

Madison ConnectHome Update

Date: September 24, 2020

To: City of Madison Digital Technology Committee

From: Deborah Rakowski, CDA Deputy Director

The Madison Community Development Authority and the City of Madison Information Technology Department have partnered together on the Madison ConnectHome initiative, an initiative to narrow the digital divide for HUD assisted households in the City of Madison. The initiative was launched in 2020 with the inaugural Madison Digital Inclusion Summit. While the initiative has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic has also spurred the need for digital inclusion for low income households throughout the City. Some of this year's highlights this initiative are below.

Launch: Madison Digital Inclusion Summit

- Held February 10, 2020 at the Central Library, the event brought together a diverse group of just under 100 people including CDA residents, property management staff, IT professionals, non-profit staff and City of Madison staff.
- Next steps identified from the group discussions included:
 1. Collect baseline data to measure needs
 2. Develop a clear vision and goals inclusive of community and resident voices
 3. Create a coalition with potential subgroups (DTC was identified as a possible leading group)
 4. Create a resource hub or guide
 5. Conduct outreach (resident meetings, public education, digital ambassador program)
 6. Develop a regular meeting schedule
- The HUD ConnectHome project manager from Washington, DC was in attendance and presented at the summit. As a result of her visit, she invited the Madison team to participate in a round table group to discuss the technical assistance provided by the national partners. As a result of these sessions, HUD has already begun to implement suggested changes.

Planning: 2020 Action Plan

- The ConnectHome project team utilized feedback from the Digital Inclusion Summit to develop the 2020 action plan. The action plan included the following work areas: Connectivity, Devices, Digital Literacy, Other Programming, and Program Management.
- Key activities in the 2020 action plan are:
 - Complete feasibility study to establish baseline connectivity for CDA residents
 - Develop tracking mechanism to track connection improvements
 - Upgrade current devices owned by CDA in computer labs at CDA properties
 - Connect CDA residents to refurbisher/low cost resource
 - Determine digital literacy class locations with internet access at CDA properties
 - Develop after school, workforce training, and senior training programs
 - Create a Digital Ambassador Program
 - Connect with Corporation for National Community Services (CNCS) offices for AmeriCorps VISTA opportunity
 - Develop and implement a communications strategy

Action: Progress Report

- The feasibility study started with a resident survey, which was completed in September 2020. Results indicate that 44% of respondents report not having a home internet connection, 42% reported not having a mobile phone with internet service, and 25% reported having neither form of service at home.
- The CDA partnered with the East Madison Community Center to apply for grant funding from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission to create a lending library at Truax Park Apartments and Webb Rethke Townhomes. The grant proposal was funded in the amount of \$40,214. The project includes the hiring the first Digital Ambassador, who will receive a \$200 resident service stipend.
- During the pandemic, CDA Service Coordinators distributed 20 Samsung data enabled tablets and 5 mobile hot spots to residents to date. Data plans are available on these devices free of charge to residents for 2 years.
- The CDA applied for and was approved for an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. The first round of interviews concluded in August 2020, however, none of the candidates accepted the position in Madison. The second round of interviews has just opened for a November placement. This volunteer would primarily be responsible for grant writing and developing digital literacy programming in collaboration with DaneNet.
- CDA staff and DaneNet staff visited all CDA resident computer labs and determined next steps to begin upgrades. Primary findings including upgrading the existing internet service to the computer labs.