CARES Act Funding In Action, 2020 ConnectHomeUSA Digital Inclusion Week Series, 10/7/20

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Well, hello everyone and good afternoon. For those of who joined us for our session at 1:00; welcome back. We're really excited for this CARES Act Funding in Action session where you hear some of the information that we talked about in the previous session and how housing authorities and tribes have applied that into their work. And so before we start off with that, I just want to quickly go over a few logistics for those who haven't joined in the first session.

So first, there are two ways to ask questions. The first way is to type your question in the chat box, and I will read your question out loud at the end. And so make sure to just send your questions throughout the presentation and I'll make sure to note who it's directed towards.

And then the second way you can ask questions is my unmuting your line or I can unmute your line. There's a hand-shaped icon in the right-hand navigation panel and if you click on that sort of like raising your hand and I'll know that you want to be unmuted to ask your question.

Everything in this session will be recorded and posted on HUD Exchange. Usually it takes about a week, it could be a bit longer because this is a training series and there's a lot of information. And then finally immediately following the webinar there will sort of be a pop up on your screen with a survey. We really appreciate any feedback that you have to give us, and it only takes about a minute to complete. So if you could do that for us, that would be great.

And I think with that, I'm done, and I'll pass it over to Dina.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Great. Thank you so much, Caila. And welcome everyone. My name is Dina Lehmann-Kim, I'm the program manager for HUD's ConnectHomeUSA initiative. Welcome to day three, part two of the ConnectHomeUSA training series that's organized to celebrate national digital inclusion week.

Today has been dedicated to CARES Act funding and as Caila said earlier if you were with us earlier you heard about how HUD's CARES Act can be used for digital inclusion activities. If you missed it, you'll be able to go back to it, as Caila said, in about a week for the recording.

There is a lot of good information that was shared and now I'm really excited because you're going to hear directly from four different communities about how they have used CARES Act funding to connect more of their residents through investments in infrastructure and the purchase of devices.

They represent some of the best examples that we've come across, which is why we've asked them to present. So I'm very grateful to our panelists for taking the time out of their busy schedule to be with us today and to share the great work that they're doing. So without further ado let me introduce our wonderful panelists.

First we'll hear from Alana Green, who is the executive director of the St. Louis Housing Authority and its ConnectHomeUSA community. Actually, all of our speakers except for the speaker from the San Felipe Pueblo Housing Authority are ConnectHomeUSA communities. I did want to highlight that point.

Next up you'll hear from Michelle Thelen, who is the ROSS service coordinator for the Northern Ponca Housing Authority.

You'll also hear from Justine Knapp who is the office manager with the Northern Ponca Housing Authority; Candace Schmidt, who is the tribal council secretary for the Northern Ponca Tribe of Nebraska; Michele Wiggins, who's the director of strategy and innovation with the Goldsboro Housing Authority; and last but certainly not least, Isaac Perez, who is the executive director of the San Felipe Pueblo Housing Authority.

I really want to thank you all for being with us today and I will now turn it over to Alana for her remarks. Thank you so much.

Alana Green: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Alana. I'm the executive director of the St. Louis Housing Authority. And our mission is to provide diverse housing opportunities and to enhance the quality of life of the families we serve. And most recently our vision has been updated to provide innovative housing and community development solutions that meet the challenges of our changing world. Next slide, please.

We have a $80 million budget, 2,790 public housing units. We have approximately 6,800 [inaudible] and choice vouchers that we administer and approximately 60 employees. Next slide, please.

As I mentioned, in 2019 we were accepted into the ConnectHomeUSA cohort and really our year one goal was to provide Internet access for units within two of our developments. And we held kickoff events and did a survey and a big event at both of those developments. Next slide, please.

So prior to becoming a cohort member we had started initial conversations with a local vendor in our town called Gaia Green Earth and fortunately for us they had agreed to work with us to fundraise in collaboration with the housing authorities to implement upgrades to their technology. In particular, they were working with us to develop and establish a public Wi-Fi network for our communities.

One of the biggest assets that they brought to the table for us was also their network of impact investors and private equity. So we were really excited about partnering with them because we knew that this would get us a little bit closer to providing Internet access for our residents. Next slide, please.

So really for us it was very important when we talked about and we thought about what we would do with our year one goal and the Internet access and so we knew that when we would provide the Internet access in the homes of our residents they would gain a really, really valuable tool to use and improve their educational, employment, health and social outcomes. And when

the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it really further highlighted the critical need for us to provide this Internet service within the unit.

And so really in our developments we've always provided computer labs but really COVID-19 brought to the forefront that home access was really needed. And when we did our list of what things need to change, Internet access is needed we thought about doing school work remotely, individual residents who might have to work remotely, telehealth was really, really important for our seniors in particular, and then really communication with family and social networks.

