else said, have you considered a part of a progressive scheme where the City changes access and capacity rates based on how many users are asked to pay such that the less users pay the less the ISP pays? So, we'll make a note of that.

There is a hand raised. Ushnish, want to go ahead and ask your question?

Yes, so just wondering why the mobility offer is branded while the others aren't? What's so special about the mobile the offer that needs to be branded?

It's, I mean, this is just something to get the conversation going. So the other aspects we've talked about hasn't been about cell phone brand mobility. So, this was just another way of describing the product, that's all.

There's a hand raised by Gabe. Want to go ahead and ask your question please?

Hi, I'm wondering about the 50/10 minimum. I understand that that is a sort of a baseline that's set by the CRTC but I wonder, but I know that there are lots of people who have less than 50/10 access and find that totally adequate for their needs. If that was it, like and I think, I worry that that requirement might be very limiting when it comes to who or which kind of ISP can participate in this and the kinds of technologies that'll be necessary for delivering service to people's homes. So, is that negotiable at all? Or why is that our requirement here?

So, I think there's two aspects of the 50/10 and I think even how the 50/10 became, the standard, has a lot of embedded history to it. And I, I don't want to get into that at the moment. Okay. But I hear what you're saying about whether, or not that's limiting to certain products. Our intention here, with the example here, is that we would like to set, we want to set a minimal Internet speed for high speed performance.
So that they can enable video calling like we are doing right now, etcetera. And I know that the speed and bandwidth are different discussions, and they're different considerations, but what we're trying to look here is, we are going to, we'd like to put into the RFP minimum requirements. Something we're thinking about right now is the 50/10 speed, but we're open to your thoughts and this is why we're, we're asking the questions. So I take your point about it not being, sort of, the answer to everything.

Thanks, Alice and just a reminder to those that have asked their questions already with their hand raised, if you can lower it that would be great.

The next hand raised is a person with the initial S. M. Go ahead and ask your question, please.

Hello, this question is for Alice and Lawrence. I heard you say that you were designing this pilot to test it, and it's small, and it's testing a particular bunch of things and if successful, it will be expanded. I think part of the data that you would be wanting to collect, I would assume would be the experience of the users and the public's feedback on this. And I asked a few questions of Tanvir and Alice, you answered as well. Thank you to you both. But I'm still not clear on why that part, that layer is not being fleshed out in the pilot because, I imagine, because this is a new direction for the City that should also be something that you're putting out there in testing. How would residents come back to you and talk to you about improvements? Which out of all of these questions that you're asking, I don't see clearly laid out thus far.

So is it okay if I add something here? So no, thank you. Thank you very much. It's good feedback. Definitely, we're going to be taking this back to see how we can collect that feedback. And this is the information session we are having right now, and that was one of the objectives for it. If we can gather some of the detail, and then and think through and contemplate that, how we can in fact, gather some additional feedback. We have one additional feature where we do some sort of market sounding as well. And that market sounding is we collect the data from various different sources too. So we will look into that, how we can address that. But definitely when we are putting together our scope of work and requirements and we are, in fact, going put together the technical questions to the marketplace that is in light of the, some of the data gathering, our technical team have through various different sources.

So we will definitely be looking to the various options and the source of information, where we can understand what are the pain points and what will be the ideal situation, what are the offerings and how the public can get the maximum benefit out of this. So it is a great point, and we will definitely look into that when they're putting together the scope of work and evaluating the service providers.

Great, thank you. There's some questions around why we're looking at this as a traditional spoke and hub model instead of a community model. I'm paraphrasing here. We welcome a community proposals through this process and this is not the only way that we're going to intersect and build out plans. So there are other ways, like I mentioned earlier, where, for example, we're doing a free public Wi-Fi in certain TCHC buildings.

We're doing a number of other projects around digital equity as well as digital inclusion beyond this particular phase 1, you know, RFP. So, there's an opportunity here to give your proposal. There will be other opportunities for us to, to talk about that as well. So, I just want to make sure that you know that the door's open and that we welcome you to get in touch with us about those proposals.

I want to talk a little bit about pricing and billing, you know, we want to make this a sustainable model, and we want to hear what you feel about this particular topic.

So are you thinking about, you know, actual cost shared equally by subscribers? Net cost shared according to needs, so means? Fixed amount with a surplus amounts returned to subscribers? Or like a co-op or credit union or fixed amount with surplus reinvested to grow the network? Or something else?

If anyone wants to jump in here?

Alice, Bianca has had her hand raised for a while.

Oh, I'm sorry.

Yeah, since the previous question. Bianca, do you want to go ahead and speak to please?

