

2021 ConnectHomeUSA Virtual Summit

**Developing and Updating Your Action Plan, Recognizing CHUSA
Communities, What Lies Ahead**

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Medora Benson: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Developing and Updating Your Action Plan, Recognizing ConnectHomeUSA Communities, and What Lies Ahead webinar. My name is Medora Benson with ICF, and I will be your host for this last session. Before we begin, I'm going to run through a few logistics. Next slide, please.

All attendees have been muted upon entry. Please submit all -- any technical issues via the chat box, and I will work with you directly to resolve those issues. Throughout the webinar, we encourage you to submit all content related questions via the Q&A box. Please note, due to timing, we may not be able to respond to all questions. Both the chat and Q&A box can be accessed via the bottom panel of your Zoom window. This webinar will be recorded and it will be posted to the HUD Exchange.

Now, I'd like to turn it over to Dina Lehmann-Kim with HUD.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you so much, Medora, and thank you, everybody, for joining us and for sticking with us through our third day of this virtual summit. We're so honored to have you with us today, and this session we're bringing to you by your request.

We heard lots of requests for TA around developing and updating your action plan. So, I'm really pleased to be able to offer this to our communities and to anyone else listening. And I also want to thank ICF, the ICF team who have helped us put this together today, as well as my HUD colleagues who are on today, Ashley Vo and Jason Amirhadji.

So, before I turn it over to our first speaker, I would like to introduce her. Her name is Racquel Ellis, and she is a public housing consultant with ICF, working on multiple projects such as MTW Choice Neighborhoods and now ConnectHomeUSA. Previously, she worked as an internal trainer and RAD PPV supervisor for Nan McKay and Associates, a national leading company for training and PHA consulting. With that, I will turn it over to Raquel for her to begin her presentation. Thank you, Racquel.

Medora Benson: Racquel, you are muted right now.

Racquel Ellis: My apologies. My apologies. Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to this session of 2021 ConnectHomeUSA Virtual Summit on developing and updating an action plan for ConnectHomeUSA.

My name is Racquel Ellis. I am a public housing consultant for ICF and will be presenting this portion of the session. Next slide, please.

Today, I will be discussing how your organization should prepare an action plan from year to year and the ways your action plan can be used to support your community and its digital inclusion efforts. Next slide, please.

There are six key stages of developing an action plan, team, vision, goals, roles, strategy, and implement. Your action plan should outline your community's vision and goals for narrowing the digital divide within the community. It also should provide your team with a detailed roadmap and timeline for achieving key milestones toward your goals. Concrete and clear directives are important for keeping your organization's team grounded and aware of mutual responsibilities. Next slide, please.

When your organization begins to build your team, there are several key factors to consider and keep in mind. Who will be involved, and what departments internally should play a part, such as IT, resident services, or external partnerships? It is important to understand the impact that each party can have on successful implementation and delivery of the plan.

Including residents and resident leadership, provides direct feedback from the community and the people who will benefit from and most impacted by your action plan. Your organization will need to create roles and responsibilities for each member, which ensures that each team member understands the part that they play in the action plan.

Incorporating outside partnerships and providers is another key factor for your action planning process. For example, the United Way or the Boys and Girls Club could provide trainings or a safe learning space for the community. Next slide, please.

Moving now to visions -- vision statements, these are used to describe your organization's primary goal to the community. Establish a vision statement by collaborating on ideas from all team members, which will ultimately speak for your organization in a few words and explain the vision to the community. For example, IKEA. Their vision statement, to create a better everyday life for people. Nike, to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world. Or Disney, to make people happy.

When reading these vision statements of each company, it tells you exactly what the company represents. Keep this in mind when creating your organization's vision statement.

On the left slide -- sorry. On the left side of this slide are a series of helpful resources on useful topics which can browse when you get a chance. These slides will be posted within a week or so after this session, and you will be able to click on the links within the slide. Next slide, please.

This is a mapping tool that can be used to set time frames for each year's goals within your action plan. For your first-year goals, a few things to be mindful of include determining what your organization measurable goals, whether your tracking tools are working, and, if not, what adjustments are needed?

Also, do you need to collaborate with IT to make any of those adjustments? What resources are key for successful implementation, remembering to think of both external and internal options?

Using this same mapping tool for year or two and onward will help your organization. It will help your organization compare differences from year to year, periodically review and analyze to adjust goals as needed, and identifying new targets. This mapping tool is a part of an upcoming

toolkit that will be released by ConnectHomeUSA in the future. So, stay tuned, and keep an eye out for it. Next slide, please.