A lot of times [inaudible] that was often overlooked but really being homebound because of COVID-19, a lot of our seniors, in particular, really didn't have access to their networks that was really important to them in their wellbeing. And so that was very important. And then also communicating with the Housing Authority partners, our social service providers was really important as well. Next slide, please.

So when the CARES Act funding came available we went and scrutinized the document really, really closely to figure out what we could use the funding for and we were really excited to see that it included expenses related to preventing and preparing for and responding to Coronavirus including activities to support or maintain health and safety of assisted individuals and families.

And in the document HUD encouraged us to balance operational needs with health, safety, and educational needs of our families. We really felt that providing the Wi-Fi was the biggest thing that we could do to really help the families with those typical outcomes that they would need to survive and thrive during the pandemic.

And so the first thing we did was we got on the phone with our field office. Our field office is really, really, really supportive of us and very helpful in responding and coming up with creative solutions. And so the first thing we did was talk about whether or not we could use the funding for the Wi-Fi. They were really, really, really in favor of it; they thought it was a great idea. And then from there we went to requesting a sole source procurement to continue our relationship with our local vendor who had already been working with us really [inaudible] at no cost at that point to work with us. Next slide.

Our housing authority Wi-Fi demonstration program, it's a private LTE network. The LTE network provides Wi-Fi for different developments. And so it kind of like what you see at universities, campus Wi-Fis and what you would see in a dorm. There might be an individual dorm network for Wi-Fi that's very similar to what we're putting in now. It also included creating a digital roadmap, actually implementing the Wi-Fi and then deploying it out for other uses.

This slide is actually incorrect; it is not 1,152 residents, but it's actually households so it's really affecting a lot of our residents. The initial investment was $450,000 and CARES Act funding an estimated annual cost is $15,000. I will say also on that slide, the $15,000 can be offset by providing access for some of your partners who might be willing to pay for that space on the website or also offering the services to surrounding non-housing authority families. Next slide, please.

And so we went through the process of trying to decide whether we should use Wi-Fi or whether we should go in and do kind of hard-wired Internet. And really what we found is that the Wi-Fi was the cheapest, most feasible option. And one thing that we took into account is that when we were retrofitting older units it can be rather expensive. A lot of our developments are pending redevelopment. And then also when we use Wi-Fi, you can actually remove and move the equipment to other developments as needed. Next slide, please.

When somebody at our campuses -- we have one campus that has a multiple Housing Authority development and so we have a picture of kind of all of our units kind of clustered in one area near downtown. Can you go to the next slide, please?

So Clinton Peabody Apartments is one of our most challenging developments. There's about 350 families that live in the development and we've been plagued with just kind of maintenance issues, things like that and so you [inaudible] Wi-Fi [inaudible]. Peabody will allow us to connect our cameras into the real-time crime network that goes with the police department. It also allows the residents to have access to our property management software where they can work within -- via online and then track them which makes it a lot easier for them to know the status of their orders. Next slide.

LaSalle Park Apartments is also one of our kind of difficult units, where developments where there are a lot of individual families there, so this will allow the kids to be able have access to [inaudible], which will be really important. Next slide.

To make sure that our demonstration was actually a demonstration where we could get a lot of feedback from it, we wanted to include some of our mixed finance development too because we wanted to be able to see how we could work with our development partners to provide the Wi-Fi to everyone in the development, not just our public housing residents.

Parkview is our campus too and Parkview is primarily senior and people with disabilities. And so we wanted to do this development to also sort of see how the residents will use the Wi-Fi to offer telehealth and to use our service provider services. And then also it's a high-rise building and so being able to see how the Wi-Fi could work there [inaudible] to our additional high-rise units. Next slide.

West Pine is also a senior building. It's one of our buildings that is in the central corridor of the city and so there are a lot of businesses, there are a lot of condominiums, things like that around the development. And so we want to actually with this one to see how we can incorporate using this as a pay option for people that live around the area. Next slide.

And Euclid Apartments is also similar, surrounding a pretty large neighborhood. We want to see if we'll be able to use this as a funding opportunity to provide the Wi-Fi for a pay option to the surrounding neighborhoods.

And so one thing that our vendor consulting partners kind of wanted us to do is to come up with some sort of kind of Wi-Fi portal that, when residents access the Wi-Fi they will immediately log onto a website that the Housing Authority owns. And so we've used that to foster better

communication with our residents. We include events and opportunities, links to online services with our managing partner services. And so we thought this was more effective than just including it on our website, our regular housing authority website, because it will give them access to Wi-Fi automatically.

