

2018-2019 ConnectHome Digital Inclusion Efforts in Detroit, 11/19/19

Caila Prendergast: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for logging onto the webinar today. We're going to give it a few more minutes and give some more folks some time to log on and then we'll get started. Good afternoon, everyone. Again, thank you for joining us today on ConnectHomeUSA's webinar series.

Today's topic is Digital Inclusion Efforts in Detroit together with Dina Lehmann-Kim, HUD's ConnectHomeUSA program manager and myself, Caila Prendergast. We are your hosts for today. Before Dina introduces our exciting speakers, I have a few housekeeping items for everyone. Our speakers will share their knowledge for approximately 15 to 20 minutes each and at the end of each session, we will reserve about 15 to 20 minutes for questions and answers.

You may ask questions in two different ways. The first way is in the right-hand navigation panel, you will see a hand-shaped icon. If you would like to verbally share your questions, select the hand icon and I will unmute your line in order of questions received or if you would like to send us your questions, feel free to type it in the chat box in the lower right-hand navigation panel.

I will then read your questions aloud in the order received. If we are unable to address all questions, we will send an email reply after the webinar. All webinar participants are muted upon entry. If you would like to notify our team of any technical difficulties, please send us a message in the chat box. Today's webinar is being recorded and will be available on HUD Exchange shortly following the webinar.

Immediately following the presentation you will receive an invitation to complete a survey and we welcome you to complete the short survey and share any ideas you may have for future webinars. I'm now going to send it over to Dina who will introduce today's speakers.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you so much, Caila and thank you everybody for joining us today for our November ConnectHomeUSA webinar, Digital Inclusion Efforts in Detroit. Why are we highlighting Detroit? For two very important reasons. One, it's one of just a handful of cities that has hired someone whose job it is to address the digital divide.

So that's really key. And number two, it's a ConnectHomeUSA community. We're very fortunate to have our two speakers today. First on the agenda is Joshua Edmonds who is the City of Detroit's very first director of digital inclusion. Reporting to the city's chief information officer, Joshua is responsible for developing and implementing a sustainable digital inclusion strategy aimed at annually reducing Detroit's digital divide.

Joshua's background in tackling the digital divide stands from his work at the Cleveland Foundation's Digital Excellence Initiative and ConnectHome at the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. So with that, I will pass it over to Joshua and then I'll introduce Julia Fearing once it's her turn to speak. Joshua, thank you.

Joshua Edmonds: No. Thank you. And is my audio coming through okay?

Dina Lehmann-Kim: It sure is.

Joshua Edmonds: All right. Perfect. So I know everyone's muted, but again, Joshua Edmonds. I'm the City of Detroit's director of digital inclusion and I actually moved to Detroit in February of this year, but time is relative and we've [inaudible] move incredibly quickly, because the demand has been very high and for those of you who don't have a champion, when you get one, I believe it's inevitable, you'll see that the pace in this role is very quick and you can do a whole lot in a short amount of time.

You know, what I'm going to cover today, briefly going to touch on my background and talk about the benefits the City of Detroit receives from my role, kind of the partnership structure that we're building and how other cities should advocate for a role like mine and then lastly, what can public housing authorities do with cities with or without a digital inclusion champion.

Now, my background starting -- we're going to left to right here. It was mentioned I worked at the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority on President Obama's ConnectHome Initiative. We locally brand ConnectHome as Cleveland Connects. We've found that that was actually a lot easier to have the localized branding not to say that ConnectHome, there's anything wrong with it, but Cleveland Connects and based on us going around talking to people really stuck.

So I would immediately tell folks who are kind of trying to -- they might've been a ConnectHome city for a while now and maybe the brand wasn't able to stick as much, I've seen that from other communities too. That would be my recommendation right then and there.

But one of the really big things that we did to really get attention on Cleveland and specifically, the digital divide we did a housing hackathon and we worked with our local university, so Cleveland State University and we worked with our larger tech developer community and we -- you know, the first portion of the day was research and talking about mobility as it relates to residents and the housing choice voucher program and how really the digital divide and a number of factors directly impacts their ability to find housing and the city not being able to actually fully realize the potential of the voucher.

And I was [inaudible] that actually -- I'm sorry, the county and one of those things that we began quickly realizing was many of these -- and this is kind of obvious, but regardless, many of the -- those tech developers had really great ideas and really great solutions, however, the minute I began actually talking to residents firsthand they realized that maybe some of those other solutions that they thought were good ideas just weren't super applicable.

And so we created this hackathon and it got actually attention from HUD saying that this is CMHA, it's one of the oldest chartered housing authorities in America and for them to do something so innovative, it really resonated well and some of the solutions that came out of that were incredible and the -- everyone loves attention, especially positive attention.

Now, after doing that work, the Cleveland Foundation, a local philanthropic giant in Cleveland, they kind of swooped in and said, we love the work that you're doing, but you could do it in a

different capacity, which I quickly obliged to work there, brought Net Inclusion, which is the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, its flagship conference, brought them to Cleveland, really highlighted the work that we did.

