

Sustainable Community-Based Systems for Device Deployment and Digital Skills Programs

January 31, 2024



TEXAS BROADBAND
DEVELOPMENT OFFICE



INSTITUTE FOR
Local Self-Reliance



Agenda



- Welcome and Introductions
- Device Deployment Strategies
- Programs Underway
- Codesigning your Digital Opportunity Solutions
- Practical Application and Q&A Session

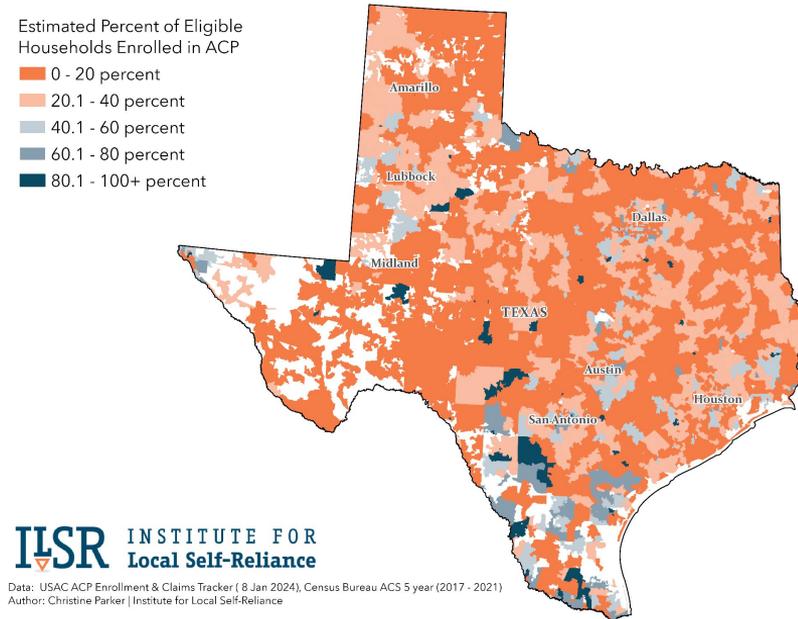
From Digital Divide to Digital Opportunity



Device Deployment Strategies

- Approximately **11% (1.2 million)** households in Texas have a smartphone only, and no other computing device.
- **7% of online survey respondents** have *only* a smartphone to connect to the internet.
- Surveyed respondents, such as unhoused individuals (27%), low-income households (20%) and individuals with limited English proficiency (18%) were more likely to rely on only a smartphone to connect to the internet than all survey respondents

Note: [DigitUnity](#) has a great interactive map on device gaps.



Device Deployment Strategies

Community-Based Approaches to Device Deployment

- Refurb vs. New
- Lending vs. Ownership
- Accessibility



Billy Calzada, San Antonio Express-News

Device Deployment Strategies

Successful Initiatives

- [MHM Digital Equity Grantee Cohort](#)
- [Harris County and T-Mobile's ECF grant](#)
- [Senior Planet and OATS from AARP](#)
- [Compudopt](#)
- [Computers for the Blind](#)
- [Austin Free-Net](#)

San Antonio Express-News

We also believe it's critical that San Antonio and Bexar County leaders demonstrate genuine concern for their aging constituencies. That starts with both ending the practice of "othering" older adults and breaking down ageism in the implementation of technology. We generally do a poor job of asking seniors what works for them, and then we make decisions without seeking their input. This perpetuates a vicious circle that leaves older adults struggling on the sidelines.

We encourage all our elected leaders to implement standard practices of connecting with their older constituencies to determine what they need from government. OATS can help inform those conversations.