So that's all I have. Thank you for listening.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks a lot, Alana. That's so great. Again, any questions for Alana just put them in the chat box now and we'll get to them at the end. And so now I'll invite Michele and Justine from the Northern Ponca Housing Authority to start off their presentation.

Michele Thelen: Hi. This is Michele Thelen with Northern Ponca Housing Authority. I just wanted to thank you for inviting me to be a panelist on this webinar. Since there are several of us speaking on this topic, I'll just briefly describe what we're doing on the housing side of this and then I'll turn it over to Candace because I think the iPads and the iMax are part of the bigger picture with the CARES Act funding that's being used.

But I am the ROSS service coordinator and a huge part of my job is that we provide education and training courses for our current tenants. One of our main focuses is financial empowerment so that our tenants can be self-sufficient. Normally we would provide these classes in person either one on one or in a classroom setting. And so with COVID we are launch an online version.

But I guess I'll start with ConnectHomes. So that's what we were using previously and with our tenants the financing was done with the IHBG/ICDBG funds. We partnered with T-Mobile for tablets or computers that would act as their hotspot for their Wi-Fi. Tenants were educated on the basic computer usage and then we conducted surveys when we were done to see the success of their usage.

Today we have updated our NPHA website to add PayPal for rent collection. That's been a huge new tool that we've added. A lot of our tenants have been utilizing the PayPal where before they could just drop off payment or mail it in so we're kind of moving up. We plan to share and record our own training videos. We just recently purchased webcam equipment through the CARES Act funds so that we could share these on our website. We've added emergency devices to our Indian Housing Plan with CARES Act funding and surveying tenants on what other needs they may have.

So the first thing that we will do is our plan of action is to make sure that all of our tenants, specifically we're trying to target our non-Ponca members because they were not given the iPads and the MaxBooks. And so we're trying to target them first just to see what their needs are. If they have a tablet at home, do they have Internet access. And if they don't, then we will see what their needs are and provide them with those things that they need. And then we'll start making sure that everyone has all that stuff and then we will start casting our education programs online.

Our main focus is the financial empowerment and everything, and so we just want to make sure that all of our tenants can access our education online and any of our trainings or our classes that

we provide. If the Ponca tribe has any classes that they're able to turn in to those or telehealth, that kind of thing, but that's kind of what we're doing on the housing side of it.

I don't know what's on the next slide. Yep, Candace.

So that's kind of what we're doing on the housing side of it. We're just focusing to make sure that all of our tenants have Internet access and devices and just trying to launch everything via online until we can be in person again. I think that's all I have unless Justine has something to add.

Justine Knapp: Hello. This is Justine and I am the office management coordinator here at Northern Ponca Housing Authority. And I don't have much to add. I guess I was just going to kind of go into the added emergency devices that we put into our Indian housing plan with the CARES funding. That is what we're focusing kind of on, the elders and the disabled to get them Life Alerts possibly. So that's another area that we are focusing on with the CARES funding.

Other than that, I think Michele did a good job and kind of letting you guys know how we're spending our CARES funding, so I will just turn it over to Candace from the Tribal Council. Thank you.

Candace Schmidt: All right. Can you guys hear me? I think I got myself unmuted here.

Caila Prendergast: Yep, sounds good.

Candace Schmidt: Okay. And I apologize if you hear children screaming in the background. I am actually currently home because I've been quarantining due to COVID. So if you hear children, they're okay, they're just loud. So I apologize.

Hello everybody, good afternoon. I'm Candace Schmidt and I am the Tribal Council secretary for the Ponca tribe of Nebraska. I apologize for speaking in front of any of my elders today and thank you for having us here, having our Housing Authority staff and having myself.

So just a little introduction about -- I think you can probably go to the next slide. Okay.

So a little intro about the tribe. We actually are a non-reservation tribe, so what that means is instead of having reservation land base, we have what we call service delivery areas and we have 15 of those throughout -- we have 12 in Nebraska, two in Iowa and one in South Dakota.

That being said, we actually have over 4500 members that live nationwide, so about half of our membership does not reside in those service delivery areas but our service delivery area acts as our reservation base that we provide service to our members. We do have some programs that members can access regardless of where they live and so any chance we can do that we try to extend our services to as many members as we are able to.

Let's see here. And then the tribe itself we have six office locations. So I'm actually a District 4 representative out of Norfolk, Nebraska. We also have offices in Niobrara, in Ralston, Omaha, Lincoln, and Sioux City, Iowa. So not only are our people spread out, but our offices and staff

are spread out. We actually have two health clinics, one in Omaha and one in Norfolk as well. And then our housing location, we have obviously our home base in Norfolk where I'm at and where Michele and Justine are at and they also have a satellite office in Omaha. So that's a little bit of background about the tribe itself and how we are set up.

