



# Virtual Event Planning Case Study

## Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP)

The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) joined the ConnectHomeUSA initiative in 2017 and has since developed innovative partnerships and brought hundreds of devices and in-home Internet access to many of its residents and families.

HACP's virtual convening was supported by the HUD field staff and staff from the Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA), another ConnectHomeUSA site.



## Original Vision for Virtual Convening

HACP's ConnectHomeUSA team had originally planned to hold an in-person convening. The COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible. The team reassessed and decided, with input from the HUD field office team, to not only hold a convening to bring together partners, share successes, and generate new ideas to get residents connected, but to also bring the event to a larger audience -- nearby Public Housing Authorities that were not participating in ConnectHomeUSA.



## Planning

1. HACP's ConnectHomeUSA lead who spearheaded the idea began mapping out the vision, which included building out a project management spreadsheet and sharing a proposal with HACP leadership.  
**TIP:** Take a look at the *Virtual Event Planning Checklist* and *Event Planning Template* in this toolkit to get started.
2. After receiving approval for the idea from HACP leadership, HACP staff also presented their idea to the HUD Pittsburgh's Field Policy and Management (FPM) team, including the HUD Pittsburgh Field Office Director. The local HUD team was not only supportive of the idea, but also offered to support and expand the reach of the event to other housing authorities in Western Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic region.
3. The Field Office and the HACP staff worked together to develop goals and a framework for the event.  
**TIP:** Use the *Event Planning Template* in this toolkit as a starting point.
4. ACHA also assisted with planning and provided support and outreach throughout the event planning phase.
5. After finalizing the goals, the team worked together to assign tasks and finalize logistics of the event.  
**TIP:** The *Event Planning Template* can be a helpful project management tool for virtual and in-person event planning.

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## Implementation

Once a framework for the Convening was finalized and goals and audience outlined, the project team began executing the following tasks:

- Selecting a virtual platform
- Creating and executing an outreach plan
- Developing and consolidating speakers' PowerPoints
- Coordinating with speakers and presenters
- Developing marketing materials
- Building an event page on the HACP website
- Finalizing the agenda





## Results and Follow-up

- Over 75 people attended, including staff from nearby housing authorities, residents, stakeholders and more
- Feedback from participants was positive
  - Stakeholders were impressed with the execution of the event and expressed thanks for the invitation to participate
  - The Pittsburgh PIH Director was pleased that the information was shared with housing authorities outside of Pittsburgh
- The ConnectHomeUSA HQ team asked the HUD field team to describe the event to other regional ConnectHomeUSA leads during an all-hands meeting as an example that other field offices could replicate. Over 80 HUD staff attended the presentation and the event was also included in an internal HUD newsletter.
- The agenda, promotional flyer, and slide deck used for all the presentations are available on the HACP website and can be accessed [here](#).
- HACP followed up with:
  - Thank you notes to all speakers;
  - Resource lists to all attendees;
  - Showcase of event to other HUD staff; and
  - Surveys.





## Benefits of Going Virtual

1. Flexibility to include speakers and attendees from outside the region.
2. Connecting to other housing authorities in the region to share the work and assist them initiate their own digital inclusion programs.
  - a. The convening has opened up a dialogue with other housing authorities in the area, specifically the Westmoreland County Housing Authority, which is also a ConnectHomeUSA community.



## Best Practices

HACP and the HUD Field Office outlined a few best practice tips for virtual event planning and implementation:

1. **Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration.** By working with the Field Policy and Management staff in the HUD Pittsburgh Field Office and the Allegheny County Housing Authority, HACP was able to connect to an expanded list of organizations and potential partners. The Field Office staff were also key in the planning process and overall success of the convening.
2. **Include resident voices as speakers.** Residents are the center of the ConnectHomeUSA program and should be included throughout the event planning process.
3. **Set clear goals from the beginning.** Before setting an agenda, identify clear goals, purpose, and audience.
4. **Develop a project team early on.** A virtual event takes a team to plan and execute. Include committed individuals on the project team. Build a strong relationship with your local HUD FPM team if you have not already and look to them for support!
5. **Find a platform that meets your needs.** There are a lot of virtual platforms out there with different offerings; do your research to find the right fit. Check out the ConnectHomeUSA Virtual Training Planning Kit for more information on possible platforms.
6. **Conducting a short, pre-event run-through with presenters is key.** This will make presenters and hosts feel more comfortable on the day of your event.
7. **Tech Check.** Have presenters log on early for a technical check-in — this will help resolve any tech issues that might arise on the day of the event.





**ConnectHomeUSA**