dcConnectHome

Overview

About ConnectHome

ConnectHome is a new initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with the mission to narrow the digital divide for children and families living in HUD-assisted housing. ConnectHome is the next step in a national effort to expand access and use of high speed broadband and builds on the efforts of the Obama Administration's ConnectED initiative to connect 99% of K-12 students to high speed internet in classrooms and libraries. The demonstration looks to reach over 275,000 low-income households nationwide, including nearly 200,000 children, with the support they need to access the internet at home. The District of Columbia is one of 28 communities nationwide selected by HUD to participate in the ConnectHome demonstration program.

Technology is the new equalizer and is an essential asset for families as they effectively navigate the road to the middle class. We are committed to ensuring that children and families in low-income households have both the access to information and opportunities afforded by connectivity and use of high speed broadband.

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Work is already underway locally to bridge the digital divide for low-income families in the District of Columbia. In 2010 the District received more than $25 million in federal grants from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) to expand the city's digital infrastructure, upgrade public technology access locations, collect broadband data, and encourage digital inclusion through education and training. The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) used two of the grants to create Connect.DC, the city's digital inclusion program, to focus the District's endeavors to bridge the digital divide.

dcConnectHome will enhance existing efforts with a focus on the District of Columbia Housing Authority's (DCHA) public and assisted housing households. Collaboration across all sectors of the community is an essential factor for success of the demonstration program. The Office of the Mayor, OCTO, HUD and DCHA are working together to build upon existing relationships and develop new ones with a diverse set of stakeholders to bring broadband access, technical training, digital literacy programs, and devices to DCHA households.

Broadband adoption rates differ significantly along socio-economic, geographic and ethnic/racial lines. In the District of Columbia, while the broadband adoption rate has increased to over 75% in recent years, adoption rates in low-income communities lag behind. In Wards 5, 7, and 8, where over half of the City's public housing households are located, the broadband adoption rate is less than 65% percent compared to 85% in the other five wards.

Goals

dcConnect Home is preparing a plan, with input from key stakeholders, that details our path to achieving the following goals:

1. Connectivity—making sure households have a signal to connect to and available low-cost/no-cost internet service to make the connection
2. Devices—providing the necessary equipment needed to access the internet (i.e. laptops, tablets and desk tops)
3. Digital Literacy/Engagement—understanding and using devices, software and available on-line resources
4. Content—connecting households to internet-based information related to education, workforce development, etc.

A strong evaluation component will also be created to assess our success and lessons learned.

Collaboration as the Driving Force

Stakeholder commitments based on their respective areas of interest will be the driving force in achieving these goals. To date, the following partners have made national commitments to the ConnectHome demonstration program and we have been working to leverage their resources locally with dcConnectHome:

- Apploi
- Age of Learning (ABC Mouse)
- American Library Association
- Best Buy
- Boys and Girls Clubs of America
- College Board
- DC Public Library
- GitHub
- Public Broadcast System
- Sprint

In addition, the following are some of the local partners that are members of the dcConnectHome community:

- Byte Back
- Code for Progress
- Project Reboot
- United Planning Organization
- Keys to Canaan
- Academy of Hope
- Operation HOPE
- LIFT DC
- Connected Living

dcConnectHome looks to expand the partner circle with organizations that have a vested interest in positively impacting the life outcomes of families and children living in the City's public and assisted housing communities.