



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES NEW CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND AFFORDABLE INTERNET
OPTIONS FOR MORE THAN ONE MILLION CHICAGOANS**

*Chicago To Serve as Pilot City in National "EveryoneOn" Campaign That Will Build on City's Track
Record of Bridging the Digital Divide*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today was joined by Zach Leverenz, the Chief Executive Officer of the national non-profit *Connect 2 Compete*, to announce that Chicago will be a pilot city in the national *EveryoneOn* campaign that aims to increase digital literacy and access to the internet. As part of this initiative, 1.1 million Chicagoans will be eligible for a new low-cost wireless internet option, building on the success of the Comcast Internet Essentials initiative that Mayor Emanuel announced in 2011 and bringing vital connectivity to more residents across the city.

"Digital skills are 21st century workforce skills, making digital literacy training and affordable access to high-speed Internet service game changers for children and adults," said Mayor Emanuel. "From day one we have worked to increase internet connectivity and knowledge for our residents, especially in neighborhoods that have traditionally been underserved. This is a great example of the public and the private sectors working together to craft innovative solutions to prepare our workforce for the global economy."

EveryoneON couples increasing low-cost internet access with free internet training and brings together public and private organizations to realize this goal. The organization chose Chicago as a pilot city based on Chicago's strong track record in expanding internet access and success increasing digital literacy. *EveryoneON* will apply what they learn in Chicago as they expand across the country. This partnership includes *Connect 2 Compete*, FreedomPop, Comcast, the Ad Council, Chicago Public Library, Chicago Housing Authority, the SmartChicago Collaborative, Chicago Public Schools, the City Colleges of Chicago, and others.

“The digital divide is solvable now, and the solution requires collective will and bold action. We are excited to be launching this pilot in Chicago and look forward to continuing it in cities across the country,” said Zach Leverenz, Chief Executive Officer of *Connect 2 Compete*.

The importance of internet access and digital literacy skills in today’s economy is clear. Preliminary data from the City’s computer centers indicates that Chicago residents who have received technology training from those centers in targeted neighborhoods are 13 percent more likely to obtain employment or increase their net income. Additionally, a University of Illinois at Chicago study found that employees who use the Internet or a computer at work have weekly wages that are 14 to 17 percent higher than those that don’t.

This new initiative builds upon the existing partnership between the City and the Comcast Internet Essentials program. Launched in 2011, Internet Essentials has to date connected over 11,000 Chicago families whose children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches to low-cost, high-speed internet, making Chicago the top city in the country for participation. The *EveryoneON* campaign in Chicago continues the Internet Essentials partnership and adds a second low-cost option from FreedomPop that utilizes a high-speed, 4G wireless network. This new option will reach a broader target audience of 1.1 million Chicago residents living in zip codes where the median income is \$35,000 or less. As part of the City of Chicago's role as a pilot city, the SmartChicago Collaborative will work with FreedomPop to collect data and feedback from local users of the FreedomPop offering that will help refine the program and benefit users across the country.

In addition to the success of Comcast’s Internet Essentials partnership, Chicago has leveraged federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program funding and other resources to:

- Establish free Wi-Fi at 28 public computer center sites and upgraded free Wi-Fi at 66 Chicago Public Library branches;
- Provide over 180,000 hours of instructor-led technology training to 29,300 Chicagoans citywide;
- Help at least 570 Chicagoans find jobs through 180,000 one-on-one CyberNavigator assistance sessions at the libraries;
- Deliver technology training to over 1,000 small businesses;
- Provide out-of-school digital media programming to 1,350 youth;
- Establish the Connect Chicago network to bring together over 250 locations that offer free digital skills training throughout the City; and
- Install over 1,400 computer stations at 170 public computer centers citywide, located in CHA facilities, CCC campuses, community centers, libraries and Veterans Resource Centers.

About Connect2Compete

Connect2Compete (C2C) is a national nonprofit that aims to eliminate the digital divide by making high-speed, low-cost Internet, computers, and free digital literacy accessible to all unconnected Americans. Technology and digital skills are essential to ensure future generations can compete in the global economy and to prepare them for the 21st century workforce. C2C aims to leverage the democratizing power of the Internet to provide opportunity to all Americans – regardless of age, race, geography, income or education level. For more information, please visit Connect2Compete.org

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