

# San Antonio and Greater Bexar County Community Digital Equity Plan and Roadmap

Initiative Details: Affordable Housing

August 2021

# Disclaimer:

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The information found in this portal is intended for public use. It reflects work produced and provided by the SA Digital Connects team and community members starting in January 2021 to the present.

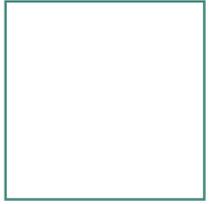
Some information will reflect the moment in time when the work was done. Data, funding, maps and assumptions may fluctuate in the everchanging digital ecosystem.

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# Initiative Details

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# Affordable Housing



# Nature of the problem

## Recall | San Antonio and Greater Bexar County residents face a significant digital divide...



20% (390K) of San Antonio/Bexar residents lack access to broadband



...With significant differences across districts, e.g.,

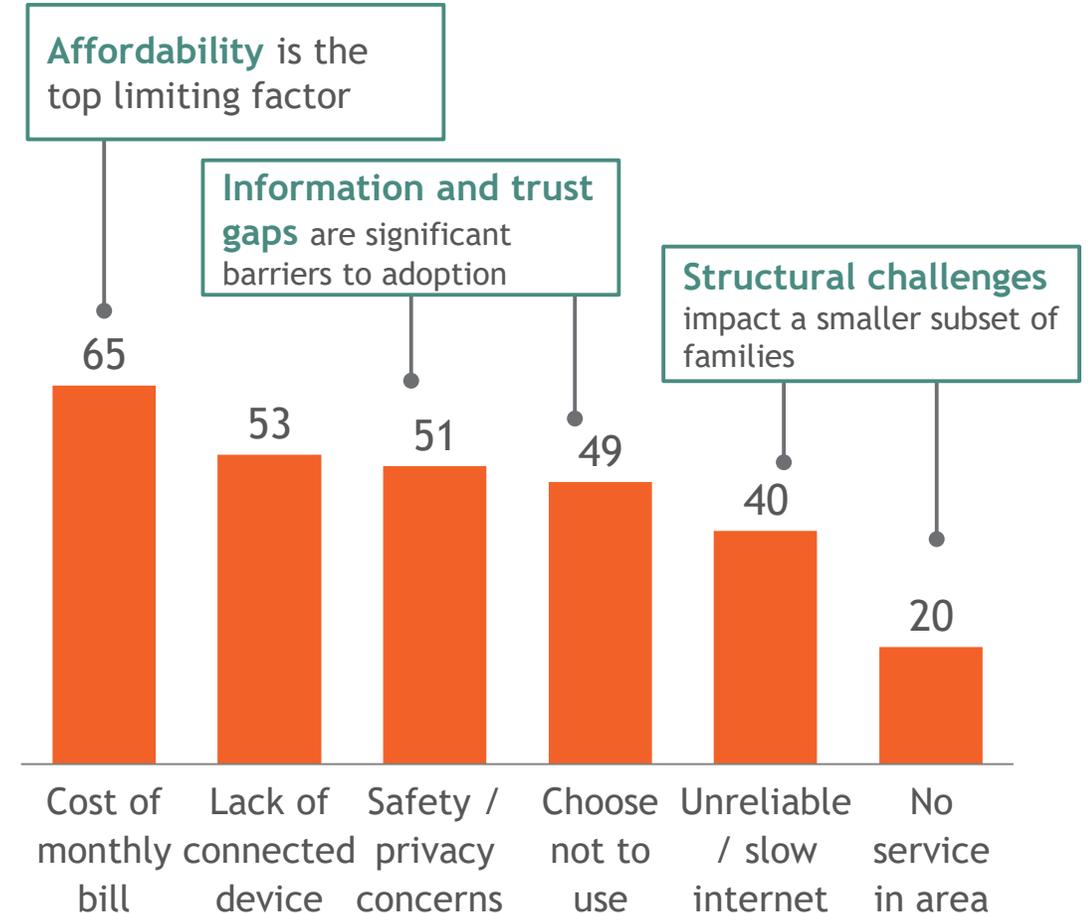
- District 5: 38% lack access
- District 9: 6% lack access



