



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Smart Cities for All brings focus on Digital Inclusion to Bioneers movement

- **Victor Pineda and James Thurston receive award for global activism on behalf of persons with disabilities around the world**

**San Rafael, CA - October 20<sup>th</sup>:** Smart Cities for All, a joint initiative by G3ict and World Enabled, will be participating in Bioneers 2017 – Uprising, calling attention to the need for greater digital inclusion and accessible urban design in cities around the world. This event highlights scientific and social innovative solutions to various environmental and socio-cultural challenges. This year Bioneers will include a panel on “Digital Inclusivity and Urban Resilience in the Global South” led by Smart Cities for All. The event takes place from October 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> at the Marin Center, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA 94903.

“People with disabilities form part of every community and as cities invest in technology they have a unique opportunity to empower all citizens and leave no one behind,” said Dr. Victor Pineda, President and Founder of World Enabled. He added “I am honored to join the innovators and change makers at Bioneers to foster people and planet centered solutions that create systemic change. Our Smart Cities for All global initiative helps cities build smarter and more accessible cities for all.” Dr. Pineda is scheduled to deliver a keynote address highlighting how technology can shape a more inclusive future. In addition, the Smart Cities for All global initiative, led by James Thurston and Dr. Pineda, will be recognized with an award during the event.

“Providing a platform for radically inclusive social justice solutions is at the heart of the work that Bioneers does.” Said Joshua Fouts, Executive Director of Bioneers. “And the Smart Cities for All global initiative is singularly emblematic of what it means to pursue equitable, just, access to technology to all people. We are so honored that Victor and James will be sharing their solutions with the Bioneers community.”

Smart Cities for All is partnering with Bioneers, a community of leadership that is actively changing the world, to spotlight the need for digital inclusion in a rapidly urbanizing world. This year’s conference will include a focus on Smart Cities for All’s innovative tools, strategies and solutions to ensure that persons with disabilities and older persons are part of the discussion of how “Smart City” projects are conceptualized and executed.



"Most countries around the world have signed on to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and so have committed to the digital inclusion of all their citizens. Our Smart Cities for All global initiative has created a set of tools to help cities make progress on the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons." Said James Thurston, Vice President for Global Strategy and Development at G3ict, adding, "We are deploying these tools globally in partnership with industry, government, and disability organizations and we are confident that they will be particularly useful in the Global South."

Earlier this year, G3ict and World Enabled launched the Smart Cities for All Toolkit -- which is now available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Several additional language versions are currently in development and will be released soon. The Toolkit contains four tools to help Smart Cities worldwide include a focus on ICT accessibility and the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons, while also supporting a range of organizations and roles related to Smart Cities. Each of the tools addresses a priority challenge identified by global experts as a barrier to the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons in Smart Cities.

More information about the participation of Smart Cities For All in Bioneers 2017 - Uprising in the following blogpost's link:

[Why Cities Should Build Smart, Urban and Inclusive Solutions for All](#)

## **About Bioneers**

Bioneers ([www.bioneers.org](http://www.bioneers.org)) is a nonprofit educational organization that highlights breakthrough solutions for restoring people and planet. Founded in 1990 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, by social entrepreneurs Kenny Ausubel and Nina Simons, Bioneers has acted as a fertile hub of social and scientific innovators with practical and visionary solutions for the world's most pressing environmental and social challenges. A celebration of the genius of nature and human ingenuity, Bioneers connects people with solutions and each other. Its acclaimed annual national and local conferences are complemented by extensive media outreach including an award-winning radio series, book series, and role in media projects such as Leonardo DiCaprio's film *The 11th Hour*. Bioneers conducts dynamic programs in Restorative Food Systems, Indigenous Wisdom, Youth Leadership, Women's leadership and Community Resilience, as well as special projects such as Rights of Nature law.

Learn more about Bioneers and its annual conference: <http://www.bioneers.org>.



## About Smart Cities for All

In 2016, G3ict and World Enabled launched a research project to assess information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility in smart cities around the world. They surveyed more than 250 experts and smart city program managers, 60% of whom responded that smart cities were failing people with disabilities. Only 18% of respondents knew of a smart city that uses ICT accessibility standards. As a result of the findings, and with support from Microsoft, the two NGOs created the Smart Cities for All Toolkit, featuring four digital tools to help those involved in city planning to make future technology projects more inclusive. James Thurston, Vice President at G3ict and Dr. Victor Pineda, President at World Enabled, lead the Smart Cities for All initiative launched in 2016. Both James and Victor are leading accessibility experts who are committed to building a broad global coalition to ensure that persons with disabilities and older persons enjoy the advances of smart cities on an equal basis with other citizens

Learn more about Smart Cities for All: <http://www.smartcities4all.org/>

**Dr. Victor Santiago Pineda** is the President of World Enabled and the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES). Dr. Pineda is a recognized leader in international disability rights and was appointed by US President Barak Obama to the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board. He teaches city planning at University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Pineda has received numerous awards, including a National Science Foundation (NSF) Innovation research grant, a Fulbright Hays Scholarship, and the AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Award. Mr. Pineda received a B.A., B.S. and M.C.P. from the University of California, Berkeley and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles.

**James Thurston** is an internationally recognized technology policy leader. As G3ict's Vice President for Global Strategy and Development, he leads the design and implementation of new programs to scale up G3ict's global impact. He has served as advisor to high-ranking government leaders in the US and abroad on technology policy, human rights, and digital inclusion. He has experience applying both technology and public policy to important social and economic challenges. He holds broad policy and management experience in both the private and public sectors and at the federal, state, and international levels of government. Prior to joining G3ict, Mr. Thurston was Director of International Accessibility Policy at Microsoft, where he developed and executed a worldwide strategy to expand the company's outreach on disability and technology issues. Mr. Thurston holds both a Master of Public Administration and an M.A. in East European Studies from the University of Washington, as well as a B.A. in International Affairs from the University of Maine.