Creating an organization to define roles and responsibilities will help to identify and align each role that is needed to support your action plan. Each team member should have a clear defined task to help achieve the timelines for each goal in your action plan. You will want to initially determine the number of team members needed, but also understand that this number can and should be adjusted, if needed, to effectively support the execution of your action plan. Next slide, please.

As mentioned in the previous slide, this tool will also be an up-and-coming toolkit. This action planning tool helps your organization track the timeline for your action plan. Best practice for using this tool includes determining strategy to achieve each goal and understanding that -- what resources need to be in place. Use this tool can keep track of each goal, who is working on each individual task. This timeline helps ensure the project launch dates stay on track by incorporating deadlines for implementation. Next slide.

After year one, it now becomes time to update your action plan. Here are some things to consider. One, is your current data tracking system working? If not, how will your organization address these issues? One way would be to collaborate with IT and flesh out any ways to make your tracking system more efficient.

Two, do you need to change any goals from first year or adjust timelines?

Three, reevaluate your original metrics and determine if your organization met the objectives. If not, adjusting those objectives will be needed, possibly to a future realistic date.

When your organization is implementing your action plan, will there be any debriefings for residents? This would provide significant feedback to the organization on delivering and communication from an external perspective. This feedback could be used to make any necessary adjustments for years to come and future action plans. Next slide, please.

So, what should you do next after this session? If you are in the beginning stages of your action plan, you should be sure you are selecting your team, creating your team's organizational chart, and identifying roles and responsibilities, creating your vision, setting your goals, and determining your team strategy to achieve implementation by a certain deadline.

If at this point you should be updating an existing action plan, your team should reread and review the current action plan to determine if there are any changes needed. If revisions are needed, your organization's team should reconvene to discuss and complete revisions within a timely manner. For your own record keeping and future use, we suggest maintaining a record of change and updates to your action plan over time. Next slide, please.

Before wrapping up this portion of the session, I want to provide a brief overview of where you can find some resources on developing and updating your action plan. These are resources currently available for your use. And, as I mentioned, there's an upcoming toolkit from

ConnectHome specifically about this topic, which will also be available in the future. Next slide, please.

A quick reminder that you can put your questions into the Q&A box, and we have a few minutes set aside now for them. Thank you.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thanks, Racquel. So, one question is, "How soon will slides from the session be available?"

Not sure exactly, but try next week, if not the following. So, the slides and the recordings are going to be up on HUD Exchange. We can -- maybe Jason or Ashley can put in the the link into the Q&A or the chat.

So, let's see if there are any questions for Racquel about action planning. Feel free to type them in the chat. It looks like -- okay. Ruby said, "Not a question, but thank you, Racquel. Super informative."

All right. So, let's see. Racquel, let me see if I have a question for you. What do you think is a key ingredient to a good action plan? You're on mute.

Racquel Ellis: I'm on mute. Sorry.

I believe if you are in the developing stages, first, definitely creating your team, getting that structure, your organizational chart structure to identify the key responsibilities for each individual member of the team.

Definitely understanding what statement do you want to give out to the community as far as setting your vision statement as well, building that trust factor when implementation comes for the action plan.

Also, I would say, definitely meeting with the team frequently, determining if that's going to be weekly or biweekly, to determine -- to discuss things that each member is facing during the action plan as well.

Also, when setting your timeline or deadlines for the project, making them very realistic and, if need be, adjusting those as you go along creating that action plan. I would definitely say including residents' interaction is very important because there's always a fear with residents if there's going to be a change. Even though we know it's going to benefit them, understanding how they feel as the community receiving this benefit for them.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Right. And to get their buy in. I mean, I think it's really important to always engage residents from the very, very beginning, and they should certainly be on your core planning team. If -- yeah. It's really critical because the whole goal of this is to serve the residents, and if they feel heard and that their interests are being addressed, that's really a key ingredient to success.

Okay. There's a question here. "How often do you and your core ConnectHome team meet?" Anybody from the HUD team want to answer?

I can start, but I would say in the beginning, you probably want to meet maybe once a week, and then as you go along, you might want to do it on a monthly basis, maybe quarterly over time. But as you're getting up and running, I would say you probably want to meet on a weekly basis. Anybody else want to add to that? No? Okay.

All right. Next question from Alexandra Shuck [ph]. "From your experience, what has been the most successful approaches to building trust when creating the action plan?"

I would say one thing you should do is follow through. So, if you say you're going to do something, do it. Don't overpromise. We heard that from Brownsville in one of the sessions on Monday. So, I think those are key ingredients. Racquel, anything you'd like to add?