10% (195K) of San Antonio/Bexar residents lack access to devices

## ...Driven by several factors

Reasons for not using internet (% of respondents)



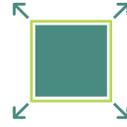
## Affordability and adoption are the greatest barriers to access; extent of availability challenges varies by source and service quality

Category	Sources	# and % of households	Considerations
Availability: Unserved	Broadband Now	5K (0.8% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unserved by 25 mbps coverage</li> </ul>
	SASpeakUp <sup>1</sup>	27K (4% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported not having internet because there was no service in their area</li> </ul>
Availability: Underserved	Broadband Now	9K (1.4% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unserved by 100+ mbps coverage</li> </ul>
	SASpeakUp	53K (8% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported not having internet because service was slow or unreliable</li> </ul>
	Broadband Now	201K (30.1% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unserved by 1 gig coverage</li> </ul>
Affordability	SASpeakUp	87K (13% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported not having internet because could not afford the monthly bill</li> </ul>
	ACS data	211K (33% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% with income less than \$50K, proxy income for hhd. of 4 eligible for the National School Lunch Program</li> </ul>
Adoption	SA SpeakUp	67-100K (10-15% of HHDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported not having internet service because of data &amp; privacy concerns or chose not to<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>

2. Survey asked if residents had access to the internet. 20% reported a lack of access. The survey then asked those without access "why". 1. 51% of respondents without access said they had security or privacy concerns; 49% of respondents without access said it was because they chose not to. Assumed 0-50% overlap



# Comparison city research and local efforts

*Preliminary*Key themes from  
affordable housing

Majority of successful public housing internet access projects occur in waves, starting with specific developments and building out

- *San Francisco's initial attempt to connect all city residents in 2018 failed due to high price tag of \$1.9B*



One strategy has been to team with prominent ISPs to provide free internet for limited time, then move to discounted rates going forward

- *Los Angeles teamed with provider Starry Connect, who promised 6 months of free internet for four prominent public housing developments, then would move to a discounted pricing plan*



Public housing internet initiatives are often coupled with public school initiatives to make sure students have ability to learn remotely

- *Tulsa invested \$5.6M in providing high-speed Wi-Fi to Tulsa Housing Authority complexes and free internet to 20,000 public school families for next year*



Important to also provide digital literacy programs so residents know how to navigate the internet given their new access

- *Chicago and Comcast partnered to not only provide affordable internet to public housing, but also to hold digital literacy lessons at public libraries*

# Other city examples: Affordable housing (I/II)

City / County	Stakeholders	Date	How its funded	Why did they do it	Description of actions
Chicago	Chicago Housing Authority, Comcast	2016, Expanded 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comcast investing over \$280M in this in other initiatives</li> <li>Users still pay \$9.95 / month</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allowed all HUD-assisted homes (public housing etc) can participate in Comcast's "Internet Essentials" affordable program for low-income families</li> <li>Also will provide digital literacy training at CHI public library</li> <li>Internet Essentials also provided 47K+ subsidized computers for under \$150</li> </ul>
Los Angeles	Mayor's Office of Budget and Innovation, Housing Authority of LA, Starry internet, Microsoft	October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starry connect is paying for much of it, with help from Microsoft partnership</li> <li>Unclear how much Mayors office and HACLA are contributing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internet access is now a necessity specifically with COVID and remote work and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will deliver 6 months of free internet access to residents in four public housing communities (~9K residents)</li> <li>After initial phase, service will continue for \$15/month</li> </ul>
San Francisco	City of SF Department of Technology, Mayor office of Housing and Development, Monkeybrains (internet provider)	August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mini grants from the Age Strong Commission and Department of Innovation and Technology (250K total)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One in eight residents lack high speed internet</li> <li>One in seven lack basic digital literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched "Fiber to Housing" program, providing 1,500 low-income families with access to free-high speed internet</li> <li>Leverages existing municipal fiber resources staff expertise and private sector partnerships (MonkeyBrains)</li> </ul>
New York	NYCHA, 5 internet vendors	May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five vendors will charge reduced monthly servicing costs to ten developments</li> <li>Three developments will get for free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To end the digital divide that has become more apparent during Covid-19 pandemic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City executed license agreements with five internet service providers</li> <li>Plan to offer free and low cost high speed broadband to up to 30K residents in NYCHA housing developments</li> </ul>

