



## **QPC Hosts 18th Annual Leadership Conference: *Think Forward: Governing Beyond the Digital Divide***

The Quality and Productivity Commission virtually hosted the 18th Annual Leadership Conference on June 2, 2021 via the Zoom platform. This year's theme was "*Think Forward: Governing Beyond the Digital Divide.*" The Annual Leadership Conference is jointly sponsored by the Board of Supervisors, Chief Executive Office, and the Quality and Productivity Commission.

Commissioner Will Wright served as this year's Leadership Conference Ad Hoc Committee Chair and also as the Master of Ceremonies during the Conference. He welcomed over 200 attendees to the first virtual Leadership Conference. The event served as a forum on the digital divide and its impact during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted how governments can address the issue "in order to ensure that interactions are inclusive and equitable for County employees and residents."

The Keynote Speaker was Los Angeles County's Chief Executive Officer, Fesia A. Davenport. She presented on the digital divide and emphasized that the disparity is more than about those who have computers versus those without; rather, the topic is about who can benefit from bridging the divide. This bridge would be supported by equitable access to broadband connections and related resources, and adequate security and privacy for all users of digital technology. In short, the goal is to bridge the divide and provide equal access and opportunity to use digital resources for all! Following Ms. Davenport's presentation, the County's Chief Information Officer facilitated a Q&A and covered topics ranging from broadband access, digital literacy, provision of digital devices, challenges/solutions, and identifying the critical needs of the community.

This year's *Solutions Panel: Addressing the Digital Divide* offered an in-depth discussion on the what, when, where, why and how of bridging the digital divide. The panel was moderated by Ricardo D. Garcia, County Public Defender, and included speakers Chike Aguh, Chief Innovation Officer, U.S. Department of Labor and Rebecca F. Kauma, Economic and Digital Inclusion Program Manager, City of Long Beach. Each provided their insights on the communal impact of the digital divide. Discussion points included how the divide tracks with other gaps like housing, education and employment; how systemic and institutional inequities might contribute through a widening of the gap and should be looked at through a racial equity lens; and how implementing foundational changes, such as revisiting the County's Strategic Plan, can help develop effective solutions. Following the Solutions Panel discussion were three Q&A breakout sessions, that spotlighted the panel speakers and gave the audience an opportunity to ask questions and interact with the panelists and moderators including Amy Bodek (Director, Regional Planning), Selwyn Hollins (Director, Internal Services Department) and Tiana Murillo (Assistant Chief Executive Officer).

Other speakers included Celia Zavala, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors, and Jacki Bacharach, Commission Chair. Ms. Zavala acknowledged that the digital divide is a multi-dimensional problem deeply connected with other socio-economic issues and emphasized that, "The County's strategy must focus on a holistic, inclusive and sustainable solution for everyone." She mentioned that various County departments (e.g., Consumer and Business Affairs, County Counsel, Internal Services, Public Works, Regional Planning, and WDACS) were already working on digital divide initiatives in response to Board Motions. However, she also underscored the importance of everyone equally doing their part to bridge this divide. Ms. Bacharach closed the conference by speaking on the core mission of the Commission to provide advice, innovative ideas, assistance and support to County Leaders and employees to promote quality, productivity and efficient of County public services and operations. She concluded by linking the Leadership Conference as a key component to meeting that mission and expressing thanks to the speakers, facilitators, attendees and those involved in planning the Conference.