I'll just go right into the Lifesize. So I'm not sure who's on the line or if anyone's heard of Lifesize. Basically that's just a virtual conferencing software database that the tribe purchased over about 10 years ago and it's done a lot for us as a tribe. Seeing and hearing how I just explained how spread out we are and how our office locations are spread out and our people are spread out, the Lifesize has really paid dividends for us as a nation. The upfront cost of the system itself I can just tell you was $150,000 but the first year in travel savings alone, we saved $60,000. So we definitely got our return on investment and investing into this system so if you haven't heard of it, I encourage you to look into it.

It allows us to have our meetings virtually and we do have our office locations, and I'll go back to our governing body on Tribal Council. So we have actually nine of us and we're at each location. So we can have our Tribal Council meetings. We can have them in person which we've done historically but given the events of not only this year but last year with the flooding, having this Lifesize system available to us allowed us to continue governing our tribe and continuing services to our people.

And so I think Joey wanted me to mention our elders. Given that we're a tribe, our elders are important to us and we hold them in high regards. We actually have an elders council as well and so they like to meet in person but obviously with everything that's happened with COVID we really wanted to make sure that they're protected and our people are protected but able to continue on with doing the things that they need to do. And so the Lifesize really allowed us to continue to do that not only last year when we were hit with the flood but this year with COVID. And so I'll keep going here. So I'm trying to read through my notes and make sure I'm not forgetting anything.

And our members that reside anywhere, so if they're not able to come to an office to attend a meeting in person, if we're meeting that way, they can actually log in and watch -- all the meetings are streamed and then they're also recorded so they're archived so we have history of all of our meetings that are available to our membership if they want to for some reason want to look at a meeting, go back and hear what we discussed and what we decided and why. They have the capability to do that through the system that we have.

Let's see. And I would just add, it was really important to us as a tribe and a tribal council to keep our people safe with COVID, with knowing the dangers of that and with our people. We have a high diabetes rate so that puts a lot of our people in the high-risk category. So really the Lifesize has meant that much more to us and allowed our people to continue to still feel a part of the tribe and still receive services that they need on a daily basis and do it safely. So that has been great for us.

I think I covered everything I wanted to on that. I'll go into specifically to the CARES funding. So what we did with that, we're first of all so grateful that we were given CARES funding to get

us through this crisis this year. It's been a lot for us and all that being said, there's a lot of rules and regulations, as you guys all know, that we had to work through and we also had a very short turnaround time that we have to spend those monies by. So as a tribal council we said what can we do right away that makes sense and how can we boost responses to this virus and what it's doing for our people, not only here but nationwide.

And so a couple council members, Vice Chairwoman Sullivan and myself got together, we discussed putting together a project where we could purchase computer devices, MacBooks specifically and iPads and give people the option to apply for those. And we coined the project iPonca obviously to play off of the iPad and our iPhones. So iPonca project is what we called that. We created an online application system where people just had to go on and fill out their information and then they also would tell us what they needed the device for. And so we've seen a lot of people applying for schooling, whether it's elementary level or even college, our college students were able to apply for a device.

And then our elders were able to apply for a device as well. And one of the things that we'll be rolling out as a tribe is telehealth capabilities. So we were looking at doing that with the Lifesize equipment as well, but the problem is not everybody had computers or had a device or a means to log in to watch Lifesize. And as great as it is if you don't have the equipment that you need to utilize it, it's not worth anything. So the iPonca project has really gone over really well. We rolled it out in mid-July, I think July 17th actually and ended it August 5th, somewhere around there. So we had it open for about a month and received close to 3,000 applications for devices so far.

And so with that I think I kind of covered everything I wanted to share with you guys today and I'm available for any questions.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks so much Candace and yeah, we'll definitely have some questions for you at the end. And I've had a few requests submitted [inaudible] from the presenters so if you all are comfortable sharing your contact info, please drop it in the chat box for our attendees who maybe want to ask you some more questions. And so with that I'll pass it over to Michele Wiggins from Goldsboro. Michele Wiggins are you there?

Michele Wiggins: Can you hear me?

Caila Prendergast: Yes.

Michele Wiggins: Okay. Okay. Hi, everyone. This is Michele Wiggins. I'm the director of strategy and innovation for the housing authority of the city of Goldsboro. And we wanted to share the efforts that we have made for implementing PHA-wide Internet infrastructure for all of our public housing units. Thank you.

So just a little brief overview, talk a little bit about the pre-solicitation activities that we did, our bidding and eventual sole source situation, the implementation and then our motivation behind why we pursued this as well as some lessons learned.

