



TO: HACLA Board of Commissioners
FROM: Jenny Scanlin, Chief Development Officer *Jenny Scanlin*
THROUGH: Douglas Guthrie, President and CEO *Douglas Guthrie*
DATE: October 27, 2022
SUBJECT: **Digital Inclusion Initiative Update**

The work Strategic Initiatives undertakes to improve Digital Inclusion is informed by ***People Strategies 6 & 7: Agency to Resident Communication & Enhance Resident access to education opportunities, workforce readiness training and skills development.*** The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (“HACLA”) remains focused on digital equity and inclusion efforts by supporting broadband adoption of internet service options made available to residents at a discounted rate and ensuring that families are digitally literate to access needed services. We have three unique program areas where this work is primarily housed.

Program Area 1: Digital Ambassadors.

Initiated as a pilot under the Community Health Worker demonstration grant at Nickerson Gardens, the Digital Ambassadors promote digital connectivity in a peer-to-peer model. In partnership with EveryoneOn, a national organization with a mission to unlock opportunity by connecting families in underserved communities to affordable internet service, computer access, and digital skills training opportunities, our collaboration has leveraged their resources to provide trainings to HACLA’s Digital Ambassadors, who in turn provide digital inclusion support, and technical assistance to residents across HACLA’s public housing sites.

In 2022 HACLA initiated its second cohort of the Digital Ambassador Program, training over 30 residents to date and placing them across public housing sites to offer connection to digital access programs and training on devices, and broadband connectivity. Digital Ambassadors complete a total of 20 hours of training over a six-week period and receive basic digital skills training; obtaining a free tablet upon enrollment. This year Digital Ambassadors continue the promotion of Starry Internet, hotspot usage, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) (formerly the Emergency Broadband Benefit program), and broader use of the internet for goods and resources available to residents.

We are working to expand this program to include other HACLA properties and communities as well as the provide trained Digital Ambassadors with additional work hours beyond the hundred hours the program currently encompasses. This would allow HACLA to have a more dynamic program and provide ambassadors the opportunity to provide deeper levels of support to residents. The Strategic Initiatives Unit has applied for grant funding for this program expansion and hopes to be able to initiate this work in 2023.

Program Area 2: Broadband Access.

In Quarter 1, HACLA sent out notices via mail to all 1,500 households who received **T-Mobile** Wi-Fi devices that their device costs would no longer be covered by CARES Act. T-Mobile offered to help residents register for the Affordable Connectivity Plan (ACP) and continue use of the devices. HACLA donated the devices to each household, providing residents with the option to continue their hotspot service at a discounted rate.

HACLA's internet service partner, **Starry Internet**, has completed network installation and launched internet service to eleven HACLA public housing sites as of Quarter 3. As of October 2022, adoption rates for Starry Internet are averaging 53% (2,701 households out of 5,143). Overall, 90% of HACLA Public Housing households have been enrolled by Starry in Affordable Connectivity Plan (ACP), reducing their household internet cost to \$0.00 per month. Starry recently completed the wireless Internet infrastructure at Ramona Gardens and Gonzaque Village will follow. Also, Starry is in the process of obtaining the necessary permits to begin network installation at Rancho San Pedro as the final site in the contract to receive Starry Internet Services.

Below are resident adoption rates at existing Starry sites as of October 6, 2022.

Community	Launch Date	Units	Net Subs	% Adoption	% ACP Enrolled
Mar Vista Gardens	6/9/20	601	251	42%	69%
Imperial Courts	10/30/20	498	217	44%	84%
Nickerson Gardens	12/11/20	1,066	859	81%	69%
Pueblo Del Rio	1/20/21	670	257	38%	84%
Jordan Downs	2/4/21	535	128	24%	80%
Estrada Courts	6/7/21	414	194	47%	78%
William Mead	6/17/21	449	202	45%	97%
Pico Gardens/Las Casitas	7/15/21	298	195	65%	96%
Avalon Gardens	10/18/21	164	72	44%	94%
San Fernando Gardens	6/9/22	448	326	73%	99%
Ramona Gardens	9/15/22	610	214	35%	98%
Total		5,143	2,701	53%	90%

As of Quarter 3, HACLA and **Spectrum Internet** services conducted an assessment across sites to determine the condition of their internet services at all Public Housing sites. Spectrum will be investing in infrastructure improvements at six sites to improve internet connectivity to provide residents with additional broadband options. Lastly, HACLA has executed an agreement with **WeLink**, who will be providing free high-speed internet services to all Estrada Courts residents courtesy of Angel Foundation (Will.I.Am). They have surveyed the site and are anticipated to have the network installed by the end of 2022.