We brought PCs for People to Cleveland. For those familiar, they run an incredible social enterprise, refurbished operation and we were able to bring them there. NTEN is a name that I'm going to mention much more later on in the presentation, but in short, we actually had partnered with NTEN to do NTEN fellowships and those are --

The NTEN fellowship is geared towards staff within organizations who can go through a professional development around the digital divide. So that way they can become internalized digital inclusion champions and we actually supported an NTEN fellow within the housing authority. So even with me leading the housing authority the commitment was always there.

And then I did some other things in Cleveland around the digital divide, but shortly after moved to Detroit to take this position and all my efforts around the digital divide and what I want everyone else to see in the city, again, that localized branding. We're actually doing Connect 313 here. So I'll go into more of that later as well.

So the digital inclusion municipal return on investment, this is something that you're going to see other cities kind of expound on a lot more, however, this is where I would say immediately if you want to have those conversations on why your city's [inaudible] with the digital divide, again, going from left to right or in some type of order, the additional private sector support is real.

Your private sector companies are wanting to do more, especially a lot of these tech companies. In the past year alone, in the City of Detroit, we have Microsoft, LinkedIn, Google, Twitter, Facebook, Amazon. They're all downtown now. They're all in Detroit now.

Before they were in the suburbs, now they're in the city and the digital divide is something that directly impacts them, because one thing that we know is tech isn't really diverse and if the digital divide is largely exacerbated by the cycle of poverty, and we see that in a lot of these cities, especially our minority/majority cities, we see who's going to be hardest impacted by this digital divide.

This directly impacts hiring decisions. And so we had some of these tech companies who have done some hirings and they've been getting slammed because of lack of diversity and some of them actually came back and circled back to me and said, this digital divide is -- disproportionately affects people of color and we need to do something about it.

And so they've actually been great partners to me and I can't stress that enough. Another one, every year, the least connected cities gets pushed out by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Detroit -- of cities of 100,000 or more is considered the least connected city in America. And so we actually use that as a point of galvanizing and owning that narrative and saying, we're sick of that, let's actually attack this instead of every year we don't have a response for that.

So I would tell anyone who is astute with looking at the American Community Survey you really can do some damage there and it doesn't matter if you're not the least connected state in America, if you have 15 percent of your residents that don't have Internet of any kind, that's still pretty significant and you should bring that attention to your city and ask what their response is.

Another part is the digital divide is neighborhood focused. You don't really see massive digital divides in downtown sectors just because we know where the wealth is and oftentimes where it's not, especially in the neighborhoods. And so no city wants to leave their neighborhoods behind and that's kind of a national thing, despite the fact that those are really geared by localized sentiments.

And so being able to say that all of our work actually has to be done in the neighborhoods, otherwise, if it's done downtown, you're not really going to see any metrics improve, that helps municipalities feel -- I would say administrations feel a lot better about serving their residents. I'm going to skip over some of this other stuff, because I realize I'm actually taking a little bit longer than I thought to get through this.

But the other part -- sorry, the other part of this is that this is future-focused and it's future proof and what I mean by that is if we're seeing that as a result of globalization that technology is essentially allowing people to do distance working, you don't really have to -- as a result, you're having companies who don't necessarily have to have a physical presence in some of these cities and they're hiring.

And so what that means is if your city isn't really competitive or your residents aren't able to compete with these other cities, you essentially get left behind. We don't want that and it's a legitimate fear and the cities have to just be really realistic that that is what is already happening and we don't want that to happen. So we have to have an answer. Moving onto the internal-external partnership structure I'm building is pretty extensive and this is evolving. It's going to continuously evolve, but starting from the workforce people one of the big things -- I had mentioned earlier PCs for People, however, in the City of Detroit right now, we're actually working with Human I-T.

Human I-T is a social enterprise, very similar to PCs for People that does the refurbishing on -- the donating of technology assets and diverting e-waste from landfills and the cool thing about them we have a lot of enterprise in the city. We have GM, Ford, BlueCross BlueShield, all Dan Gilbert's companies, Bedrock, Quicken.

And for us, we're able to say to those companies how would you like all of your technologies to stay in Detroit for the benefit of Detroiters? On the back then, because Human I-T is an nonprofit, now that becomes a tax write-off.

And so it's actually good for business and it's actually good for the community and we've actually aligned that with workforce, because we want essentially to have all these people who are going through these workforce trainings to then be paired with a laptop or a device and that's an immediate pairing.

And I know I'm going to get to this later about what public housing authorities can do, but in an immediate pairing, this also works really well with the FSS program too and I'm not sure if that's just maybe because I used to work in public housing that I see these relations as things that we can obviously take advantage of, but even if you make the case to your local digital inclusion champion, they're going to get that.

The other part about this that we're looking at doing with the housing part, that Notice of Funding Availability, or NOFA, I know that for public housing and any type of development that this is already something that digital equity is already kind of built in through some additional language, however, for the city, our housing revitalization department, they claim that they didn't actually have digital equity baked into their NOFA.

And so there's like 100 points that they give developers to -- you know, for bidding for contracts and we actually were able to -- they actually gave me three points. So that way every single development within the City of Detroit moving forward is going to have either WiFi in it, a computer lab or WiFi at broadband speed, which is -- that's, again, just something that we're able to do at the city, because --

Or at least I'm able to do at the city, because I have those relationships with some of these other people. The other thing that we're doing -- and again, I'm not going through all of these, because it's a lot, but the other thing that we're doing is also looking at, again, our role at the Census.