If you look at the map there, this kind of gives you an idea of our property. For our agency we actually are considered a large public Housing Authority, but we are on the smaller end of that. We have 1225 public housing units, about 237 HCV vouchers and then we also participate in the [vast of] mainstream programs and we have vouchers in those programs as well.

If you can see from the map, we are in Goldsboro, North Carolina. We're considered an urban area by some, but we are also dealing with a lot of rural infrastructure in our area in the eastern part of North Carolina. And we have about eight different developments that we cover, and you can see those on the map there as well. Next slide.

We actually joined the ConnectHome community in 2017 and have been working on increasing our digital literacy and digital inclusion efforts since before that time but definitely since that time. And before we got to the point of actually having CARES Act funding and moving forward with that process, we were involved in some other efforts that kind of led us to this point. '

So one of the things that we did prior to CARES Act funding was to engage several companies in site surveys to kind of tell us what our properties had, what might be some options for us, what we would need if we wanted to engage in connectivity. During those processes we were able to assess our resources, find out what the gaps would be, what might need to be involved. We also talked with other agencies and found out what was working for them; sometimes what worked for them but wouldn't work for us because of the difference in our portfolio.

Knowing our goals was really important as well because as those of you have been trying to do this know there are a lot of different ways to do connectivity, there are a lot of different ways to do infrastructure. We decided early on that while we were interested in providing devices we thought that we would have a bigger overarching impact if we focus on infrastructure, which then caused us an issue because infrastructure is more expensive and that leads you to the point about budgeting, how much does this cost, how are you going to find the funding for this. And that's one of the reasons that we're so thankful that we were able to prioritize this connectivity effort as part of our goals for using our CARES Act funding. Next slide, please.

So what we ended up doing was to put out a RFP with evaluation factors out to the general public. We advertised in newspapers and diversity publications and we also direct mailed, called any of the providers who had been in contact with us or tried to, since being kind of involved in ConnectHome and doing the site surveys and things like that which included traditional Wi-Fi providers and companies that did broad banding and all these types of things.

We also worked on the detailed specifications, what we wanted. It couldn't be too general because when you're doing the procurement, unless you just (no obligate ?) that you're going to do a sole source procurement, it would be very hard to compare what you were looking at if you did not have very detailed specifications.

We knew we wanted to encourage this competition and that's why we engaged in the advertising that we did and using the RFP process. We had several companies that just told us that was not how they provided Internet. They wouldn't be able to do what we were asking for and then we

had some that said yes, they were quite interested in providing this; we had at least three of those. And then we got the bids in we actually only received bids from one of the companies.

So we reviewed the proposal and we reached back out to our HUD field office to let them know the situation and between the CARES Act funding and knowing that we already had children in school who were not having the capacity to learn in the way that they needed to and not having this infrastructure in place to show that there was an immediate need for that.

And then also with the connection we had with the company that we're using, the Open Broadband LLC is the company, that they also engage with the local government here and they already had infrastructure here which could potentially save us a lot of money with the towers and the other infrastructure that they already had provided. And we were able to secure that sole source request at that time. Next slide.

So with Open Broadband we're currently in progress for installing what is essentially sort of a Wi-Fi mesh system that distributes from a tower site that we're able to use that Open Broadband has in the downtown of our city. So we're able to tap into that.

So it's kind of a high-bred system. And one of the things that we knew we wanted to do was, not just to provide Internet connectivity but to provide quality Internet connectivity knowing that if people were going to primarily be using this for education, for school, virtual schooling and telecommuting or telehealth, that it needed to be able to run videos on the Wi-Fi and probably quite a lot of video capacity and that was going to drain the bandwidth. So we are using a higher fixed wireless Internet than was originally thought to be used when we did our first site surveys.

Very thankful for the CARES Act funding and the ability that it has because there really was that moment where we said this is it, this is the plug to the hole that we had for the funding for the planning efforts that we had been doing for several years. We needed to decide where we were going to put the equipment and how many pieces of equipment we were actually going to need for the technology. And we had an idea about how many and then we tweaked that after the company came onboard with Open Broadband and to some degree we are still doing that now during the implementation phase.

For prioritization, because you have to go in some kind of order especially when you're trying to move quickly, we decided that we wanted to prioritize the school age children that would be trying to tap in for educational purposes. And so we used our property management software and we arranged by age groups for the number of families that had children in the age ranges for elementary through high school. And then we're proceeding in that order for the distribution of and installation of the equipment.

For the shipments and quality of the equipment, we are actually partnering with the company to have them ship their equipment to our warehouse so that they have an easy distribution center for the lots and lots of equipment that we have coming in. So it's not without its hiccups but we think it's worked a lot better than having them ship it to Charlotte, wherever, and then have to bring that down every time they want to install equipment.

