Advancing Digital Inclusion
Digital Inclusion Research Forum
October 13, 2023
Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas
The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Federal Reserve System.
What We'll Cover

What is the Advancing Digital Inclusion initiative?

What did the Dallas Fed learn through this initiative?

Where can researchers plug in to assist communities?
The Dallas Fed’s Start with Digital Inclusion
Goals
1. Each community achieves a sustainable strategy for connecting all residents to the internet.
2. Share lessons learned with policymakers & other communities to help advance digital inclusion across the region and nation.

Key Barriers
1. Dearth of leadership capacity/ collaboration
2. Infrastructure/resources
3. Technical know-how
Direct Support to Communities in Pilot Cohort

Each community receives the following assistance:

- **Broadband Action Plan** that include stakeholder engagement, market assessment, business model analysis, network design, financial model, consensus building
- Preparation for securing **competitive public grants** (ARPA, etc.) to fund the plan
- Identifying appropriate **governance structure**;
- Professional **leadership development** for local champions
- Cross-site peer **learning network** to tackle shared challenges and spread promising practices, seed collaboration across communities
Community Overview

South Dallas

El Paso

Ector

Dona Ana
What’s on a Community’s Mind, A Timeline

Starting Point
Community partners decided to work together and form a coalition. Starting entities: economic development orgs., school district, nonprofit, county

Help they needed

- Convince people this is an issue and build buy in
- Identify assets (horizontal and vertical) and prioritize areas
- Collect community information

Quick facts about the Digital Divide, its effect on the community, and the potential cost of not addressing it
Help with collecting and centralizing data (GIS)
Create and assist with a community driven needs assessment
Focus Point

Communities needed to decide early on, who’s focusing on what and how they will staff, fund, and evaluate their progress.

The speed of their work depended on:
- No. of dedicated staff
- No. of dedicated volunteers
- Technical expert available
- Startup dollars

Help they needed

Deciding focus areas
- Examples of successful programs and how to implement them
- Research available for specific populations

Submitting grants
- Identifying grant opportunities
- Grant specific data
- Grant writers / reviewers

What’s on a Community’s Mind, A Timeline
If a community can successfully coalesce their partners and are seeing progress, evaluating and expanding their work is their next move.

Help they needed

**Evaluating and measuring progress**
- Identify metrics they should keep track of
- Help create a platform that they can utilize

**Being exposed to new ideas in the field**
- Share tools and new research
- Invite them to digital inclusion events for exposure
Community Highlights

New Mexico Department of Information Technology coordinated with Doña Ana Broadband to produce a Community Broadband Survey report where 3,000+ individuals participated, including 1,475 residents who did not have internet.

Ector ISD’s County Home Connectivity Survey found that 1 out of 5 ECISD students rarely or never has reliable internet access at home. These students are located all over the county - not only in specific, remote pockets.

Dallas’ Affordable Connectivity Program dashboard digital divide quick facts and provides two maps that bring spatial context for both the digital divide and ACP enrollment numbers within the City of Dallas.
The range of Borderplex Connect’s (El Paso) community partners positioned them to submit a **holistic infrastructure grant** (included information about opportunity youth, loss from missed health appointments, etc.)

The CARDBoard Project in South Dallas collects data from its program participants that provides context about who they are serving to (1) **guide their work and (2) to use in grant writing and storytelling**.

Mamacitas Ciberneticas completed a digital skills community needs assessment that is **shaping local and state decision making**.
Community Highlights

Harris County successfully challenged the FCC maps based off quality of life and ACS data to identify regions that would be challenged.

Borderplex Connect (Dona Ana) is coordinating with the New Mexico Department of Information Technology to centralize data around colonias and challenge the FCC maps.

UTEP’s Hunt Institute assessed El Paso County to determine the potential regional impacts of broadband service.
Areas Where Researchers Can Support Communities

- Map challenging
- Technical support
- Data Support for grants and story telling
- Advocates
- Evaluations

Reminder

- Include actionable steps to go along with research findings
- Make information easy to access and quick to use
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