I think that this, again, is something that public housing authorities, particularly residents receiving vouchers but are ally PHIs as well, we really, really have to deliver on this one, because obviously, the funding argument's there, but beyond that with the Census going online and we know why ConnectHome existed in the first place, I think the public housing authorities really had to step up in a big way here.

And for us, I tell people I'm putting democracy on there, but I tell everyone make no mistake that it's the census right now, but in the next 10 years, it could very well be election. And so I just really want people to take a proactive stance there and then really empowering people in the -- on the team to be able to do that.

Now, how cities should advocate, really, I have several pictures up here that really explain it the best way. One of those are America's Least Connected Cities. So me pulling that data and just showing everybody what that is over and over again, be really cognitive of your data and make your data work for you.

I didn't really skew anything, but I did save cities of 100,000 households or more. If you just want to look at your population and say I'm a population of -- you know, my city's 50,000 people or 40,000, then pull all the cities that have comparable populations to say of all these comparable-sized cities, we are the least connected or the second least.

That's still going to go pretty far, but you really have to be able to let that data tell a story. The second thing is for Digital Inclusion Week, which is the first week in October every year -- or

actually, the first full week of -- in October every year. That happens by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

I would strongly advise you all to look into that, because your private sector companies know what that is. I mean, I had every single Internet service provider present, I had the community present, I had over 200 people attend this Digital Inclusion Summit and I sent one email. Again, people are really ready for this stuff.

At the bottom, maps, maps go a long way, as many maps as you can. All that data that I have on this map over here -- I know it's really hard to see, but this is percents of homes with no broadband Internet subscription. That's all found in the American Community Survey. That's data that's available to you right now.

All you would have to do is plot that data on a map and that's how you kind of tell that story over and over again. And on the left, partner with academia, do that. I can't stress enough if you're in a city that actually has academia present or some sort of academic institution, use it to your advantage. They want to partner, they just might be a little weird, but do it.

I promise you it's going to [inaudible] the dividends that you're going to need. Right here is a picture of Beth Niblock. She's our city's CIO and I would strongly advise you to reach out to the CIOs of your respective cities, because honestly, they get it. The Ford Foundation nationally, they're starting to really try and support more CIOs in getting into this external-facing social good role, if you will, because they get it.

They get the technology. They understand the value of that. And so I would tell you your CIOs are probably going to be very apt to this conversation, to this discussion and I guarantee you it weighs, to some degree, on their conscience and if there's not a response, this is a great way to partner and find an internal champion that's really close to the mayor who actually already has that trust.

And the last part, philanthropy always is going to play a big role in this stuff. Some of them are starting to get it, you've just got to be a little bit patient with them if they don't, but luckily, with the Knight Foundation, if you're a Knight city, definitely work with them as much as you can.

Now, how public housing authorities can work with cities, one, if you have a digital inclusion champion, immediately if you're doing any type of intake with the voucher -- with your voucher folks or even your LIPH folks, this is just arming people with information, as much information as possible being a benefit navigator.

When I was at the housing authority -- in Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, one of the things that we did, we made sure that the resident services was a big partner in everything that we did, but beyond that ACVP actually had staff that was on the intake that we -- they would actually sit down and ask residents, do you have Internet, do you have a computer, do you have this or that?

And if they didn't, actually connecting them to those resources in the community. Obviously, PCs for People in Cleveland and now with having Human I-T in Detroit, that makes things really easy for us, because they've already -- they're already committed to signing up residents with that low-cost Internet that comes with the providers, whether it's Comcast, AT&T or our charter Spectrum, but beyond that also connecting them to the devices that works.

But if you don't have that person, you can still do that, it's just going to be a little bit more difficult, but that's you directly reaching out to your providers and saying let's work together, because we all know -- well, I shouldn't say we all know, it is known that if you are in public housing, that's an auto qualifying mark to qualify for this low-cost Internet at \$9.95.

And so that is something where it's like take advantage of that right now. Another part is Internet user data reporting. One thing that we -- again, data is key to all of this stuff. We don't know -- there's so much data that's missing around the digital divide. So any data that can be connected let's use it as much as possible to tell that story, because when I'm engaging with funders, they always want to see data, they always want to see metrics.

And so you really should -- if you don't have resident data as it relates to Internet access or as it relates to computers in the home, I strongly advise you to begin doing that. And I think honestly, it would be a very small survey. And then sharing any type of programming that you're doing with the digital inclusion champion.

If you're doing something, let us know and I would say that if it's very broad, it can be very broad, like something as small as you saying, we're doing this giveaway, that's fine, reach out to the city. We like that stuff. Or hey, we're doing a computer training here and it's open to the public. Cool, that means that we can then connect other people to the -- I mean, it's --

A lot of this digital divide -- you know, it's not always just digital, there's really just a communication divide and we're not really good at -- and I would say collectively, not PHAs in general, but just collectively we're not good at sharing information with others and honestly, basic information sharing just goes a long way in bridging this stuff.