Racquel Ellis: Yes. I would agree with that. Don't overpromise. Keeping realistic time frames or releasing of products or deadlines to them. Just being honest, I think, with the residents in the community builds trust to start creating that rapport, and follow through. If you feel like you're not going to make or meet a time frame, tell them. Communicate that. So, I would say communication is the key factor, too, as well.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a really good point. Keeping open lines of communication.

Another question, "Could you please provide some effective resident engagement methods during the pandemic? In-person meetings have been complicated for us."

So, I think old-fashioned phone calls is a good way. There have been -- and we can share this later. There have been some of our FSS and Ross service coordinators have used computers and cell phones, email successfully and other platforms. The names are escaping me right now, but I'm happy to share them after the session. And it's all with PII, personally identifiable information, removed. So, I will -- I'd be happy to share that with you all after the session.

But let me see if my other HUD colleagues or, Racquel, if you guys have anything you want to add.

Racquel Ellis: Yes. I would add, well, definitely during COVID, you can use survey type tools to try to get feedback, which would, of course, be via email. Text blasts as well are very efficient and effective as well during COVID. But I would say non-COVID, if measures stop and were able to interact, doing type of maybe like cookouts or little meetings that you're giving maybe raffles or a giveaway, things like that, but also just making sure you're delivering the information you need to deliver as well at that time.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Excellent. Anybody else from the HUD team want to add anything?

Jason Amirhadji: I'll just say we had a lot of great presentations throughout the summit around trusted messengers and whether it's digital ambassadors, could be health workers, really just sort

of peer navigators to do the outreach. So, I would say, don't take it personally if you are a program staff, a coordinator, someone who's working at the PHA level. A lot of times folks may not want to answer your call, but they may answer the call of a neighbor or someone who they trust.

So, just engaging with folks in the community on that level and recruiting folks and having them be part of the program. And there's a lot of different ways to do that, in terms of hiring or stipends or other ways of compensating folks. But I think leveraging resident councils, making sure that you're understanding the needs of the community when you put the information out there.

So, I shared a great story from day one that we heard around just -- not just coming with what the offers are from the partners but doing an assessment of the needs of the community and so you can come to folks with things that really resonate with them.

Racquel Ellis: And I have one more -- I'm sorry. I have one more suggestion. Sometimes, also, meeting the residents where they are, meaning go to where they live rather than having them come into the office, because sometimes that's intimidating. So, sometimes if you go to their dwelling or maybe their apartment building has a room where you can host the meeting, I think the level of comfortability and you'll get more feedback if they're in an environment that they're used to, because coming to the office always sometimes creates a fear for residents sometimes on the program.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. And I think now, especially with COVID, people might be hesitant to come to an office. So, if it's possible to meet outdoors or outside of their door in a hallway or something like that.

There's another question from Ruby. "How do we approach residents who are not ready for change in an action plan?"

That's a really good question. Any thoughts on this one? I have one, but I want to ask others if they -- from the panelists Racquel or Jason, Ashley. So, the question is, "How do we approach residents who are not ready for change in an action plan?"

Racquel Ellis: So, again, I would suggest, first, gaining that trust factor is very important. Also, maybe giving examples of how it would benefit or better their life as far as their family, kids, children, or what have you, and giving examples of those because sometimes, if you put it in perspective for people, then they'll jump on board with the change. If they can't see it, sometimes they can't believe it. So, that's what I would suggest.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. And I think this kind of thing also takes time. So, you're not going to get everyone right away. So, if you start small and people start to see the programs that you're implementing, you'll eventually get more people to come along. And I think if you engage -- again, going back to engaging residents in your process, I think that will be very helpful and resident leaders as well so that you're -- the resident population feels that they're being heard and

then they see that programs are being delivered based on their feedback. So, it's not going to happen overnight. It's definitely a process.

Racquel Ellis: And I'd like to add to that, Dina, with the resident spokesperson or community. Once changes are happening within the community, they start to talk. So, if the word gets out there, it's going to circle through the community as well. So, if you have that resident leader to kind of have the face to kind of put it out there into the community, they'll start to trust that factor and then, of course, hopefully become on board.

Jason Amirhadji: I'll just add, from the last session, the great point was brought up around human-centered design and really approaching your action plan from a bottom-up approach instead of top down; right? So, a traditional way that folks think about things is, okay. We want to connect 100 residents. Let's go do it. But that's not really a human-centered approach; right?

So, a bottom-up way might be to talk to folks and identify, what are their challenges? What are the gaps? What are their needs? And you might have different goals emerge from that; right? It may be help folks who are already connected better use the connections and devices they have maybe with training. Or it could be, for folks who are disconnected, understanding is it that they need a computer? Do they need for school, for training, for maybe just administrative tasks like paying bills and filing taxes? So, really understanding what are the needs that are driving your ultimate action plan.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a really, really good point. And I think you could have a resident-only listening session, for example, where you get feedback just from the residents. So, yeah. I love that idea. Thanks, Jason. Thanks, Racquel.