Thank you and I think it's, I know we're getting close to time, I just think from the community's perspective. There's a lot that we hope to share with you in negotiating whoever you're working with. And now that we can see the process, we just really want to make sure that that kind of guidance has a way to get into the procurement requirements because you're negotiating both with that vendor on behalf of the City, but really on behalf of the public. So, just the way these questions are framed, is they're narrowing and I just want everyone to know. I think that kind of advice is also helpful for you and there's lots of time to share with you yet. But holding those two, you know, like both the City as the corporation, the City, but also the public as someone you're negotiating on behalf of for it's something relates to all of these questions. So, just please consider that.

Absolutely, noted. Thanks Bianca

Yup, absolutely. Yeah.

Okay, so, don't see any… there's some fixed costs or some responses in the questions.

One more question is about eligibility. So our goal, of course, is for digital equity and reduced Internet costs for vulnerable and underserved Torontonians. How do you see this working out on our system? So people self-declare need as, like, a food bank? Do you see designated groups only? You know, people who are designated as being in need. Is it neighborhood based? So, everyone, all the residents and businesses in the neighborhood, in an area may receive and be an end-user? Or combination of all these? Or something else?

I'm not seeing any new hands up. There is a question about information available on additional consideration for TCHC buildings. Please feel free to reach out to my team through our email address and we'll be happy to have a discussion on that.

Salem has their hand raised.

So you've got the microphone. Go ahead and ask your question please.

So just very quickly, I don't know if we're getting ahead of ourselves, but, I guess once it's rolled out, what milestones would need to be reached for the project to move into phase 2, or be expanded to a bigger area of the city?

So we have we have committed to reporting back to City Council and there, as you can imagine, we have a number of things that we are evaluating the program against. And taking your input today, more things to think about and to add to the list. But there's no specific 1000 subscribers means a checkmark, there's no magic number, Salem, if that if that answers your question.

And I know it is 4 o'clock. I know some of you may have other matters to attend to. First, thank you very much for your attendance. I'm not closing the meeting yet, but I want to let, you know, those who are thinking about dropping off know, we'd like you to complete the feedback form if you're able to, online. If you don't feel like you've been able to answer all the questions here and you're always welcome to reach out to us through our email address as well, digitalfeedback@toronto.ca and our website will be updated with information. It will be updated with this video, and it will have the survey intake form as well.

So, with that said, I don't see any new hands so I'd like to move on to the next question, which is a more general question here. What are your expectations as a potential residential and/or business end-user? What are your expectations in terms of, for example, what will might prompt you to, or motivate you to take part of this? What might deter you from being part of this?

I'm seeing Ushnish with their hand raised. I'm not sure if that's from last time. Okay, you can go ahead and ask your question.

It was from last time.

Okay, thank you and Salem your hand is still raised, and I think that's from last time as well. But, again, if you want to ask a question, Salem, go ahead right now please.

I don't have any more questions at this time.

Okay, thank you.

No further hands raised, Alice.

Okay and I'm trying to scan the chat and the Q and A at the same time and I'm not seeing anything. Somebody said cost and speed would be a factor. Again, I want to direct everyone to go to toronto.ca/connected_community for more information as well as the, the feedback form.

So okay, great. So, then the next slide is, you know, what is from a tech community member perspective, there are many of you here today. And you can of course wear different hats right? So what types of infrastructure access do you envision as being required to deliver this initiative? Do you want to tell us about any constraints or challenges or risks that may impact the plan? What immediate actions, ongoing support and policy decisions for the City would be required to be helpful to implement, or expand the network, overall?

Bianca has her hand raised, so Bianca, you can go ahead and ask your question please.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I think, it's, this relates a governance and I think the valuation, for all of us in community to understand which public assets - public assets, which are all of our assets, are being put on the table. What the valuation is and how do we assess that we are driving a good deal here, not just on behalf of the City again in one position, but are we using that value to promote a plurality of different approaches? Because I think from the community perspective, we understand a lot of the constraints, but we have years to create conditions for lots of different ways to do Internet provision. And so I just, like I'm repetitive, but I'm a little concerned by the frame, which feels narrow and that point is where there's a lot of opportunity to pull on the knowledge and the community and for us, but we have to understand what the starting point negotiation is right?