Program Area 3: Computer Lab Upgrades.

In 2022, HACLA committed \$850,000 to upgrade computer labs at public housing and asset management sites – moving the sites from static, antiquated labs to updated Lending Libraries and Resource Centers offering device lending, tech classes, zoom rooms, and other resources. In order to begin work on this significant project, Strategic Initiatives staff developed overall budgets for computer lab rehabilitation projects for 13 sites with a total estimated cost of \$3.6 million. This provided staff with a target for fundraising purposes and allows us to develop strategic asks to potential donors. To date we have been successful in garnering commitments from partners to help cover costs for nine of the 13 Computer Lab sites. These funds will not cover full costs but will assist to get projects off the ground. These commitments include \$340,000 in cash from the City of Los Angeles and Congressman Gomez’s office to complement our investment as well as in-kind donations of equipment, internet connectivity services and labor from Starry and Microsoft.

In the 3rd Quarter, staff released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Architect/Engineering Services to provide architect and engineering services to develop permit-ready drawings for each lab renovation and a detailed cost estimate. Staff are negotiating a final contract and hope to have a firm working on plans before the end of the 4th quarter. HACLA staff will be using the balance of FY2022 and FY2023 to continue fundraising efforts and heading into a schedule for initiating renovations of each lab.

HACLA AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS

All American Cities Award

HACLA won the **All-American Cities Award** based on our Learning Pod / Connectivity Model Programs in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) that was implemented during the pandemic. With a theme of “Housing as a Platform for Early School Success and Equitable Learning Recovery,” Los Angeles was awarded the designation as a 2022 All-American City by the National Civic League and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR). This award is specifically designed to showcase community-driven efforts to promote early school success and equitable learning recovery from the consequences of the pandemic, while featuring housing as a critical platform in supporting the recovery process. As Los Angeles continues to grow in its ethnic and economic diversity, HACLA has continued to identify and meet the needs of residents throughout the city. HACLA’s partnerships with the Mayor’s Office of the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Los Angeles Public Library, Starry Internet, and Communities in Schools was recognized as a model in support of educational enrichment and digital equity for our youth.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

HACLA hosted Commissioner Geoffrey Starks from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at Nickerson Gardens and Jordan Downs in May 2022 and shared its strategy for broadband connectivity during the pandemic, including highlighting our Community Health Worker Program and Digital Ambassador Program. Commissioner Starks and his staff learned about HACLA’s digital inclusion efforts in partnership with Starry, including the use of Learning Pods implemented during the pandemic. HACLA’s work inspired Commissioner Starks, who ensured

the FCC set aside community engagement funds to help low-income households better access ACP benefits (up to \$30/mo free internet) and invited HACLA and Starry to participate on a national call announcing this investment.

Housing Is Summit and Broadband & Digital Inclusion Summit

HACLA staff presented on our Digital Ambassador / Connectivity Programs at the Housing Is Summit virtual conference, was invited by the Chicago Housing Authority to present in Chicago on our Digital Inclusion best practices with our partner SoCal CAN Project SOAR and has recently been asked to present at HUD's Broadband and Digital Inclusion Summit in October.