I don't see any other questions in the chat. Let's see. Yes.

Jason Amirhadji: We do have a great comment in the chat.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. Go ahead. Yeah.

Jason Amirhadji: Just a suggestion from a vet saying that they would do it separate from the resident council meetings. Having ConnectHome on its own might generate excitement, at least where you're at, and that would be great if you want to share where you're coming from. People aren't interested in the resident council right now because they feel they aren't heard.

So, we know that could be the case in some places, but other places, they have maybe a different experience. But it's a good point that ConnectHome not getting lost. So, whether that's embedding it in a structure that's already there or creating something standalone. Racquel or others, do you have any thoughts on that?

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's actually where I was going, and I didn't articulate it that well. So, sorry. I did think of -- it should be a standalone session where you're just talking about this issue, this issue of connectivity and how -- the needs that residents have around it or the problems that they're facing around connectivity, devices, and the training that they need. So, yeah. Thank you

so much, Yvette, for helping to clarify that point. And you're from Rockford, Illinois. All right. Go, Rockford.

Any other questions in the -- I don't see any in the chat. Any other bits of wisdom that you guys want to share around this, the action planning?

As you're thinking, I will reiterate that we're going to have an action plan toolkit, as Racquel mentioned, on HUD Exchange, and it's going to have the timeline that she showed you. It's going to have the other documents that will walk you through the process step by step. And of course, there is the playbook which breaks it down in really easy and digestible pieces. So, you can always go back to that as well.

I don't see any more questions. Do you guys?

Racquel Ellis: I would just say one last suggestion. When you're picking your team and coming up with the roles, definitely making sure you have team members from all areas of the organization. I would say definitely, even if it's a housing specialist, because they interact with the clients on an everyday basis. So, just making sure at each level that you have a voice on the team for each level is important.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Right. And I see a comment here from -- let's see. Who is it from? Betty. "Residents and participants have to be on the planning. Otherwise, they think it's just another way for staff to spy on them." Oh, wow. "Or monitor them." Wow. Yeah. Okay.

Yeah. For sure. I mean, it's -- if you're designing something for residents, you can't do it without their input, basically.

And to your point, Racquel, I think it's really well taken that you really think carefully about who's on your core planning team. It doesn't have to be big at the beginning. And the other thing I would say is you're coming from a position of strength in that you have a resident population that many organizations want to serve.

And so, when you're asking the library, can you help with digital literacy training, for example, you're -- don't feel like you're asking for a favor because you're helping them with their mission. And that's just an example of the library, but there are businesses. There are other organizations that would be -- would mutually benefit from having your residents connected, like the local bank, for example. Having residents that are banking online will help their business. So, remember, you're working from a position of strength.

All right. Any other words of wisdom from the team?

Jason Amirhadji: Dina, that's a great point, and just to highlight something that has been brought up earlier in this summit, this is a great opportunity when you're working with anchor institutions to really understand what their goals are and what they're trying to achieve and then what your resident goals are and where the overlap is.

So, that's really sort of what this planning process hopefully is getting to is identifying sort of what's in everyone's common interest and then what mechanisms do you need to put in place to ensure that that works?

So, to Betty's point, if folks have concerns around privacy or security of their information and data, those are things that you want to clarify in your MOUs and in your communication around what you're doing so people have a really clear understanding.

I won't call out specific communities, but I know sometimes we hear things like communities wanting to filter or monitor perhaps data that's being shared through their common networks. And they're maybe coming from a good place, information security or just making sure to best utilize limited bandwidth. But just to understand that in doing those things, you have to be transparent, and also it can create trust issues.

So, I think it's really important to consider all those factors from the outset; right? We heard earlier about smart speakers and those can be really great tools but people are concerned. Are they always listening? What about my privacy? So, these are things you want to get ahead of when you do your communications to help build trust because those could also be, unfortunately, opportunities to lose trust if you don't get ahead of it.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Right. That's a really good point. Yeah. That's the last thing you want to do is to lose trust because once you do, it's really, really hard to recover from that. So, don't overpromise, and make sure you deliver on what you say you're going to do.

All right. Well, I think we're at time for this section -- sorry -- of our last session. Racquel, any other parting words of wisdom before we go?

Racquel Ellis: No. Just thank you for listening, and hopefully it was helpful.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Great. Thanks so much, Racquel.