So, is there any documentation of the assets and their value so that we can help understand how to help you? You know, like, I think, unfortunately, this is framing us in too tight for what is known and what could be done here. Like, we can literally help you write the kind of contract requirements that would force multiple models in the future and that's a fair requirement if these suppliers or potential vendors are getting access to public assets. So, I just don't want value to be understood as monetary only, which is what I keep hearing again and again through all the answers to questions. So how do we create value for that plurality of models, into the future, future public value, that is not only about the price of what the, you know, of what the Internet access is because there's many other ways to consider value so it's both a question and a concern, but I think there are ways to get at that and how you gather and write the requirements. So I hope that this doesn't close, before we can participate in that piece, and I'm kind of curious as to how far down the road you are on the tender writing because if you're going to issue it in June, it's pretty soon.

It really is pretty soon. Bianca but you know, that's why we're here today, to hear your thoughts, and everyone's thoughts here. I think what I want to also highlight is and I've said this a couple of times and I hope you don't mind. There will be other opportunities to consult on the ConnectTO program overall beyond the tender process for phase 1, right? So, I think that's where we are also looking for a lot of your insights into how you see value, right? One of the biggest challenges, I'll be transparent and I've been in the past, is defining value for the different trade-offs, right? And that one might consider here, right? So that's good. That is a challenge and it's because I think even just with the 22 participants that are left, we all have something different to say about that, right? So public consensus on that and how do we make sure that we're able to sort of address the, sometimes what feels like quite an acute need, from the community, plan for the future, make sure that we are able to find partnerships still. Right? Because again, as you can see from the model, the City is not positioning itself as an ISP. Rather we're looking to work with the community and with the sector to bring that expertise into the, the actual delivery model. Right?

So we're balancing all of these things, but I take your point about where governance comes in, and I do think that through all the discussions we've had so far that that is in the hands of the City, which means

it's in the hands of the community, right? So, that's why we're here.

So can I just build on that? And thank you Bianca for your comments and your leadership in really advocating for the community, I think that's why we are in public service. Part of the report for those three sites is also about lessons learned for the pilot. I think that's just building upon. So, I don't see this process as just because of the procurement that's going out is for those pilots to help us inform, and it doesn't stop the fact that through what we learn if we don't capture everything through the value and the governance, there is an opportunity through that to provide that continuous loop so we can capture it as we make the program much more extended and large.

So, I just wanted to put to the fact of the matter, that yes, it is very tight in terms of trying to get for those pilots, but just to build upon what Alice was saying, it's not over because the way that the business model is going to be determined, will need some engagement from the public to help shape that for us in the overall bigger plan because one of the things we've heard from the community is that they want something sustainable. That sustainability is very important, so I just wanted to put that out there that June procurement does not exclude what the actual bigger program will be, where we need to come back.

Thanks Lawrence, I'm noticing Ushnish has raised their hand again. Want to go ahead and ask your question please?

Yes, this time it's a valid hand. So, have you considered applying the community benefits framework to this project? Like, the community benefits framework the City of Toronto has seems to be applied to physical projects, but the tech projects seem to escape that filter. Will there be some agreements with organizations that are already on the ground, that already have committee benefits agreement on other projects so that the employment created from this project benefits the underserved communities, so it's like, all the jobs don't go to a bunch of privileged middle class folk?

Yeah, I take your question and we'll explore that more. We are definitely interested in seeing how the program works within the community. I'll give you one example is from the Digital Canopy Project we've been doing since last year where we're providing free public Wi-Fi in some tower neighborhood buildings. Part of that work has been a mentorship and program that we, the City has engaged a young, black professional public entity, to be able to train and mentor 15 youth within the communities.

So that's the whole point, So that they're able to learn tech skills and bring those tech skills back into the community where these public Wi-Fi programs are now in place. So we're very interested in making sure that the community members themselves benefit from this, not only from as an end-user, but also participate in this.

In terms of the community benefit framework itself, my understanding it's the same as yours. I think it's been very much of, there's been a lot of trades focus if I can put it more bluntly this way, but we will definitely review and see how we can intersect, if possible. Thank you for that.

Salem has his hand raised. I'm not sure. Last time to go ahead and ask a question.

I don't know why that's happening. I apologize.

Okay, no problem. Okay. So, no further hands and just a reminder, if you have your hand raised, and you've asked a question to lower it, please.

Curtis asked will that literacy stewardship component feature in the RFP?

I don't have that answer right now. Again, it is a negotiate RFP and we're looking for these, looking for community benefits, right? So, we'll definitely take that under consideration, Curtis.

There was a question about where exactly where the demarcation of City assets be and where will the provider pick it up? Are these fibre assets going to be pulled from local city buildings like a library and then providers take it from there?

So, if you look at the attachment to our report, we were able to do a discovery and sort of high level architecture with a group here in Toronto called MetScan. So their report is in our staff report and there you will see that's pretty much the model that's being displayed there and that's being considered where the, you know, the City asset terminated the city or the City building a or library or, I guess community centre of the city will be, and where then, you know, the sort of the last mile concept or the delivery to home concept will pick up from there.