- Rosemary Kowalski and Pay jasso

Device Deployment Strategies



Digital Access: Internet-Enabled Devices Distribution

Project Spotlight

Harris County Public Library Connected Program



Key Takeaways

- Largest ECF distribution by a public library in the US through two rounds
- Identify barriers to adoption early on
- Distribution partners are essential
- Develop risk mitigation strategies

Iterative Process Results

- Digital Training is essential to integrate into any device distribution program
- Improved use of digital platforms for scheduling distributions
- Vendor adjustments to ensure the best results for the program

Services	Resources	Customer	Location	Output
Digital Navigators Pilot	Digital Skills and Navigation	Residents	Libraries in HC	6 Digital Navigators
Internet-Enabled Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15k Chromebooks• 40k 5G Hotspots	Residents	Libraries in HC	15k Devices; 40k Hotspots

Necessity of Digital Skills in the Modern World



MHM Digital Equity Implementation Strategy

A healthy digital equity ecosystem requires coordination of program delivery partners, best practice development and dissemination, metrics / impact tracking, and funding – for both digital inclusion programs and to address infrastructure gaps.



Device Access

- Develop Public Computer Centers
- Facilitate bulk purchasing and distribution (or corporate donations)



Digital Skills

- Empower "Digital Connectors" for direct training
- Run public classes
- Provide online tutorials
- Establish call-in help desk



Public Benefit Adoption

- Promote Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Community-Based Digital Skills Training Programs

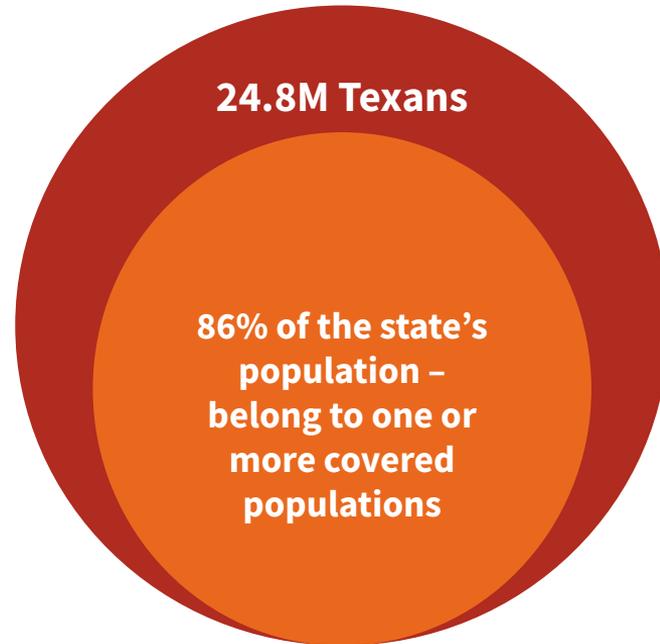
Best Practices for Designing Effective Programs

- Under DEA covered populations
- Concerns with older adults and digital navigators
- In-person community outreach
- Accessibility

Covered Populations	TDOP Section
Members of a racial or ethnic minority group (racial or ethnic minorities)	Section 3.a.iii.6, Page 78
Individuals in households below 150% poverty (low-income households)	Section 3.a.iii.8, Page 86
Individuals residing in rural areas (rural residents)	Section 3.a.iii.7, Page 82
Persons who are 60 years of age or older (aging individuals)	Section 3.a.iii.1, Page 57
Individuals with disabilities	Section 3.b.iii.4, Page 67
Individuals with a language barrier, including those who are English learners or have low literacy levels (individuals with limited English proficiency)	Section 3.a.iii.5, Page 73
Veterans	Section 3.a.iii.3, Page 64
Incarcerated individuals	Section 3.a.iii.2, Page 61