All right. So, now, we're going to turn it over to the recognition section of this session. Before we do, I'm going to turn it over to Jason real quick. I do want to say that we have -- we are awarding these badges based on information we collected earlier on in the year. And so, we know that there's missing information. We know that this is an incomplete list of awardees, and we're going to share how you can give us updated information. But we wanted to show you what you can receive. And so, with that, I'll turn it over to Jason. Thank you.

Jason Amirhadji: Great. Thanks so much, and I'll just note, if folks look in the chat, Ashley put in a general link to the HUD Exchange that has all of the resources Dina was talking about, including the playbook and four years of past webinars, and I put a specific link to the action plan section.

So, if you go onto the HUD Exchange, you will find at any one of those webinars just some amazing work that we've highlighted over the years from you all, from the community, all the work that you've done, whether it's connectivity or devices or training. And that really goes

before the pandemic, but now, especially during the pandemic. So, we thought it was important not only to recognize your efforts but also to just show the impact of this program throughout the years and really all of the work that you're doing on the ground.

So, this is an opportunity to celebrate you and applaud you. These digital badges are -- I have to say, HUD legal team requires that I tell you that they are valueless, in one sense. You can't exchange them at the HUD gift shop for anything. They're not good for currency. You can't use them in that sense, but we hope that you find them to be valuable, that you can put them on your website. They could be bragging points and certainly, again, just to help highlight and recognize all of the work that you've been doing to help narrow the digital divide in your community.

We don't have all of the reaction features available right now in Zoom, but I would encourage you, as we call out your community, to share in the chat. Maybe some people have already been sharing some of their great highlights from the summit, but anything you want to share about your efforts, something that's memorable experiences that you've had in your work in ConnectHome.

It's one of the most, I think, valuable parts of this program is the ability to help residents and to see the tangible change that you're making in people's lives. And we don't always get to see that at the federal headquarters level, but we know that you all are seeing it on the ground. And so, if you want to share a story or a quick snippet or anecdote in the chat, we'd love to hear those as well.

We have three categories that we are offering digital badges on this year, and then we'll be previewing some future badges to come, and those are around the three legs of the digital inclusion stool. So, that's connectivity, devices, and training. And as Dina mentioned, these are based off of the data that we had earlier in the year, but these are going to be living badges. So, we'll continue to update them.

And they're offered in this year's theme of the Olympics at the bronze, silver, gold, and platinum levels. So, as your efforts continue, we can upgrade your badges to the higher levels once you let us know. So, remember, just getting a badge itself is an honor. So, please don't feel like one level is somehow inferior to the next. But you're welcome to smack talk or celebrate each other in the chat, and we hope that you do as we go through and share some of these wonderful badges that you all have really -- to recognize your work in ConnectHome. So, if we can go to the next slide.

We're going to start off at the bronze level for devices. So, this is 100-plus devices distributed, and I will say for some communities, depending on the size of your community, this might be a platinum level achievement because you might have connected the entire community. And we recognize some communities are so large that 100 is just one step in the way. But we think it's an important milestone because it shows that you've been able to put the partnerships in place to get devices distributed. And then I think you're going to see a lot of common themes here in terms of the names, because it also inherently means folks must have access to the internet and hopefully also to training.

So, I'll try to avoid making anyone feel left out, but there are some communities I've had personal experience with. So, I'll just share some things along the way as we go through.

But I want to just start off by recognizing our first community at the bronze level for devices, and that's Brownsville 2017 cohort. We also had Rockford, a pilot. We heard from them earlier. Westmoreland County, another first ConnectHomeUSA site from 2017. San Buenaventura from 2018, we actually talked with them, and they helped us think through some updates to the playbook. So, I really want to recognize their efforts as well. Continue.

Denver, one of our great pilot communities, as we've highlighted on several of our webinars. Rhode Island, which is our first statewide ConnectHome community from the 2017 ConnectHomeUSA cohort, and Jacksonville from 2019, also running now a Jobs Plus program. Charlotte, 2017, also a former Jobs Plus site. Akron from 2017 and also home to our Secretary Fudge.

We have North Las Vegas, 2017 and Providence, 2018, so part of that statewide effort in Rhode Island. We have Madison from 2019, St. Louis from 2019, also a former Jobs Plus site, and Columbus, Mississippi, which is actually remarkable because they're the newest site on this list. So, they've done a lot in a very short amount of time. But huge congratulations and celebration to everyone, and see some folks chatting on Akron in the chat, which is awesome. But congratulations to everyone on this list.

So, we now move up to the silver level, and this is 250 devices distributed. So, this is a 150-device step up from the bronze level, and this just shows the enhanced level of commitment and distribution and planning and effort, partnership that has to go to achieve this.