We also had to consider where they were going to place their Wi-Fi antennas that have to go on each of the buildings and we wanted to make sure that that was out of easy reach so that people are not ripping them down or interfering with them and obviously tried to avoid installing them inside of the units for the same reason.

We also had to consider the electrical components. A lot of our units, while they are garden style, we don't have too many apartment buildings that are just multi family. We have one apartment building that has about 50 units there on one site. Other than that, we have single or double story garden style apartments. So all these buildings created the need for additional electrical outlets, and we needed a way to make sure that those were going to be installed. So that was an additional cost that we are having to work on outside of the contract for the Internet infrastructure but it's still a necessary component of that.

And just going back to what our motivation is, what started us doing this in the first place. We are really focused on resident services, particularly our self-sufficiency efforts at the Goldsboro Housing Authority. And we want to continue to make that a high priority and we all know that we can't do that and we can't make it a high priority if the residents don't have access to the resources that they need. And this day and age, the digital divide is a very real thing, particularly in a quasi-urban but really more rural area.

Where we are, we have a total of 36,000 people in our entire city. So we don't have lots of different companies here who are competing with each other to provide quality Internet services, and particularly ones that are providing high-speed Internet. So we want to make sure that they have the resources we need, and we felt this was a great way for us to be able to do that.

We're focused on educational opportunities and other types of self-sufficiency activities but we really wanted to make sure that knowing that a lot of our residents did not want to leave their homes or might be afraid to leave their homes with everything that happened with COVID that that was just one more reason to move forward in the direction that we were moving and that we have the capacity to be able to do that with the additional CARES Act funding.

I did want to mention, we are also using some CDBG funding -- I'm sorry, some capital funding for some of the usage that will happen after the time period where the COVID funds will need to be spent. So we're using our capital fund dollars to work on that part as well. I don't think I mentioned that during the implementation.

Some lessons learned: Advertising, advertise more than you think you even need to. If you're going to do a competitive process just get the word out there and make sure that you have really technical specifications. You may need to get someone to help you get those together and see what it is you actually want.

That leads me to the next point about making sure you do know what you want and what you need because you have to prioritize these things. Unfortunately, we can't generally provide everything to everyone but pick out a few key points, whether that is devices or infrastructure or high speed or which groups you're going to prioritize to help and that was really helpful for us.

Considering what other components might be necessary, in this case the main one for us was electrical outlets and having the electrical work done. And then what we can accomplish in the time frame available. We pushed for a December completion because we did our contract the COVID funds were extended in any way so we knew that those funds needed to be expended, everything needed to be completed just so that the funding wasn't at risk and we weren't scurrying to try to find another use for it because the contract wasn't complete yet.

And then also in our situation, every day the equipment is not installed is longer time periods where the students and the parents don't have the infrastructure they need to do the services they needed while we're going through these interesting times. So it's been a great experience and we're really thankful that we've had this opportunity and we look forward to answering any questions you guys might have. Thank you.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks, Michele, that was great. So without further ado I'll pass it over to Isaac for our final panel presentation and then we'll move on to the question and answer portion.

Isaac Perez: Hi everybody. My name is Isaac Perez. I'm the executive director at San Felipe Pueblo Housing Authority in New Mexico. I've been executive director here for close to 20 years. For those of you that don't know, San Felipe Pueblo is in between Albuquerque and Santa Fe right in the middle of both in central New Mexico. And we are a rural tribe that shared a lot of the same issues as I just heard over in Greensboro [sic].

So we were very fortunate to receive ICDBG Cares Act funding and we've been active in trying to leverage and use some of this funding combined with an ongoing big permanent fiber broadband project with the Pueblo that they had been trying to put in place for a few years. And we're very fortunate that, just like the last presenter said, this funding actually filled a huge hole for San Felipe Pueblo and that hole was actually being able to provide devices, and in our case they are Surface Pro laptops, in each home throughout the Pueblo and we have 650 of those units.

As you can see by the map there, we're not directly close enough to Albuquerque or north of us to Santa Fe, where we can tap into the several resources because we're about, I'd say, 30 miles each way north or south from there, so we are rural and trying to do the best in this situation that we're stuck in with the COVID and the grant could not have come in in a better time.

We have been working on, prior to COVID, getting a permanent infrastructure project done, but due to land base traditional areas within the Pueblo that we could not trench or disturb, we just had a heck of a time getting that done. However, of course, with the virus that came in, the Pueblo's been very supportive in allowing us to get fiber laid and to approach other areas that probably would not have been allowed to be disturbed and we are now able to move forward on our project and we we're right in the middle of it right now.