Without the championing, using ConnectHome as leverage as much as you can. This is still a national brand and nationally-recognized name. Use that as much as you can. I don't think it -- I mean, again, you probably -- it could probably stand to have more partners through it and the ConnectHome team (has ?) done a great job with that, but that brand has the most power.

Keep using that. Identify city council champions. A lot of councilmembers will go to -- and it's no secret, but they go to all these public housing authorities all the time and these different estates, because those are where the voters are in a lot of these cases, especially the senior properties. And so if they're going to be doing that to get the votes, then spin it back on them and say, we've got this digital divide, what are you doing for that in the community?

And I think you're going to find a lot of them to be receptive of that. Obviously, if you have a great library system -- not even a great -- if you have a library system, use them to your advantage. They are natural conveners as well. Ninety-five percent of all public computers are

found in libraries in America. It still stands to be one of the best anchor institutions and if you're not partnering with them, that is a very, very easy thing to do.

And if anyone is deploying mesh networks, essentially, WiFi networks throughout the city, give up your rooftops. Like don't be difficult there. In Cleveland, when we did it, we deployed a mesh network in one of our communities and honestly, the public housing authority was a great partner in that, but beyond that they weren't difficult about it.

They saw the ROI, they saw that the residents could use that WiFi and again, once you explain what it is, most people aren't going to be too difficult internally, but again, just knowing that's valuable. And the last part, man, use not even just VISTA fellowships, use all fellowships as much as you can if your city doesn't have fellowships or you don't know of any, I would reach out to your philanthropic sector and say --

Because all of them do it, there is this -- they have this leader development funding pool where they want to crank out new leaders and make sure that people stay in the city. Ask them about a public service fellowship and if they would want to support one at your organization to introduce more young professionals in public service.

A lot of your young professions are digital natives and they get this stuff and they get what it means not to have it. And so I would say use that as much as possible to at least move things along and in the interim before you're able to get much more steady funding on this. This is my last slide to summarize all of this.

I actually watched Chris Rocks special Tamborine and it's something where I would tell everyone to adopt this approach. Pretty much what Chris is saying that a lot of us want to be the rock stars and we all want to be center stage all the time and do everything and for digital inclusion, we don't necessarily need rock stars, I would say we need much more orchestras.

And so [inaudible] wants you to kind of put down the guitar and play the tambourine and it could be that we have these partnership structures where everyone wants to do so many things on it and it's like no, we don't really need to do that. If you're a public housing authority, you don't need to own the digital divide from A to Z.

Maybe you can only do A and B and then someone else can do C and D and then we get the full alphabet of inclusion. And so I would say that just keep that in mind, acknowledge your guys' -- your role in the community and what you can do, but don't overstretch, because when you overstretch, you end up overpromising and then underdelivering and then we're all kind of in a not-great situation.

And so that's kind of my approach to it. I left a lot of the stuff out, because they're really high level, but I'll definitely open up for questions later.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you so much, Joshua. That was amazing. That was so amazing and I had myself on mute, otherwise, you would've heard me going uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah, right, right,

right, right on, thank you so much for saying that. So now I'd like to turn it over to Julia Fearing, so excited to have her talk.

She is with the Detroit Housing Commission. She's a resident opportunity and self-sufficiency coordinator and she serves two of DHC's family and senior sites. She also manages and maintains program coordination and case management for their EnVision Centers, which is, I'm sure you all know, a new HUD secretarial initiative and she is also responsible for the development and implementation of DHC's ConnectHome program.

Julia has worked in the housing industry for over 10 years and has lots of experience and I've had the pleasure of speaking with her many times. She is a hero of mine. And without further ado, I will turn it over to her. Julia, you're up.

Julia Fearing: Hello. Happy Tuesday, everyone. I hope everyone is doing well. Joshua, that was fantastic. You took the majority of my presentation, I just want to let you know that.

Joshua Edmonds: Oh, I'm sorry.

Julia Fearing: Well, hopefully I don't sound like a broken record, but welcome, everyone. So I won't hold your time. I want to discuss the four key areas of successful ConnectHomeUSA implementation. And so the four key areas are preparation, population, partnership and performance.

And so before you begin planning your meetings with different partners, it's really, really important, before planning, is to make sure that you have an understanding of the task at hand, an understanding of the program, that you're able to effectively communicate to providers and also residents, because if you don't buy into and you don't believe in it, then guess what, the providers and residents, they're not either.

So the best practices for preparation are to plan, prepare and implementation, which is action. If you have a plan to have a meeting with community providers in helping you to form these partnerships, you want to make sure you create some type of research with existing partners that you have in your agency as well as non-existing partners in your agency.

Make sure you expand your geographical reach and also make sure that you create somewhat of an elevator pitch that you can deliver to those partners, let them know the tidbits about the ConnectHomeUSA programming.

One of the things that [inaudible] I have to do is schedule a face-to-face type of meeting with those potential partners letting them know about the ConnectHome programming as well as all also following up with some type of letter and email to memorialize it.

The next thing is you want to prepare an action plan to establish goals with those individuals that you became partners with and with that, you'll set up some type of partnership meeting and give a larger-scale presentation and breakdown of how can they help us and how we can help them and how it can be a win-win situation for all.