So, we'll start off with Fresno, one of our great pilot sites. I know Bobby's been an active participant in the chat over the past few days. Yonkers, who we just recognized actually in the session just before this from 2019. Harlingen, Texas for 2018 and Allegheny County, which was part of actually our first collaboration between the city and county with Pittsburgh. We have Wilson, North Carolina, 2017, New Haven, 2017, and Detroit, 2017 also has been a past feature in our ConnectHome Summit.

And now, to the gold level. So, this is -- like the Olympics, the gold level is something to be very proud of. It's not the top level, but it's another step there. So, it's 500 devices distributed and 250 more than the silver level. It's certainly something to aspire to for those at the bronze, silver, or still aspiring communities.

Starting off, we have Cleveland-Cuyahoga, again, who we heard about earlier from the Digital C effort. Los Angeles pilot community and also one of our community health worker sites. We've had Ruby chiming in throughout the conference. Seattle, one of our pilot sites as well.

And now, for the platinum level. This is the ultimate achievement unless we have to make up some new tiers, if people really outdo themselves. But this is really, I think, a strong indicator of commitment and just showing the dedication to not just narrowing the digital divide but truly trying to connect everybody in the community, which is a remarkable achievement.

So, we'll start off at the platinum level for devices, and that's Greensboro, 2017, Lucas, which is Toledo, 2018, also a Jobs Plus site. Phoenix, 2017, also a Jobs Plus site. San Antonio, 2016, home of our former secretary and also a Jobs Plus site, Pittsburgh, which we featured Knowledge Build Hudson on day one, 2017, and Chicago from 2019. Also, a two-time Jobs Plus site. So, lots of returning folks on there.

And yes. As Dina said, if you're not on this list and you should be, let us know, and we would love to be able to recognize all of your great work.

All right. So, I'll now hand it over to Dina to take over the next section on connectivity.

Ashley Vo: Hi, everyone. I will be actually --

Jason Amirhadji: Oh, sorry. Ashley.

Ashley Vo: -- be going over connections, and, unfortunately, I don't have all the states memorized or all these nifty facts that Jason knows. So, I'll just be running through them.

So, first off, we're starting with the bronze level. This is 100-plus connections. With that, we have Charlotte, our 2017 ConnectHomeUSA community, San Buenaventura. Wilson, Allegheny County, Gary, Indiana, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Westmoreland County, Jacksonville, city of North Las Vegas, Norfolk, and Winnebago County and, lastly, Rockford.

And then moving on to our next level at silver with 250-plus connections, we have Columbus, Mississippi, Yonkers, Akron, Lawrence, and Harlingen and, lastly, New Haven and Brownsville.

And moving along to gold, which is for 500- plus connections, we have Seattle, Bakersfield, San Antonio, and Annapolis.

And then, lastly, our platinum level with 1,000-plus connections. Lucas, Greensboro, Denver, Renton, St. Louis, Fresno, Cleveland-Cuyahoga, Goldsboro, Phoenix, and Portsmouth.

And with that, I'll pass it on to Dina to go over our residents who received digital literacy training and the digital badges for that one.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thanks, Ashley and Jason. And a reminder. We're going to have a slide with a link, and maybe -- oh, I'll copy it and put it into the chat as well for you guys to update information. So -- because everybody who deserves a badge should get one. So, as I said, this was based on data that we received earlier on in the year. So, I'm sure there's folks who are missing who should be on here.

Okay. So, let's start with 100-plus residents receiving digital literacy training. Brownsville, Lucas in Ohio, Rockford, Rhode Island, Allegheny County, Charlotte, Los Angeles, one of our pilots, North Las Vegas, Birmingham, and Chicago.

For the silver badge -- and by the way, these badges will be sent to you electronically so you can display them on your website, or if you have a ConnectHome page, you can display them there, but you will -- these will all be sent to you following the summit, so within the next few days.

So, Fresno, 250-plus residents received digital literacy training. Harlingen, Denver, Providence, and Westmoreland Count. Congratulations.

500-plus residents. This is a lot, you guys. Okay. New Haven and Cleveland. Okay.

So, then we make a big jump, and there's more communities here at the platinum level. San Antonio, Seattle, Greensboro, Phoenix, and drum roll for the big one, Pittsburgh. So, Pittsburgh trained over 6,000 residents, and so that's why we put them in bold. I mean, everybody is important, but this was such a big accomplishment that I wanted to highlight them for the exceptional work they've done.

