



The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and the California Emerging Technology Fund December 2016

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Name of Project: ConnectHome
Grant Number: N/A
Start Date: January 2016 **End Date:** December 2016

I. Financial Summary

• Total Project Budget Spent:	\$111,412.41
• CETF Grant Amount:	\$50,000
• Number of First-Time Adoptions Achieved	281
• Number of Reconnects (Adoptions) Achieved	535
• Percentage of Match Funds Raised against Goal:	\$35,870.23
• Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: (Total Outcomes/Total Budget)	\$208

II. Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

CETF committed \$50,000 to support the implementation of ConnectHome LA as a collaborative joint venture among partners to optimize the impact of the project on improving the lives of participating residents. CETF funds were used to engage a Project Manager for 12 months to assist the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) in achieving the goals in the Project Plan.

There are over 7,000 children between the ages of 5-18 residing throughout HACLA's 14 public housing communities. Through participation in ConnectHome, HACLA focused on connecting K-12 households to ensure that children have Internet access to support their education. After assessing offers by various Internet Service Providers (ISP), Sprint's offer was determined to be cost effective with the best opportunity for connecting the maximum number of households.

Six public housing communities (Avalon, Gonzaque, Ramona Gardens, Nickerson Gardens, Pico/Las Casitas, Rancho San Pedro) that are compatible with the Sprint device participated in the initiative. There are a total of 1,463 eligible (K-12) households among the six sites. According to a survey implemented by CETF at Mar Vista public housing development in 2013, nearly 50% of the households surveyed stated that they had Internet access. Our goal was to focus on achieving 45% connection among eligible households who were not connected.

The agency theorized that an implementation of program components will lead to an **increase in digital literacy skills** and adoption or **active use of broadband at home** among participating households. The technology established at the properties is expected to lead to residents who have greater proficiency be able to use a computing device at home and **conduct activities such as research** and connect with resources online and **communicating online**. A third party evaluation is on-going at this time.

Goals and Objectives Summary

Describe percentage of Goals and Objectives completed and percentage remaining incomplete.

Project Outcomes Summary

Outcome Description	Actual	Goal	Percent Completed
Households Enrolled in Program	642	320	100%
Households Registered for Training	592	320	100%
Internet Adoptions	370	320	100%
First Time Internet Adoption	281	N/A	NA
Total Number of Households Present at Sign-Up	539	320	100%
Total Number of Served Households	535	320	100%
Total Number of Computer Distributed	530	320	100%
Total Number of Hotspots Distributed	535	320	100%

III. Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

Accomplishments

Through the ConnectHome Program we were able to connect 535 households to free internet for four years, out of those households, 530 also received a computer desktop system. All of the households who participated in the pilot program also received basic digital literacy training.

Each household received resources and information for accessing educational, employment, healthcare and civic engagement related resources that lead to greater economic opportunities and a better quality of life.

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

- HACLA met the grant agreement to connect 45% of eligible k-12 households at the participating sites. There were a total of 1,463 eligible households. According to previous surveys, nearly half of the households were already connected. This program targeted 731 potentially unconnected households. This program provided 535 households with connectivity.

Discussion of Other Positive Results from Project

The ConnectHome program was successful not only because we reached the goal but we helped establish an approach that was commended by HUD and the White House. Through managed

partnerships, many achievements were possible in our mission to help connect the resident of Housing Authority of Los Angeles. Some examples are:

1. *Digital Literacy Encouragement* - Through the ConnectHome L.A program, all participating households received a two-hour digital literacy training course. Many participants were encouraged to take computer classes outside of this program to build on their new knowledge.
2. *Meaningful Partnerships* - Our program partner human-I-T collaborated with REDF, an organization whose mission is to create job opportunities for those who face obstacles in their community and everyday life. human-I-T was responsible for six at-risk youth, all who were trained on how to fully refurbish a computer system. This partnership taught the youth valuable skills that would help them build a career pathway.
3. *Becoming Part of The Community* - Some of the most meaningful moments were during the distribution events. Hundreds of residents lined up with their children as they waited their turn to pick up their hotspot and desktop. These households, especially children, were excited to be able to have their own internet connection and a computer at home. All volunteers, staff members were part of an initiative that is all about leveling the playing field so that all children have access to the tools to help them thrive.

Impacts of the Project

One of the most positive results from this grant has been the program's impact on the individuals who received the equipment. The following are some comments they shared with us:

Virginia G.

Virginia is grateful to the ConnectHome program because she has been able to assist her daughter in her homework and other school work. Before the ConnectHome program, her oldest daughter paid for the computer and the internet connection, however, after she moved away the family could no longer afford the connection leaving her 11-year-old daughter with no access. Through the ConnectHome program, she can now provide those necessary tools for her daughter and save money in the process. Her daughter is now able to keep up with her classmates since she can take complete her schoolwork at home without spending extra time at school or at a library. Virginia is grateful that she has been able to participate in this program and hopes to remain a participant as long as her daughter is in school.

