

Vancouver Digital Strategy

Vancouver is a coastal seaport city in Western Canada, home to over 600,000 people with roughly 2.4 million inhabitants in the Greater Vancouver area. The city is one of the most dense and ethnically diverse cities in Canada and North America. To maintain its sustainable competitiveness and continue to attract residents and businesses alike, the city envisions enhancing the multidirectional digital connections amongst citizens, employees, businesses and government, providing all urban stakeholders with efficient service delivery.

Project overview

Vancouver has a strengthening reputation as a technology hub, home to an emerging technology sector that places the city in strong position to effectively deliver an innovative digital agenda. The city's Digital Strategy framework aims to unify current city initiatives, support citizen and business engagement and access, promote the expanded use of open data, and transition towards e-Government technologies and infrastructure to drive forward Vancouver's economic and social development. The Digital Strategy rests on four pillars, focusing on initiatives including; a digital road map for city service delivery and citizen engagement, digital infrastructure, economic development in emerging technology and digital sectors, and efforts to drive the city as a digital organization. The city took a collaborative approach to developing the strategy through the co-sponsorship of the initiative by the Vancouver Public Library and the Vancouver Economic Commission, ensuring the strategy reflects the city's goals related to social and economic responsibility.

Results and impact

One year after the approval of the Digital Strategy by City Council, a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) is in place, mandated to execute the strategy in collaboration with city business units and external partners. As

a unifying framework, the strategy and its initiatives have brought decisions regarding the delivery of the city's digital services to a central table, issues including single sign-on and the selection of a mobile-platform for services requests (311). Access to digital infrastructure, including free public Wi-Fi in civic spaces was, and continues to be a controversial facet of the Digital Strategy. The city has completed a pilot programme to deliver public Wi-Fi in key shopping districts, with outdoor spaces next on the agenda, although the city has not made headway on this action from the road map to date. During the development of the Digital Strategy, the city assessed its current level of digital maturity, and as the city executes and evolves its digital roadmap and raises the city's level of digital capabilities; cities across Canada are increasingly looking to learn the Vancouver example.

Enablers

As a starting point for Digital Strategy, Vancouver looked to other leading cities in the digital landscape, (including cities such as Chicago, Manchester and New York) to learn from their digital capabilities, enabling the city's formulation of its own digital roadmap. The city, like many other municipalities across Canada, looks to partnerships to deliver digital infrastructure in public spaces, a key enabler in executing a project of this nature. As an example the city is looking to the digital sector for a partner for the incubator programme. Planners developed the Digital Strategy in collaboration with City Council, executives and staff, industry leaders, and citizens and businesses, drawing on the expertise and experience of a wide range of stakeholders. These stakeholders also include other levels of government, especially with regards to access to broadband for instance. The management the initiative from the City Council side has also been enhanced by the appointment of a CDO from the private sector, helping to drive the professionalism and consistency of the programme in the longer-term.