For phase 1 of this, there's limited opportunities to really test out the entire model. Like, we have been very clear about that, but we're just trying to test out certain aspects of this model. So, we may not be able to test out that specific model but we are looking for opportunities for that and we're looking for that as the overall model as part of the consideration for the longer term project.

There's lots of people agreeing with extending job opportunities for the community, and we take note of that too.

Right. I think that was, is there a last slide? Oh, there's one more slide to say, you know, this is what I was trying to say earlier as well that one of the directives we have from City Council is to review the… I apologize for the long sentence… to review the desirability, feasibility and sustainability of business models of municipal broadband delivery, including, but not limited to cooperatives, non-profits like Toronto Mesh, etcetera, joint ventures, public private partnerships and issue any solicitations as required, as desired, sorry.

This is the larger business model we've been sort of chatting about here and there throughout the conversation, but I'll pause here now for another a moment so that people can give us some feedback on this.

I do see Salem's hand up.

Yes, the person with the initials S.M. has their hand raised, you can go ahead and ask your question please.

Hi, just related to the process. It's been over a year of the pandemic so certainly, my attention span is limited, but I found that in this presentation the way that the questions were framed were very cumbersome. I literally am having trouble focusing on what you're trying to ask because there's so much. And I understand the limitations of the format that you're working through too, but part of doing this well, is to make it so that people respond. And I don't think that you got the type of response that you were hoping for, for the questions, because there was quiet, and the questions that you got around were very important, especially the ones related to governance. But just a piece of feedback that it didn't make

it easy. I'm having a hard time focusing.

Thank you, thank you for being transparent. Thank you for sharing that feedback and being candid about that. We agree that it's a lot of different ideas tied together at the same time. So it is something that we will keep in mind as we proceed for sure. Thank you very much.

No, further hands are raised, Alice.

Okay, great.

Yeah, so just a short reminder about next steps. I think you, you've now seen this slide for a second time. We're gathering the information, doing analysis. We will be moving forward with the procurement and then we want to, of course, do the site initiations.

The online questionnaire will be open starting tomorrow in the calendar until June 4th and you're always welcome to reach us at digitalfeedback@toronto.ca. The team you see before you today, we are genuinely and sincerely looking for community feedback.

We want to make this program work for you, and we know that there's a lot of wisdom and there's a lot of lived experiences, and a lot of considerations out in this community, in this great group here and the one that will be speaking to later today.

So I just want to sincerely say, again, we want to hear from you. We would like you to complete a questionnaire if you have the time. I know it's a lot of information, but if you can give us some feedback that will really help us guide creation of this RFP and as well as the overall program.

So okay, great. Okay and we take your point about the poll, so next time we are ready to talk to you, maybe we'll set up some additional polling functionality. We really wanted to have a conversation. We didn't want people to just give an answer and we thought, you know, but I understand now that not being able to see each other, and not really be able to see the chat, doesn't make that communication easy. So a big lesson learned for us there as well. So thank you and thank you for being patient with us today.

Right. Is that it? Are there any additional hands?

Ushnish has his hand raised again. You can ask your question.

Just a question on the online Q and A, not the Q and A in this session, but the one through email. Would you be publishing the question and answers? Even if some questions might not even be answered, and that's okay. The precedent for that is the Poverty Reduction Strategy where all the questions and answers from consultation data was published as open data.

So, I'll be honest, we don't have that set up yet, but we'll look at a way to be able to publish more of this information online. So, for example, we are going to be posting the video for the presentation up on our website, but there's lots of good questions here and we will start to answer them and find a way to be able to post them more publicly.

Thank you for that suggestion.

Okay great. Thanks, everybody. I think if we were in person everybody would be, you know, shuffling getting their papers and getting their coats, I guess not coats anymore, it's May. But, I can't tell if you're all itching to get a cup of coffee now or something like that. But again, just, maybe I'll ask Lawrence to say a final few words.

Yeah, and I just sent a post out just to thank everyone again for your participation, feedback and patience. It was great to also, certainly for us, to listen as public servants to your comments.

This forum is not easy to sort of deliver this. I think the last time we did a sort of a consultation we were all in person. So we are learning and adjusting, and we hope to continuously improve.

I just want to also thank my colleagues who are also participating through Alice's leadership. Thanks to all my colleagues, there's a lot of work to get this set up. So thank you all.

And I hope you all have a good evening and enjoy the weather. Thank you very much.

Thank you everybody.

See you soon.