Patsy A.

Patsy and her two kids are extremely grateful to the ConnectHome program. The program has been incredibly helpful to her family because she has been able to save money and better her children's education. Before the program, Patsy paid \$50 dollars a month on internet connection but she did not have a computer. Without a computer she only had her cell phone to access the internet; she was unable to access the internet with ease and her children only had access to internet through their school or at the local library. Aside from being able to save money by not having to spend it on an internet bill, she has found valuable coupons for groceries and other necessary items for her home.

Patsy is also able to search for jobs and access her email, all things that were difficult to do without access to a computer at home. Additionally, she is able to assist in her children's education by downloading educational programs for both her son and daughter, ages 5 and 7. Now they are able to take home the programs they use at school and receive extra help from their mom. Overall, Patsy is very happy with the internet and service she has received through ConnectHome.

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

The two main shortfalls with the ConnectHome program were limiting circumstances regarding the internet service providers and the attendance to the digital literacy training classes.

- In the ConnectHome Los Angeles pilot, qualifying households were required to attend a digital literacy training course in order to participate in the program and receive free internet for four years and a computer system. Although the classes were hosted on the weekends to ensure most households could participate, there were various reasons why some households were not able to take the training. Therefore, our number of the actual participating household was less than the number of those who showed interest in the program. HACLA offered additional training sessions for those households who were not able to take advantage of the distribution and training that took place at the participating sites.
- When connecting the households to free internet, one internet provider needed to have a strong signal in 5 of the Housing Authority of Los Angeles sites. Finding an internet provider that could service all areas was difficult. Once an internet provider was selected, multiple devices needed to be tested at all sites to ensure all households would have coverage. There are signal issues that can only be addressed by the ISP.

Discuss Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

- Keeping in mind that due to work, school, and other personal reasons many households could not attend a scheduled digital literacy class, we ensured that all sites had more than one digital literacy class available at various times. We also understood that not everyone would have transportation available to get to the training and transfer the devices back home; that is why we hosted the training on-site to increase our chances of attendance.
- In attempting to accommodate our participant's schedule, we made sure all interested households were registered at least two weeks in advance. Informing the households in advance of the dates and times they would need to save in their calendar increased our participation outcome. As our last attempt to make the program available to all qualifying households, make up classes were held at the end of the program to give those who had missed the training on their housing site a final chance to adopt the services and devices provided by ConnectHome L.A.

- The Housing Authority I.T. team visited each site to test different internet devices. During the testing phase, they ensured that throughout the housing sites LTE coverage was available by one provider. After the visits, two hotspots on the Sprint network were determined to be the best options. Human-I-T tested both devices on the desktop computers the participants would be receiving and made its recommendation to the HACLA I.T. team.
- After choosing one device that would be distributed at all sites, a protocol was created to handle any issues that should arise. Based on the experience of our partner, human-I-T, we decided it would be best to provide tech support to all recipients. human-I-T created a direct number where recipients could call and receive free tech support for 6 months after they received their devices. Most issues were handled with ease since all the distributions were uniformed.

IV. Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Build a system and have a team available to handle large amounts of incoming calls - At the beginning of the program, flyers containing information about the program and a phone number were provided to all qualifying households. Calls quickly began to flood the phone systems but there was not a big enough team to field all the calls and provide the information needed to all the callers. Some did not receive a call back soon enough and might have lost interest in the program.

Lesson 2: Basic tech support instructions for ConnectHome participants - It would have been helpful for the participants to have received instructional manuals on basic troubleshooting information for their hotspot. Tips on how to obtain the best signal in their home and how best to deal with buffering and disconnections, navigating through the menus to find WiFi name and password, how to manually reset on their hotspots would be good topics to cover as part of the initial orientation.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for Expanding the Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

Recommendation 1: While the ConnectHome program was very successful in the Los Angeles area, there are many households who remain part of the digital divide. As ISP's start to offer more affordable plans targeted at low-income households, a federal/state subsidy to offset the cost of connection could be a valuable tool in decreasing the gap.

Recommendation 2: Work with internet providers to offer high-speed internet throughout all serviced areas. Our experience with trying to find the best internet provider that would offer high-speed internet to hundreds of household at a low-cost was challenging. Many internet providers require

lengthy approval and installation processes that complicate the connection to the hundreds of households we aim to serve.

Recommendations to Close The Digital Divide Based On Your Experience

Recommendation 1: Find a way to educate to population on the importance of having accessible internet and technology available to all in need.

Recommendation 2: Engage all ISP's to offer affordable plans to low-income households.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Recommendation 1: **NONE**

V. Grant Agreement Requirements

Purchased Equipment

There was no equipment purchased using grant funds.

All of the CETF grants funds were expended.