With that partnership meeting, [inaudible] formally some type of informational packet which will have a letter of commitment, an MOU as well as sponsorship opportunities available for partners to buy into. Also, make sure your duration [inaudible] outreaching to different partners. You want to make sure that you continue to recruit over the course of any type of project and think about the quality of partnership rather than the quantity of partnerships.

And the next thing on implementation of services, you want to make sure that you include residents. If you have a resident council that's present in your community, definitely have them include it with your different meetings as well as resident meetings as well as those who have the community service requirement to do eight hours of community service.

Make sure that they participate as well or those individual residents that are very proactive in participating in all activities and events at your site and when you do that, they can let you know how to go about things, what are the [inaudible] are and the input and you'll have their participation in your activity programming.

And so the next one is understanding your population and here at Detroit Housing Commission, we conduct a lot of assessment surveys to our residents and there's two types that we conduct. One is self-sufficiency assessment as well as the Resident Technological Assessment, RTA. And so this creates a baseline for each item that we have in the housing commission.

And so the breakdown of the Self-Sufficiency Assessment, we do that biannually. We go to each and every resident door that's in our 16-site portfolio. We go to their door, we ask them to [inaudible] questions that have questions related to economic, education, health and character listed as well as [inaudible] what identifiable information that we can connect them to as far as partnerships.

And also, it helps us identify demographic information and the need of community. And so this assessment is outside of our ROSS assessment that we conduct on the ROSS program, which is Revenue Opportunity Self-Sufficiency program and outside of our Family Self-Sufficiency programming and our business center membership intake assessment program as well.

So this is outside of that. So all of our resident services staff, all seven of us, we go to each and every site biannually. Then the next one we do is the RTA, which is the Resident Technological Assessment and there's a short but sweet survey that gathers information on technological uses, experience and knowledge.

And so we ask them the basics, like do you currently have WiFi, do you have active Internet, who is your cable provider, what kind of devices are you working -- are you working with laptops, desktops, tablets, what hours of the day do you access the Internet for employment or education, is it through the 8:00 a.m. to noon, 1:00 to 4:00, 5:00 to 9:00 or 10:00 at night until, do you know how to fill out forms online, do you have access to Internet, how many adults are in the household completed high school or GEDs, are they interested in a high school -- completing their high school diploma or GED, how many school-aged children that you have and what are those limiting age gaps that you guys have?

So one of the things that the Census can do, they can assist in efforts in going out [inaudible] and funding opportunities as well as assisting those individuals that you partnered with, who, the what, the when and where the resource and services are needed for this equality programming and follow-through.

And also, the two software systems that we use, we use a software called Tracking At-A-Glance Grants for both methods as well as we also created a separate Excel spreadsheet to gather all the statistical data for all 16 sites. Next, I have partnerships and I want to discuss briefly about the impacts of partnerships as well as important tips to remember when developing partnerships.

So partners allow you to focus on what you need to do in the path that you're responsible for so you can reach your own programming goals as well as filling any gaps for funding and services. We have a couple of partners that help assist to give out basic computer training to our senior residents as well as some of our young adult residents.

Because of lack of funding, we're unable to do so. They were able to bridge the gap in doing those free services for us not only at the EnVision Center, but also at some of those neighborhood communities. Also, the impact of having a partner is because they can lead into other opportunities and training for implementation for your residents and also networking and expanding your geographical reach.

So one thing that I learned is that if you do not ask a question and you do not deliver something, they can bridge that gap for you. So one of the things I like to do is go to different networking events, resource fairs and try to make different connections with the majority of the providers that are there. I always carry business cards around everywhere I go.

I try to at least make two to three connections with anybody I meet, because you never know who they may lead you to or what connections or networks they have. Important tips to remember in developing partnerships is to be honest but gentle. So you want to be up front about the different challenges that you've experienced with residents.

So a prime example is when it comes to certain topics and certain things like financial employment, some residents can't be shy about it and would have a difficult time trying to gather all the residents. So we let that provider know or that employer know, this is what's going on, let's create a fun event where we can include those necessary goals with it.

And so I like to think about [inaudible] filling the hot dog theory. So you put the substance in there and they're able to partake and also it's beneficial for them. Also, make sure you keep your agreements. Follow-through is definitely important. You want to make sure you uphold your commitment as well as they uphold their commitment and always keep consistent and effective communications with both parties.

When asking, ask as many questions as you can. Ask for assistance if you need it. Ask for resources and services and funding if they have it. If they don't have funding, ask what can they

do, what can they bring to the table for you. Do not be shy to ask. And building positive relationship with partners.

Remember, partners, they do talk just like people do. So make sure you keep a positive, professional relationship, be humble and by doing so, it can give you leads and introduce you a network of people that you never had access to. And lastly, performance is pretty much your planning and to develop a performance plan, like a collaboration with your partner.

So you have to have some type of gathering of information to make sure -- or evaluation framework, if you will, as to the deliverables that the partner is carrying out to make sure that they're effective and conducive to your population at the particular site to make sure there's some follow-through on both ends as well as ensure active participation for both providers and the residents.

And you want to track and evaluate that and how you would evaluate that is through surveys. So a lot of our assessments that we conduct biannually and those that we conduct with Resident Technological Assessment, the RTA.