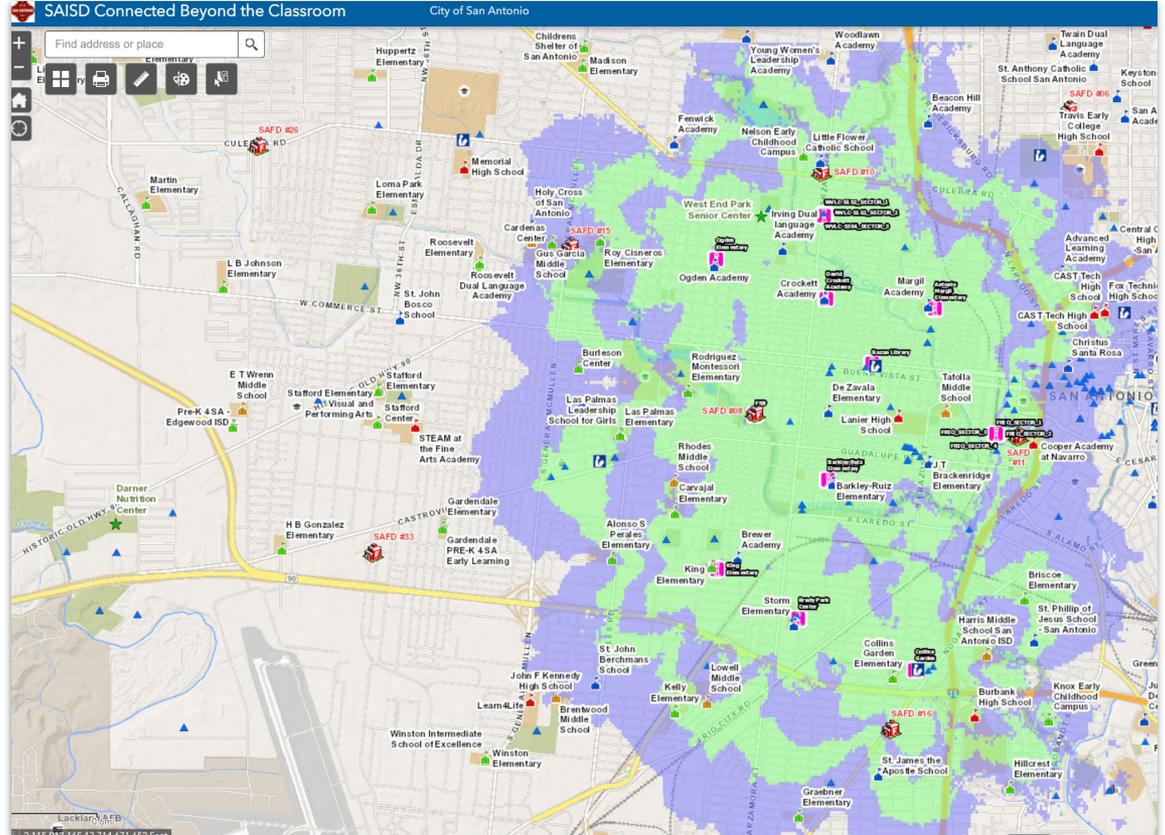
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Strategies to Ensure Long-term Viability of Device Deployment

Integrating Sustainability



Building Sustainable Digital Skills Programs

Integrating Sustainability

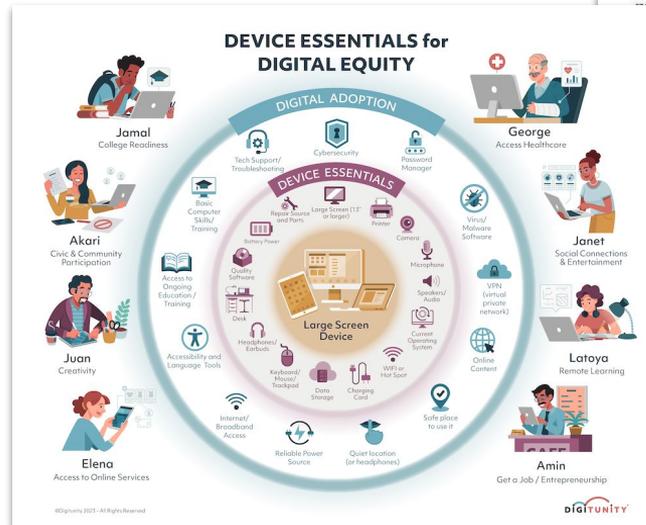
Opportunity Home San Antonio Wi-Fi program evolves to help with digital literacy, device distribution