So, congratulations, everybody. Yay. Thank you for all of your hard work. We really appreciate it. You guys inspire us every single day, and we know we thank you with our words and hopefully with the TA we provide you. But you really are where the rubber meets the road, and we are very, very grateful. We know you are changing lives through the work that you're doing. So, thank you so much.

We do have another badge that we'd like to share with you that's been created. We're not awarding it today, but we can very soon. So, we know that some of you have digital ambassador programs. If you do, let us know, and we'll send this badge to you, if you're interested in having it.

And as we've been saying, if you have updated numbers, please go to this link here. Ashley created a beautiful, easy-to-complete form that you can just put your information in, and we will track it and then send you the badge that you deserve or badges that you deserve. And you can have a collection. Why not have a collection? You could have bronze and then silver and then gold. So, thank you so much, Ashley, for that.

Did I miss anything, HUD team? Okay.

So, next, let's talk about what lies ahead. Well, congratulations. Yes.

What lies ahead? So, with all of the money that's being contemplated in the infrastructure bill and build back better, we are going to be continuing our inter-agency coordination to make sure that you are informed of opportunities that you are eligible for, whether directly or indirectly. That's, I think, an important thing to mention.

As the deputy secretary mentioned in her opening remarks, we will be having a listening session coming up. And if you haven't already, you should be hearing from everyone on. They will be sending you some questions to answer, if you'd like, about what has worked for you, what you liked about ConnectHome, what you have not liked as much, or how we could better support you because, as the dep sec also mentioned, Congress has encouraged us to expand

ConnectHomeUSA, but we don't want to do that in a vacuum. We want to make sure we hear from you.

We have our own ideas, but they're not good if they're not informed by what you have been doing on the ground, the needs that you have, and how we can support you and new communities in a way that's as effective as possible.

So, stay tuned. We're hoping to have the session on October 28th. We want to make sure that HUD leadership is involved as well. So, there's some coordination that has to happen, but please stay tuned. It's definitely going to happen with the support of everyone on and also U.S. Ignite, who was on the session earlier today. Hopefully, most of you who are participating today were able to hear them earlier today.

The other thing we're going to continue to do is support you in the way that we have. But again, this listening session will also help us understand what other things we can do for you. So, we've been doing technical assistance over the years through webinars, newsletters, and the annual summits, but is there something else we can do?

We're starting to develop some case studies. Are there other types of documents or toolkits that you could benefit from? As alluded to earlier, we have the action plan toolkit that's going to be going up on HUD Exchange. We're going to have a digital literacy guidebook that anybody can use. They're all free digital literacy training materials that you can download for free. They're comprehensive from start -- for beginners to intermediate and a little advanced. So, it'll guide you through those resources and a number of other toolkits that will be placed on HUD Exchange very soon. But again, we want to make sure that what we offer you is what you need.

The other thing I want to remind you of is you have your field office ConnectHomeUSA leads. Don't forget about them. They're really very knowledgeable about resources in the community that can help you build your programs. And then, of course, we're going to continue our monthly regional calls.

So, I'd like to now see if my HUD colleagues have anything else they would like to share about what lies ahead, their perspective, and, of course, any questions you all have, happy to entertain them.

Jason Amirhadji: Thanks, Dina. I'll just point out, we have a question in the chat or in the Q&A, I should say. "How will individuals be notified about the next step meeting on October 28?" Do you want to share a little bit just about the logistics there?

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. Thanks. Thanks, Jason. Yeah. So, this is going to be, I think, primarily for ConnectHomeUSA communities because we want to understand from them how we can better support them. So, I don't think this is going to be a larger listening session for non-ConnectHome communities, though we can give it some thought.

Jason Amirhadji: Great. And we'll be, of course, reaching out since we have contact information for those communities. So, we'll have more details to come on that.

I just want to share some great stories that people have been sharing through the chat. Early on, I asked just for folks to highlight some of their highlights so far from the summit. And we had some great conversations and comments, people mentioning specific sessions on every day of the summit. Some new folks who were encouraged to get started with their efforts and some folks who have been around for a while who we were celebrating just in the badges right now. So, a great mix of folks joining us.

And I think one key takeaway that I had from the past three days of the summit is that, throughout the pandemic, this work has really been elevated in a number of ways. And thanks to Dina and others, it's now incorporated much more intentionally across our HUD funded programs, including Ross. I've seen many Ross coordinators on with us, and we've been thinking about, how could we -- we heard even about some of the challenges with, for example, data sharing with multifamily.

So, this has been useful for HUD to get a sense of what we need to do to better support you all on the ground moving forward, but that the pandemic has really changed the game and these federal resources through the EBB and potentially now through these bills that will be making their way through Congress over the next month could really be game changers. But that doesn't mean that we can just say mission accomplished.