We ask those questions as well as how do they feel about certain providers and how was that activity and how was that program, because feedback is definitely important and [inaudible] the residents to [inaudible] any activity, especially connectivity with ConnectHome to follow through with that. And thank you.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Excellent. Thank you so much, Julia. That was really, really good. So now I'd like to open it up for questions to the audience, it's Q&A time. And so Caila, if you can remind folks, excuse me, how to ask questions. I mean, I know you can use the chat box and you can also raise your hand if you see the icon on the right-hand side of your screen. There's like a little mitten, you can do that or you can type in the chat box. Caila, am I missing something else?

Caila Prendergast: Hi, Dina. Yeah. That's just right. So those two options are, just like Dina said, you can write, type your question in the chat box to the right or raise your hand with the little hand icon, then I'll unmute your line and we'll let you ask your question.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: So this is a great opportunity, you have two very experienced people on the line. I highly recommend taking advantage of this opportunity, but while we're waiting for questions to come in, I did want to remind everybody that we did do -- Joshua mentioned the American Community Survey data and how good that is in terms of helping you map where there is a digital divide in your community.

We did do a webinar in September and that's been recorded in archives. So if you go to Hud Exchange, it should be up there now and if you have any questions about it, feel free to send a note to connecthome@hud.gov and we can connect you to people who can help you with that. The other point I wanted -- or question I wanted to ask was to Julia, I love what you said about networking and I wanted to ask you what venues you use or opportunities do you use to network.

Julia Fearing: So I [inaudible] a lot of different resources from providers that we have already existing -- that has an existent partnership as well as I look online at our different events, like Eventbrite and also some other resources with Detroit at Work as well as some of our employment solutions agencies to see what other resources they have and I try to gather up a list to see which one I could go to if I'm not already requested to have an information table.

And if I do come, I have a stack of business cards, I have a stack of brochures, I have a wealth of information, Detroit Housing Commission, the public housing aspect as well as answering questions for the housing choice voucher side. So I'm well equipped to answer questions of the residents of Detroit to let them know if they're current residents or want to become residents, I'm able to identify and answer any questions that they have.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That is great. Are you -- yeah. That really is a great strategy. Okay. I don't want to monopolize. Caila, do we have any questions?

Caila Prendergast: Yeah. We have -- we've had a few questions come in. [inaudible] really quick. Will this be achieved as well? Yes, it will. It'll be up on the HUD Exchange website. And then moving onto the next question, I think this is for Julia, how did you administer or evaluate the RTA? Also, what was the software you said you used for grant tracking?

Julia Fearing: So the software that we utilize to capture the results of the surveys and assessments was Tracking At-A-Glance. That's one of the softwares that we use and then also outside of that, I also created an Excel spreadsheet and I did it by hand one resident at a time with each and every question and answer that we possibly have and then I compile it.

And then we have a partnership with Wayne State University and they calculate everything in the answers that we have to give us a definitive statistical data to receive. And so when you have partnerships with different providers, they're going to ask a question about certain things and you'll be able to have that statistical data from that population.

So prime example was we had a partner that wanted to give us coats and they needed to know how many family sites that we have and how many kids are roughly about in our population. We were able to give them a definitive answer as to this is how many kids we have, this is the age group that we have it and we were able to break that down.

So Tracking At-A-Glance is good and if you don't have Tracking At-A-Glance, you can use Microsoft Excel which is also very timing, but it's effective as well. And then also, for the RTA and Survey Monkey, that's what I forgot to mention too, we utilize Survey Monkey that can tabulate that short survey.

We only use Survey Monkey as it relates to the self-sufficiency, because there's so many questions and so many components in it, but for the RTA, the residents are able to respond a lot better and we thought increased response was making it [inaudible] to the residents, because everyone has a cell phone.

So they were able to go into their cell phone and utilize Survey Monkey clicking on the link and was able to answer the eight short-question survey.

Caila Prendergast: Great. Thanks, Julia. I had another question come in, it's either for Joshua or Julia, I'm super excited for all this information, I don't have access to FSS or ROSS coordinators. I'm in a small community and need help trying to get my residents [inaudible]. I need help and would like to partner with anyone who may be willing to help out. Do you have any suggestions?

Joshua Edmonds: I mean, I would say at the onset, I wish I knew what community it was or what city or state, for that matter and the only reason why I'm saying that is so immediately -- so [inaudible] to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance of listserv it gives you a better understanding of who's doing what and where they are and where the gaps are.

They pretty much -- the reason why I even said it in the beginning of what community, we're pretty aware of most cities who kind of have a presence. The smaller ones, we kind of like to look at the nearest larger city and leveraging resources that way, but if you're a smaller, more intimate city, at the same time, the plus is you have -- I would say it's less bureaucratic obstruction and at the same time, it's way easier to identify a more intimate champion.

My thing would be, right then and there, going to city government and if not the city, definitely the county.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks for that, Joshua. I want to actually just [inaudible] that person who asked that question is from [inaudible] Alexandria, Louisiana. I don't know if that [inaudible].

Joshua Edmonds: Yeah. This would be something where I'd be willing to at least follow up with that. Do they have my email? Or do people on this panel have my -- or in this chat have my email?