And within the next, I'd say, two to four weeks we'll be able to provide all homes with jetpacks in their homes along with Surface Pros i7s that will allow students to better get their school work done and allow for better communication for families for emergency situations. As we are right now, there are a few hotspots located on the Pueblo and it's creating a lot of tension and

frustration because depending on where families are and the capacity of those hotspots, families were having to sit out in their cars in the heat and now very soon in the cold. And so this project has really come in handy.

As far as we move on with the ICDBG CARES outcomes and what we were proposing to do, this is a big part of the tribal communications plan that has been being worked on for the last few years. And this part, of course, is the IT communications component of it for getting to homes and getting reliable Wi-Fi high speed to each unit on the Pueblo, not just the Housing Authority units that are under management, but to every unit within the reservation.

We wanted to increase the dissemination of any COVID-19 messaging that was being done, it was a very hard situation. The Pueblo was actually hand delivering the messages on a weekly basis to get messaging out. There is a website that is available for all the tribal members, but that website is limited, and we are not able to get messaging out as we were needing to. We find now that hopefully by mid-November we will be able to do that on a daily basis.

Planning to increase the Internet services for the entire community. The jetpacks that will be installed in each house will help us do that. The jetpacks are actually part of the tribe's point-to-point multiple wireless system. We are contracting with Verizon as far as our servicing and the CARES funding is also assisting with payment for that.

In addition to just providing the Internet services throughout the community, the help and wellness department here and incident command team which I am a part of is wanting to increase just community awareness of COVID-19 because information seems to be changing on a daily basis, depending on what you watch and what you believe. And tribal members are constantly calling in basically just asking if things are certain are true and if they should do this or do that. And so this project is also helping to streamline communication to individual households that are related directly to COVID-19.

We are always working with several tribal partners here at the Housing Authority constantly having to stay in contact with the health and wellness department, tribal utility department, the tribal administration office, our department of natural resources and this service is actually increasing the communications for those services as well as we were not able to do that. As funny as it sounds, because of the lack of service in certain areas we did not have even have reliable cell phone services in certain patches of the reservation and we will be ablet o do have that now with the results of the towers that we are installing.

We are working closely with Indian health service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs here in our Albuquerque and Santa Fe areas. And as a result of increasing the Wi-Fi services we are able to communicate better with federal agencies such as HUD, USDA, IHS, NBIA.

Increasing information to high-risk populations was a priority for the Pueblo. Our elders, our people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, which is a very high level of our tribal members too, we're planning to get them information on a lot quicker basis as a result of getting the laptops out to them.

Looking to keep information and communication updated. Although we have a website and it's being bombarded with things, was not being updated, I guess I would say consistently with current information and we wanted homes, families and everybody to be able to access current information on a daily basis and not have to wait for a website to be updated which could be every three, four days or something like that. So this project will allow families to get onboard daily, several times a day if they need to and get updated.

Mentioned the laptops earlier. Originally when we applied for the grant, we were trying to just go and purchase Chromebooks for our students. We then focused on getting tablets or iPads and at the end of the day the incident command team under the tribal administration's recommendation decided to go out and get laptops which are more pricy but they have a bigger capacity.

And although they are more expensive, the Pueblo was able to assist and we were able to cost share with the ICDBG CARES money with some funding from treasury CARES money to get these devices in each house on the Pueblo. That cost, so you all will know is a little bit over a million dollars just for the laptops combined with the licensing fees and anti-virus software, we're talking about $1.3 million for the total project.

The system as it is is three towers throughout the reservation. There is a wireless signal through all the towers connected to an existing fiber line which the tribe had been working on for a few years before the COVID hit. So again, the ICDBG CARES money just hit at a perfect time for us and we were very fortunate to get it.

As mentioned earlier, procurement's been an interesting one for us here as well. We placed calls throughout the Albuquerque, the Santa Fe area, in Arizona, Colorado and Texas, and at the end of the day we just were not able to get the devices that we needed here in a timely manner. We were being told 8 to 10 weeks, some 10 to 12 weeks. So I got with the -- we do have a casino which is the Black Mesa Casino, they have their own IT department. I coordinated with them and the tribal IT department and we were able to nationally go out and get some vendors from back East. And what we came up with was two specific vendors who had been on the project.

We also tried to go through Microsoft themselves, but they were very pricy for what we were looking at. And the two departments here on the Pueblo were very helpful with getting the procurement done and we hope to purchase these devices, just coincidentally enough as soon as tomorrow and get computers here within the next three weeks installed with licensing and anti-virus software from our Pueblo IT department. We hope to get them out very quickly here.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Thanks so much, Isaac, and all the rest of our panelists. Oh, I'm sorry, did I interrupt?