There's a lot of work that has to be done to take those funds and translate them into meaningful connections, devices, training, and then ultimately, opportunities that lie at the end of that.

We did also, I just want to reiterate, paste in the chat the link to HUD Exchange, which is ultimately where all of these great resources that Dina mentioned are going to live. And throughout the year, we, thanks to ICF and the team, including Ashley and others, have categorized all of the webinars over the past four years to support each section of the playbook.

And I just want to note what an accomplishment that is because there have been really, I think probably at this point, over 100 webinars that ConnectHome has put on, monthly webinars over four years, it feels like, and lots of great information. So, I hope if you still have ideas or thoughts that you want to explore, that you check out the HUD Exchange and take a look at some of those archives because there's a lot of great information there and there's going to be more to come with some of these toolkits and resources that we'll be rolling out at the end of this year.

Just one more thought before I hand it over to my colleagues is that, of course, this work couldn't happen without all of you on the ground. And just want to recognize really that you all are doing the really important work, and we're here to support you and are very grateful for everything that you're doing to help narrow the digital divide in your community.

So, we hope that you will reach out to us, ConnectHome@hud.gov. Continue to let us know about your challenges, areas where we can help support you, and ensure that communities have the resources they need to succeed and also to be part of this list next year for the badges,

hopefully, at the platinum level across the board. Thank you for sharing that, Dina, in the chat. I don't know if others have thoughts as well.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thanks, Jason. The one thought I did have is that this work is not confined to ConnectHomeUSA communities. So, I was really gratified to see so many non-ConnectHomeUSA communities join us for these three days.

All of the resources that we've shared are available to you as well. The more the merrier. The more folks that engage in this work, the better. And I'm really glad you all could join us to listen and learn from communities who we did feature and others who we had on some of our sessions, like the session this morning and the federal funding, et cetera, et cetera. But please, don't be strangers. Let us hear from you. Let us -- tell us what you would like us to do for you. That's really what our role is because, as Jason said, the work you do on the ground is really the most important work, and we want to make sure you succeed. So, thank you so much.

Let's see if there are any other questions. A reminder. If you want to update your data, send us -- fill out that form. It's real quick, easy to do. And we want -- because we want to make sure we recognize everyone that deserves to have one or more than one badge.

Okay. I don't see any more questions, unless I'm missing something, Jason. Do you see anything else?

Jason Amirhadji: Just to reiterate your thanks to ICF for their support, all the logistics behind the scenes that made this happen, and, of course, to you, Dina.

This is the second year that ConnectHome during a pandemic has held a virtual summit, which is a pretty big accomplishment. So, thanks for being the torchbearer for this work for so long. It's really a ton of work. And folks may feel like we have a very large team, but it's really mostly Dina with the help of Ashley and SPM and then sometimes me. But it's a lot for one person to carry forward. So, thank you for putting this on, and thank you for continuing to highlight the importance of this issue.

I will also say, just as -- by way of closing slightly, that, as we draw this summit to a close, it is still Digital Inclusion Week. So, we encourage folks to continue to engage with activities around Digital Inclusion Week from NTIA. I know that some folks, for example, in New Jersey, are holding a summit tomorrow, and there's more activities that are happening across the country. So, certainly, encourage you all to continue to look out on social media and on the web and find other activities to engage with as part of this week's activities.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you, Jason. So kind of you, and thanks to everybody in the chat. You're all so sweet.

To your point, go to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. If you just Google that, NDIA. They have a list of other events that are taking place in relation to National Digital Inclusion Week. They're the ones who established this week, and so we timed it on purpose for that. So, just check out to see what else is going on. And they also have great resources on their website as

well. I think it's digitalinclusion.org, if I'm not mistaken. I'll type it in, but don't hold me to it if it's wrong. I think that's what it is, digitalinclusion.org.

Jason Amirhadji: And we hope to see you in person next year as well. I think this has been a great lesson in how we can maybe continue to do these virtually or hybrid, but we miss seeing all of you in person. So --

Dina Lehmann-Kim: We really do.

Jason Amirhadji: -- I'm really hoping that by next year -- yeah -- the pandemic will be well behind us, hopefully.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. And thank you all for the work you're doing on that front as well. I know I hear on the regional calls that you're arranging vaccination events, food distribution after school. I mean, you really are inspiring, and if I keep going, I'm going to start to cry. So, I won't. Thanks, everyone, for being so great.

All right. See you guys next year at the next summit. Hopefully, it'll be in person. Thanks, everyone, for joining, and thanks to the HUD team and ICF. Thanks, everyone. Take care.

(END)