Caila Prendergast: No, but I can connect you guys after the webinar. I'll write the name down and get you guys connected. Any other questions? Oh, a question just came in for you, Joshua. You mentioned maps go a long way. What did you use to map your data using information from the ACS?

Joshua Edmonds: All right. So there's two ways that you could do this. You could do this the more -- I would say the -- I'm not going to say the right way, but I would say more the nationally-accepted way, which in that case, we use RTIS. RTIS is widely recognized as one of the best mapping softwares out there.

Most cities -- city governments we use RTIS. It kind of comes as a license for us. You know, I'm not sure -- I don't -- actually, no, even at CMHA when we did our mapping, we also had access to RTIS, however, if you don't have access to RTIS, you can also use -- if you have Microsoft Excel in a newer version, you can actually plot that data on Microsoft Excel and actually, there's Excel mapping.

And if you don't know how to do Excel mapping, there's -- I believe it's like an eight-minute video on YouTube that would teach you. It's honestly really easy. All you have to do is put in the data points and then everything would be recognized at the census level -- or by census tract and latitude and longitude, so you're geocoding it -- I know this might seem like really technical, but I promise you it's not, because I'm not like a super, super, super technical person.

And that's what I was actually doing before I actually got the license to RTIS. So again, if you have a license, you can use that. If not, then you can also go about just plotting this with Microsoft Excel and if you are just so against doing it, I would say the ultimate next step would be, again, going that university route and I will tell you now a college student, a lot of them who are -- really, they're almost making it mandatory in colleges to learn this stuff.

You could throw that out there and someone could complete it as part of a class assignment. They'd be eager to help.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's really good advice, Joshua. Caila, are there any other questions?

Caila Prendergast: I'm not seeing any other questions at this moment. If anyone has any lingering questions, just type them in the chat box and we have a few more minutes.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: So while we're waiting, Joshua, I have a question for you. I think you said you started in February.

Joshua Edmonds: Yes.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: And it sounds like between -- it hasn't even been a year between then and now. A lot of progress -- you've been able to make a lot of progress and establish lots of relationships with the private sector, the philanthropic sector. So what I'm wondering is it sounds like they -- those sectors were understanding that there was an issue and that there was a problem to be solved and that it was a problem to be solved jointly; am I right about that?

Joshua Edmonds: Yes, but I would like to say that I made it a very, very ambitious rule that every single week I would go to a minimum of five community events. And so I kind of started documenting. I have a very, very long spreadsheet. I've had over 600 meetings and just been going like crazy and initially, I tried to go probably the much more academic route.

I mean, I have like eight binders on my desk right now. They're full like digital divide information. So definitely studied this stuff to no end and what I began realizing was it didn't matter how right I was, people just didn't understand how this played -- impacted them. So I did have a really comprehensive slide deck.

I had to completely walk it back and just say, okay, you care about workforce, let me give you the workforce presentation. Hey, you're a bank in banks, we know that online banking is a thing, so let me talk about how this digital divide is impacting your ROI in these communities that you're already investing in and I just kind of went down the list like that and it was a much easier sell.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That is an incredible strategy and it [inaudible] nicely on what Julia was saying about networking. That's incredible, 600 meetings. That's -- I don't know how many meetings a day that is, but that's a lot. That's at least two a day, if not three --

Joshua Edmonds: Yeah. We --

Dina Lehmann-Kim: -- or a week or something.

Joshua Edmonds: -- I would say it's a lot, but also -- and what's [inaudible] in the path and you use your local media, if you guys are able to -- you know, whoever in whatever city you guys are able to get a champion, local media is going to make it either really difficult for you or incredibly easy for you and I would say that our local media has made it, I wouldn't say incredibly easy, but easier for me, because there's so much hype around this issue, because there's -- this is a story.

This is a story that they're like, whoa, this is just another thing that we can essentially report on, this is a deficiency that obviously, people don't really brag about their Internet service. And so this is something where, for them, they've been actually influential in telling this story of the digital divide. And so it kind of shifts the focus and a lot of these people are now on the, okay, what now -- now what mode, which again, I -- a lot of that has to do with media here too.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. You raise a really good point about the media. I would recommend that all of our communities develop a relationship with their local media to help share your story more broadly and you never know who that will bring in, that larger media net in terms of potential partners.

Joshua Edmonds: Absolutely. Whenever -- when I was at the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, whenever we did anything, we invited media and just invited them over and over and over again and we just kept citing the digital divide, digital divide and after a while, it kind of -- they caught on and then other people began stepping up and saying, hey, we have --

And I kid you not, this happened, there was a group of people that said, hey, we have \$30,000, we want to donate to this rec center over here, because we -- they were citing the digital divide and it's stuff like that where it's like that's what we can essentially do. Take advantage -- again, if we look at that tambourine example, the media is good at telling stories, give them the ability to tell the story.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a good point.

Caila Prendergast: So we have another question. We have someone raising their hand. So Domicia [ph], I'm going to unmute your line so you can answer your question -- or ask your question, excuse me. Domicia.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Maybe she wants -- she can use the chat box.

Caila Prendergast: Yeah. Why don't you go ahead and type your question.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Well, while we're waiting, I did have another question for you, Joshua. In terms of the data that you use from the American Community Survey, I imagine you're going to use that again maybe in a few years, right, to see how the needle has moved?