Integrating Sustainability

Balancing Community Needs with Resource Efficiency

- Importance of choosing the right devices? (i.e. laptop vs. desktop vs. tablet vs. mobile or power vs. longevity).
- Keeping programs funded
- Long term sustainability after DEA funding



Exploring Digital Equity Fact Sheet Series

This fact sheet was created by ILSR and NDA with support from ADAP.

ILSR NDA AARP

Expanding Device Availability for Broadband

This is one of a series of short explainers about high-speed Internet access issues. The full series is available [here](#).

BACKGROUND

The lack of a computer or other digital device remains a significant hurdle to Internet connectivity and digital adoption for many households. According to data from the American Community Survey from 2019, nearly 9 million U.S. households had no computer of any kind, and another 12 million relied solely on a smartphone as their only computing device. (See related fact sheets that discuss [Affordability](#), [Access](#), and [Broadband Availability](#).)

This means that even after resolving infrastructure challenges, ensuring affordability, and building digital skills, accessing the Internet requires the right type of device to meet the user's needs.

Additionally, the user may need ongoing technical support to utilize the device. As organizations and digital inclusion advocates work to address this challenge in communities across the country, several successful strategies have emerged to make digital devices accessible and affordable for all.

THE PROBLEM

Resolving the device challenge is not simply a matter of having a manufacturer ship a device to an address. There are many devices suited to different use cases. New devices may be more expensive than a budget can support for the number of people in need. Older devices may have flaws or challenges to refurbish and support.

New or Refurbished?

In deciding what devices to distribute, new devices may be the most flexible. They are often available in whatever numbers are needed from the manufacturer. However, they may be too expensive for low-income households and they generally come with minimal tech support that new-to-technology households may require. One advantage is that manufacturers will often offer reduced costs for bulk order and some have discounts for nonprofits serving certain target populations. Working with a partner experienced in bulk technology procurement can also help to reduce costs.

Refurbished devices can be a good lower-cost alternative, and several national organizations specialize in this. Reputable refurbishers provide high-quality devices and generally offer warranties and tech support. Procurement and supply can fluctuate depending on demand and the supply of incoming devices. Getting businesses and public agencies to donate devices for refurbishing can be a great way to ensure supply and partners to contribute back to the community. Refurbishing devices can even reduce e-waste and disposal costs.

Loan or Own?

Once the type of device is settled, the program distributing the devices must consider who will own the device after a household takes it home. In most cases it is ideal for the user to own the device they receive - this gives them autonomy and reduces oversight and maintenance responsibilities for an administering organization. However, there may be some instances where loaning devices is preferable; two such cases are when demand far exceeds the number of available devices and there is a need to share them among users, or when device control and software standardization is important, such as with school districts. However, this additional layer of control should only be implemented if absolutely necessary.

Making devices publicly accessible at convenient and centralized locations is another strategy that is commonly employed at libraries, community centers, senior centers, and other gathering spaces. While generally not a substitute for having a device of one's own, it does have the benefit of being able to provide technical support and other digital skills training at the location.

