

ConnectHome Convening Debrief

Summary:

On March 25 2021, Tucson held a virtual ConnectHome Convening via Zoom. The event consisted of a citywide effort to discuss topics pertaining to the elimination of digital divides for local residents. Representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups were active participants during our breakout discussions, specifically highlighting unique opportunities that Tucson presents for digital inclusion. Listed below are the stakeholder groups who attended the convening, in addition to key takeaways from our discussion sessions that pertain to addressing four essential questions:

- 1) What does digital inclusion mean to you?
- 2) What does digital inclusion look like in Tucson?
- 3) What are we doing collectively to advance digital inclusion in Tucson?
- 4) What resources, programs, and initiatives are needed to achieve our digital inclusion goals?

Participating Organizations:

- Amphitheater Unified School District
- Arizona Covid-19 Digital Task Force
- ASU's Office of Community, Health, Engagement, and Resiliency (OCHER)
- Catholic Community Services
- City of Phoenix Housing Department
- City of Tucson Housing and Community Development
- City of Tucson Information Technology
- City of Tucson Mayoral Office and Ward Offices
- Community Bridges Inc.
- Community Foundation of Southern Arizona
- Community Investment Corporation
- Cox Communications
- Creative Communications Learning Advisory Council Inc. (CCLAC)
- Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
- Direct Advocacy & Resource Center
- Gorman & Company
- JobPath
- Literacy Connects of Tucson
- Nonviolence Legacy Program
- PCs for People
- Pima Community College
- Pima Council on Aging (PCOA)
- Pima County Adult Probation (LEARN)
- Pima County Department of Community & Workforce Development
- Pima County Public Libraries

- Silverbell Terrace
- Tucson House Residents Council
- Tucson Unified School District (TUSD)
- T-Mobile
- United Way of Tucson & Southern Arizona
- University of Arizona
- 4Tucson (Poverty Reduction Task Force)

Key Takeaways:

What does digital inclusion mean to you?

- Access to high-speed home internet at an affordable cost for all Tucson residents
- Access to affordable computer hardware components in good condition for residents living within our city
- Digital navigation training provided in multiple languages (Emphasis on inclusion of Spanish-speaking community; South Tucson)
- Ability to navigate technology as upgrades and changes to digital platforms are introduced into the market
- Equitable access and usability for digital technology interface in school, work, healthcare, and entertainment functions (etc.)
- Adaptations made for digital technologies to address access issues for populations who are elderly or disabled within Tucson
- Low-income households and people of color having equitable access to digital technologies to the same degree that white and affluent people have in accessing these technologies
- Addressing barriers with infrastructure pertaining to broadband access for high-speed home internet across the city of Tucson
- Tech-support that is easily accessible and quick in responding to residents who have troubleshooting needs with their digital devices

What does digital inclusion look like in Tucson?

- A centralized database for a citywide digital literacy campaign in Tucson; including both a citywide needs assessment and asset mapping of broadband infrastructure
- Affordable and equitable bandwidth access for all Tucson residents (download speeds of 30mbs or above) to provide high-speed home internet
- In-person digital literacy training that is both free and easily accessible to underserved populations (low-income, people of color, elderly, people with disabilities). Also teaching people how to use computers and the internet safely (Emphasis on inclusion of Spanish-speaking community; South Tucson). City investment in supporting ongoing digital inclusion efforts
- Long-term controlled costs with digital access for low-income communities.

- Partnership with both corporate entities and non-profits to provide capacity for device distribution, internet access at affordable rates, digital literacy training, and tech support services.
- Expanding education to parents of school children regarding addressing digital literacy gaps for the purposes of assisting parents with meeting their children's needs in school.

What are we doing collectively to advance digital inclusion in Tucson?

- OCHER currently conducting digital literacy surveys with Tucson House residents
- Pima Community College provided laptops, tablets, hotspots (loaners) for students without a computer. PCC also utilizing parking lots to provide Wi-Fi access to students in need during the pandemic.
- City of Tucson held a ConnectHome Digital inclusion convening; bringing stakeholders together to form new partnerships. Brainstorming discussions regarding digital equity for the City of Tucson occurred during the event.
- Pre-apprenticeship programs to upskill workers/immigrants in digital literacy offered through PCC, University of Arizona, and Pima County Public Libraries (PCPL).
- Wi-Fi hotspot busses implemented in South Tucson neighborhoods through Sunnyside school district
- City of Tucson currently implementing Wi-Fi hotspots in Tucson House and other affordable housing projects.
- Weekly Statewide Digital Access Task force meetings (50-70 people from state and local government, education, economic development, and telemedicine). Arizona Connects (52-page digital access strategy report).
- T-Mobile working with HUD and tribal nations to provide access point hotspots on tribal lands
- Pima County Public Libraries (PCPL) providing access to on-site computers, computer classes, and hotspot rentals. Virtual classes provided as well. GED support classes in English & Spanish, using Zoom, applying for jobs, and interview prep. PCPL also has hundreds of online databases and thousands of online materials (E-Books/audiobooks). PCPL also has access to three bookmobile vehicles which have Wi-Fi enabled connections
- TUSD works with City of Tucson to obtain routers. TUSD has 3 schools partnering with Verizon. Each student receives a tablet and data to use for school purposes.
- City of Tucson partnered with Amphitheater School District and ISPs for entire school year to help with hybrid learning
- Cox: Changed requirements for underprivileged families to access internet, allowed those with debt to qualify, as well as students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program
- Sunnyside helped teachers upgrade internet speed to teach class from home with limited funding. Raytheon helped to provide high-speed internet to school district.
- T-Mobile hotspots in 50,000 K-12 school children across the state of Arizona
- ISPs investing in network infrastructure where there are digital access gaps in Tucson

- HUD: Providing resources and connections to NGO's and other ConnectHome communities to support Tucson's efforts in reaching their digital inclusion goals.

What resources/programs/initiatives are needed to achieve our digital inclusion goals?

- Increased publicity and marketing efforts to expand awareness and education on digital inclusion
- Reliable, sustainable funding sources for volunteers, trainers, ambassadors, public relations, digital champions. Finding permanent ConnectHome staff to manage initiative as well as collecting/analyzing data. More grant writing opportunities to obtain necessary funding for project.
- Increased number of secure digital access points in the Tucson community
- Partnerships to provide ongoing digital literacy trainings for populations in Tucson that are in the most need. Allowing these trainings to be free and accessible to all residents in the city
- Sliding scale payment program for low-income individuals who may otherwise struggle with paying for ongoing high-speed home internet access. Making concessions in allowing internet for those struggling with debt.
- Tech support for hardware repairs, as well as software troubleshooting that is easily accessible for residents in need
- Partnerships with local computer refurbishers to allow for an increased number of computer/laptop devices to be made available to those in need; either for free or at a reduced cost.
- Infrastructure expansion for digital access in underserved communities to provide high-speed broadband internet. Address restrictive broadband zoning laws preventing wider access for low-income communities; often due to more affluent areas having a greater market share
- Ongoing community meetings on digital inclusion
- Ongoing investments in digital inclusion from city government
- Working together as a community towards digital inclusion goals. Do not duplicate initiatives at the local level. Too many entities involved causes increased confusion among stakeholders and city residents.
- Train people in underserved communities to become ambassadors in digital inclusion.
- Increased connections and partnerships to expand digital inclusion efforts throughout the city