Joshua Edmonds: Yes. So one of the goals that I have -- so currently, it's 27 percent of Detroit households don't have Internet of any kind. I had cited that I wanted to reduce that figure by 5 percent every year. And so every single year ACS comes out I'll be able to say, hey, we need to up our efforts or we're right on target and how I came up with that figure, I actually looked at the national regression.

So right now there's already a national regression as it relates to Internet-subscribing households. We're seeing about at 1.8 percent -- I shouldn't say regression, progression in households getting connected. And so what I said is I want to more than double that. I believe it's possible, especially now that we have a champion behind this.

A lot of what cities are seeing is they're getting more households online. So it's almost like an unnatural thing where it's like just naturally in America, more people are adopting technology that [inaudible] in every city in America. Well, I believe having a position and having a conglomerate that is solely focused on this, but we can accelerate that. And so that's what the numbers are all built on.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's really interesting. I had never heard that statistic before about the 1.8 percent of families.

Joshua Edmonds: Yeah. I had two interns this summer. So I made them crunch a whole lot of numbers.

Caila Prendergast: So we got that question in the chat box. I'm trying to wrap my mind around all these pieces. Regarding buy-in, are there any sample letters?

Dina Lehmann-Kim: So basically, like a template to send to a potential partner or funder, a template letter it sounds like.

Joshua Edmonds: I mean -- so I can definitely defer and if this is -- someone else has already done the sample letters. I haven't -- I don't think I've ever done a sample letter and the reason being, and this is how I'd liken this, I would just suggest whoever asks this question take the same approach, the digital divide isn't going anywhere, it never -- there will always be a digital divide.

Even if you connect all your residents, then we have a device gap and as 5G rolls around, then it's going to be like how do we get people from 4G to 5G? I mean, there's always going to be one. So it's -- whatever -- however it manifests, it's going to be there. And coincidentally, a lot of the organizations serving these cities are also not going anywhere.

And so I wouldn't necessarily leave it to a letter, I'd be very adamant about building these relationships and citing that. Then it's like, hey, if your mission is to serve this community and this digital divide is impacting this community and you're not going anywhere and this cause isn't going anywhere, let's work together to build that relationship, because this is what we should be doing.

This is how -- this is us taking a proactive approach and I think that most people, especially I can speak for the philanthropic people, would really respect that approach, because then it's not necessarily you coming in and solely asking for money, you're asking to build a relationship that maybe wasn't there before.

In terms of the private sector people, I would say it's kind of very similar; however, their pain point might be, hey, we have a lot of volunteers that we want -- they want to do things with the community and opening up the doors for them to be able to even teach computer classes.

I mean, that might not even necessarily need to be a letter, but again, I could be bias just because I never have taken that approach, but I would defer to someone else who might've who can speak from that, but I just wouldn't do that.

Julia Fearing: So with experience, with me, creating partnership letters just with existing relationships that we do have in our agency and by having other self-sufficiency programming, we already have that carved out.

For those individuals that you're outreaching to that you never have met or have that relationship, it's best to have -- set up a meeting one-on-one, face-to-face or through the telephone if they're not local near you and then build up that relationship and from there, memorialize some type of personalized letter that pretty much, in a nutshell, describes the programming, what you guys discussed, to see if they are interested in buying into it, but it's mostly important to have that one-on-one relationship with and that conversation.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That makes a lot of sense, that personal connection, the in-person connection can really go a long way. And one thing I learned actually from a different ConnectHome site was once you do have a relationship with a partner, one -- and I know you mentioned this, Julia, recognize them, thank them, but this other community also mentioned that they have a year-end meeting with their partners to show them the impact of the partnership.

So they have like a one-pager, say, that they prepare to show what that partner's contribution led to and that makes them feel really good and recognized. So I thought that was important and also to recognize them publicly whenever you can. Some are not comfortable with that. So you might want to be careful or check with them, but that, I thought, was really good advice.

Joshua Edmonds: I agree on that point and that was kind of one of our goals for when we did our Digital Inclusion Summit here during Digital Inclusion Week. I actually got up there and like the first thing you want to say to everybody who's been doing this work for quite some time, thank you. You know, this isn't necessarily us coming up here to ask or anything, but we had the political leadership there from the city, we had the lieutenant governor supporting this thing.

I mean, it was as many people as possible putting some of these partners and funders on full display and actually turning it back on them and saying thank you. That's how you build a relationship and that goes really -- that goes a very long way and it's warmly received and honestly, no one ever gets tired of hearing thank you.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's true. Well, we have one more minute left. Caila, do we have any more questions?

Caila Prendergast: I'm not seeing anymore in the chat box at this time.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: All right. Well, then let me take this opportunity to thank Joshua and Julia so much for the very insightful comments and information that you shared that I know is not just interesting, but very practical. So thank you so much and thank you both for the work that you do every day on behalf of the residents that we all serve and think about on a daily basis.

So thanks again and we will be in touch with everyone soon.

Joshua Edmonds: Oh, thank you. Thanks for the opportunity.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: You're more than welcome.

Julia Fearing: Thank you, Dina.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you. Bye. Thanks, Caila.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Bye.

Caila Prendergast: Bye.

(END)