Isaac Perez: No. That was all I had.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Great. So I'm just going to go ahead and dive right into the Q&A sessions. We got a lot of good ones here. So the first question that I have is for Alana from St. Louis. So, "Is there a limit to how many residents can use Wi-Fi at once? Is there a way to keep

unauthorized guests off the Wi-Fi? I know you said there is a sign-in portal, but are your residents allowed to share the password info with visitors?"

Alana Green: Okay. Sorry about that --

Caila Prendergadst: Alana, I think you need to unmute.

Alana Green: -- [inaudible] unmute myself. That is a very good question. So there is a limit to the number of residents that can be logged in at the same time. What we found is that we needed to increase the bandwidth. And so I have our team out there, they've been out for the last couple of weeks just working and testing and increasing bandwidth.

One thing we decided to do is to limit the number of hours at the 5G speed. So we are, during the day when people to work, go to school, talk to doctors, that the speed be at maximum capacity but towards the end of the evening where we might have a lot of people on Netflix and things like that, we've kind of slowed the speed down a bit just to keep the costs in a reasonable threshold.

The other part of the question as far as password, for the first month of deployment, we decided not to have people log in. We want to just have our residents become comfortable with logging into the system, trying to navigate through it and figure out how it works. But within that next 30 days they'll have to sign up with their unique password that we will be sending out to them. And then we do know that they could potentially share the password with visitors and we have a back office suite that will allow us to track usage. And so we'll be able to make tweeks as we go along throughout the year or the couple of years that we do this, most definitely.

Caila Prendergadst; Okay, great. Thanks. So we only have two minutes left. So send in your questions if you have them. The next one that I see I think this is for Ponca Housing. "Do the tenants keep the tablets, or do they sign them out and return them?"

Michele Thelen: Tenants were able to keep their tablets and they were theirs to keep. So they're theirs.

Caila Prendergadst: Okay, great. Next question is also for Ponca. "Who did you all partner with for the Life Alert devices?"

Justine Knapp: We haven't actually done that yet, that's just in our plan to, that's kind of like our next step to go to start looking into that.

Caila Prendergadst: Okay, great. Thanks. The next question, and I'm not a hundred percent sure who it's for but I think Goldsboro. Where do you procure your equipment or where do you get all your equipment? Any thoughts on that Alana? Or someone unmuted so I just want to give space. If someone else wants to share kind of how you go about getting equipment, open up the floor for that.

Alana Green: Do you mean just computer parts or just [inaudible]. Speaking in general, I know it's been very, very difficult for housing authorities to find adequate equipment. For our families, we've been using our existing partners and they've been able to prioritize our equipment purchases, in particular with our Wi-Fi equipment we were [inaudible] relatively quickly but because of the lack of availability of equipment, we've had issues [inaudible] that we need timely and, so, again it's kind of like a wait and see because the demand is way higher than the supply at this point.

So I think it's been very difficult but using our current partners has helped us get through it.

Isaac Perez: On our end here at San Felipe we are actually using a company called Technology Integrations Group, TIG, which was the most reasonable bidder for our Surface Pros.

Caila Prendergast: Okay, great. Thanks Alana and Isaac.

Isaac Perez: Sure.

Candace Schmidt: Oh, sorry --

Caila Prendergast: I don't see any more -- oh, go ahead.

Candace Schmidt: Oh, this is just Candace. I was just going to speak to ours. We actually work directly with Ponca or -- with Ponca, with Apple and one of their distributors, so we worked hand and hand with Apple for our devices.

Caila Prendergast; Great, thanks. So we are at 4:01. Thanks to all the panelists who put their contact info in the chat. Just wanting to find that that's there for participants. This session has been recorded, like I said, and the slides and the recording will be posted on HUD Exchange in about a week.

And I want to say thank you to all of our great panelists for taking some time with us today and for sharing all of the great work that you've done. And I'll pass it over to Dina for her closing remarks.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you, Caila. And thanks to everybody for joining us today and in particular thanks for the great panelists for all the wonderful information they shared with us. And for all the incredible work that we're doing. I mean, this is really cutting-edge work so we're excited to see -- follow your journey and hopefully you'll keep us posted so we can continue to learn from you. And thanks everyone and see you back here tomorrow. We have a lot more in store for you tomorrow.

We have a session on VISTA; we have a session about the census, which I think is really important; we'll talk about where you can get data on broadband and computer access and also what's happening now with the census next steps; and then we'll also have a session on tips and tricks for virtual training; and finally a surprise that we've been working on, the ConnectHomes USA team has been working on for our ConnectHomes USA community.

So please, join us back here tomorrow and in the meantime thank you all again and have a great evening.

(END)