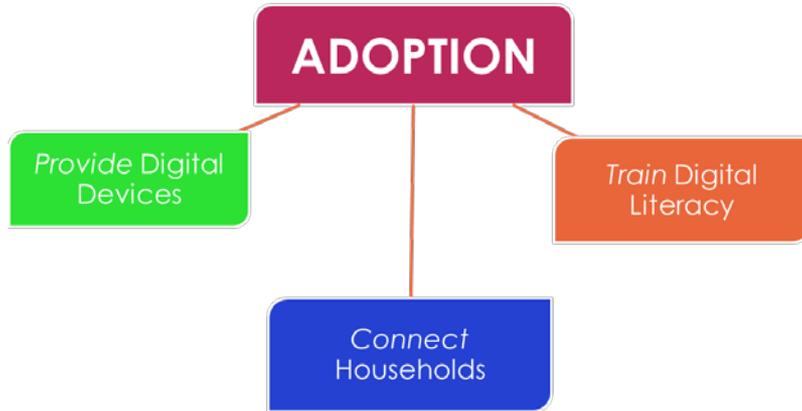
HACLA continues to be at the forefront of efforts to provide digital inclusion and equity to its residents and looks forward to expanding its partnerships and reach as we head into FY2023.

Strategic Initiatives Unit Oral Update Digital Inclusion Initiatives Update

Vision Plan: Investing in People

Board of Commissioners Meeting – October 27, 2022

Bridging the digital divide to enhance equity and access among residents residing in communities served by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles



Connect Home Campaign

- Originally started as a PILOT at select public housing developments
- Launch of the Digital Ambassadors Program via the Community Health Worker Program
- Broadband Connectivity + COVID-19 education + Telehealth Promotion + COVID-19 Testing & Vaccines

SCALING EFFORTS

In 2022, HACLA initiated its second cohort of the Digital Ambassador Program, training over 30 residents to date and placing them across public housing sites to offer connection to digital access programs and training on devices, and broadband connectivity.

- Completed a total of **20 hours of training** over a six-week period receiving basic digital skills training
- Provided a free tablet upon enrollment
- Spend **80 hours of work** in their community: Promotion of Starry Internet, hotspot usage, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) (formerly the Emergency Broadband Benefit program) sign-ups, train resident on how to access internet and basic computer skills.



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Scheduled Installs:

Rancho San Pedro

- obtaining the necessary City of LA permits

Gonzaque Village

- Need Wireless Internet infrastructure



Resident Testimonial Video

- In FY2022, HACLA committed **\$850,000 to upgrade computer labs** at public housing and asset management sites – moving the sites from static, antiquated labs to updated Lending Libraries and Resource Centers offering device lending, tech classes, zoom rooms, and other resources.
- In Q1, staff developed **overall budgets for computer lab rehab project** for 13 sites (total estimated cost: \$3.6 million)
- In Q3, staff released a **Request for Proposal (RFP) for Architect/Engineering Services** to redesign and cost estimate each lab renovation.
- In Q4, staff will release a **Request for Proposal (RFP) for IT Services** for ongoing support for equipment and software in each lab.

- Staff have received commitments from partners to help cover costs for up to **9 of the 13 Computer Lab sites**. These funds will not cover full costs but will assist to get projects off the ground.
 - **\$200,000 from Mayor's Fund** will cover Mar Vista, Ramona Gardens and SF Gardens
 - Starry/Microsoft sponsored the **renovation of Avalon Gardens** in September 2022 and sites to follow in 2023 are **Nickerson Gardens and Imperial Courts**.
 - **\$140,000 from Congressman Jimmy Gomez** for Estrada Courts, Pico Gardens, Ramona Gardens, William Mead



Scheduled Computer Labs Upgrades in 2023-2024:

- Starry & Microsoft: Nickerson Gardens, Imperial Courts
- City of LA: Mar Vista, Ramona Gardens, San Fernando Gardens

Funding for Expansion of Digital Ambassador Program:

- CA for All Grant Application / Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity
- California Emerging Technology Fund
- California Public Utilities Commission

Digital Devices and Increased Broadband Access for Residents:

- 157 Laptops donation by Farmers Insurance for students
- Lending Libraries (Tech Device loaner program)
- Spectrum infrastructure upgrades across PH sites



- HACLA won the **All-America City Award** based on our Broadband Connectivity/Learning Pod & COVID 19 education strategy in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) that was implemented during the pandemic.
- HACLA hosted **Commissioner Geoffrey Starks from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** at Nickerson Gardens in May 2022 and shared its strategy for broadband connectivity during the pandemic, including highlighting our Community Health Worker Program and Digital Ambassador Program and advocated for the elimination of barriers for the Affordable Connectivity Program.



Questions