Support

Many users in need of a device are also in need of support services throughout the process. Prior to getting a device, they may need assistance determining the right type for them and where to get it. Afterward, they may need assistance with setup, technical support, and skill building to get the most out of their device. Formally

Expanding Device Availability for Broadband

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ILSR.org ILSR Community
MuniNetworks.org

DIGITUNITY

Example: Successful Community-Based Device Deployment

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- Community Impact and Long-term Sustainability
- Replicating Success in Other Communities
- Programs underway in Texas
 - Community Tech Network
 - OATS from AARP
 - OASIS

Community Engagement

Refer to Texas' goals that align with NTIA's measurable objective categories:

- Importance of Involving the Community
- Strategies for Effective Engagement

Appendix B: Strategies, Objectives and Baselines

Table 1: Strategies and Objectives

VISION				
<i>Improve quality of life and promote economic growth by enabling fast, reliable and affordable broadband connectivity for all residents and businesses of Texas, and by promoting universal broadband adoption and access to digital skills development.</i>				
NTIA Measurable Objective Category 1: Broadband Availability and Affordability				
Texas Goal 1:				
Expand adoption of reliable, affordable broadband internet service at home for all Texans.				
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Baseline Data	Covered Population Baseline	Target	Implementation Strategies (see detailed activities in Ch 5)
1.1 Increase the percentage of Texans with reliable broadband subscriptions available in their homes.	ACS 5-year estimates (2017-2021) 68% of Texas households subscribe to broadband internet.	2023 Digital Opportunity Survey Lack of available or adequate internet service is more prevalent among these covered populations as	80% by 2030	Strategy 1: Partner with and fund statewide organizations Strategy 2: Fund local partners

Funding and Resources: Identifying Funding Sources for Sustainable Programs

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- Federal, state, nonprofit, local
- Consider building partnerships together to apply for larger awards
- Public-private partnerships
- Donors
- Earned income revenue models

Funding and Resources: Leveraging Community Resources

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- Design programs based on outcomes (health access; educational outcomes; financial literacy; employment opportunities; etc) which have other funding streams
- For example, if you were building a telehealth solution you could use the Connect Care Pilot program to fund the devices

Ensuring Equitable Access to Funding Opportunities

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Partner and co-design solutions with stakeholders

Building Partnerships

- **Importance of Collaborations with Local Organizations**
- **Establishing Partnerships for Sustainability**
- **Promoting a Unified Approach to Digital Inclusion**

Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Implementing Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Systems**
- **Measuring Impact and Success Metrics**
- **Continuous Improvement for Long-term Viability**

Group Discussion: Challenges and Solutions

- Discussion on Common Challenges in Sustainable Systems
- Strategies for Overcoming Obstacles
- Community-Based Solutions to Improve Resilience

Q&A Session



Please submit your questions in the chat box.

After this event concludes, please visit <https://infinite-peak-70034.herokuapp.com/> to download the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan.

Sign up for the Texas BDO Newsletter



TEXAS BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE NEWSLETTER

Key Dates and Upcoming Events (All times are in Central Standard Time.)

- **Dec. 23, 2023** – The BDO Submitted the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program’s Initial Proposal to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).
- **Jan. 24, 2024** – [Technical Assistance Webinar Series](#) 2 p.m. – Every Texan Connected: Working with Covered Populations.
- **Jan. 30, 2024** – [Industry Roundtable 3 p.m.](#)
- **Jan. 31, 2024** – [Technical Assistance Webinar Series](#) 2 p.m. – Sustainable Community-Based Systems for Device Deployment and Digital Skills Programs.
- **Feb. 1, 2024** – [Local Government Roundtable 10 a.m.](#)
- **Feb. 7, 2024** – [Technical Assistance Webinar Series](#) 2 p.m. – Partnerships and Tips on a Successful Application.
- **Feb. 28, 2024** – Deadline to submit the final Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP) to NTIA.
- **Feb. 29, 2024** – [BDO Board of Advisors Meeting 2 p.m.](#)

Sign up here: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXCOMPT/subscriber/new>

Thank You

If you have any questions about the draft TDOP public comment process, please email digital.opportunity@cpa.texas.gov.

Please link to this [page](#) to download and read the TDOP.

Office Hours

- Mondays, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- Thursdays, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- Email Jordan Pittman to schedule time at jordanp@ilsr.org

DeAnne Cuellar, Associate Director for Outreach, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, deanne@ilsr.org