Source: <https://www.thecha.org/news-media/news/comcast-and-chicago-housing-authority-collaborate-close-digital-divide-91000-hud>  
[https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press\\_room/press\\_releases/2019/august/ComcastExpansion.html](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2019/august/ComcastExpansion.html); <https://www.lamayor.org/mayor-garcetti-announces-free-internet-access-residents-four-public-housing-communities>; <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/338-21/recovery-all-us-new-york-city-free-low-cost-broadband-access-13-nycha>;  
<https://sfmayor.org/article/san-francisco-fiber-housing-program-provides-internet-low-income-families>

# Other city examples: Affordable housing (II/II)

City / County	Stakeholders	Date	How its funded	Why did they do it	Description of actions
Tulsa	Governor, Mayor, Tulsa public schools, Impact Tulsa	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$5.6 of State of Oklahoma's allocation of COVID relief funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% of Tulsa families have no internet access at home</li> <li>1 in 3 households don't have broadband needed for virtual learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internet access funding has three focuses</li> <li>\$2.7M will provide high-speed reliable to Tulsa Housing Authority complexes, partnership with Cox to provide free internet for 3 years</li> <li>\$2.4M for internet access to 20K public school families</li> <li>\$500K will fund internet access navigators thru non-profits</li> </ul>
Washington DC	DC Office of CTO, DC public schools, Office of State Superintendent	October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$3.3M of federal Cares act money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical for families to stay connected in virtual school term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 options</li> <li>One year of Comcast internet essentials paid for by DC Government if you have PK-12<sup>th</sup> grade student</li> <li>Up to \$50/month subsidy on internet, and one-time discount of up to \$100 for laptop</li> </ul>
San Jose	City of San Jose, California Emerging Tech Fund, Philanthropic donors	February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$24M funding, \$14M from public-private partnership with telecom companies, \$10M from philanthropic donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite being near Silicon valley, large portions of San Jose lack fast internet needed to get jobs or succeed in school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring broadband access to 50,000 low income housing over next decade</li> <li>Teach residents necessary digital skills to stay ahead and increase quality of life</li> </ul>

Source: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/press-room/officials-announce-internet-access-plan-for-tulsa-upcoming-programs-aimed-to-help-tulsans-impacted-by-covid-19/>; <https://www.techtogetherdc.com/internetforall>; <https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/02/12/san-jose-set-to-launch-new-fund-to-bring-home-internet-to-thousands-of-residents/>

## Overview of current SAHA efforts to expand Wi-Fi coverage

SAHA is in the process of expanding public access Wi-Fi to all their properties, focusing first on their “Big 3” campuses on the Westside covering a total of 9k residents at speeds ranging from 50 to 100 Mbps



### Progress achieved

SAHA has allocated \$4M for the project through a combination of multiple sources, including:

- City funding
- Federal funding via HUD(i.e., HUD)
- Prize winnings from an innovation competition featuring SAHA's unique solar mesh Wi-Fi network

SAHA has formed effective partnerships with Grande and Spectrum, who have been willing to engage to meet needs of low-income during the pandemic



### Ongoing challenges

The permitting process has slowed the desired pace up deployment for Wi-Fi network to other campuses

Infrastructure investment required goes beyond solely broadband infrastructure and includes renovations to buildings, many of which have outdated electrical wiring precluding long-term broadband solutions

Sustainability requires stable funding, which is not yet in place for the scope of work SAHA hopes to accomplish



# Recommendation

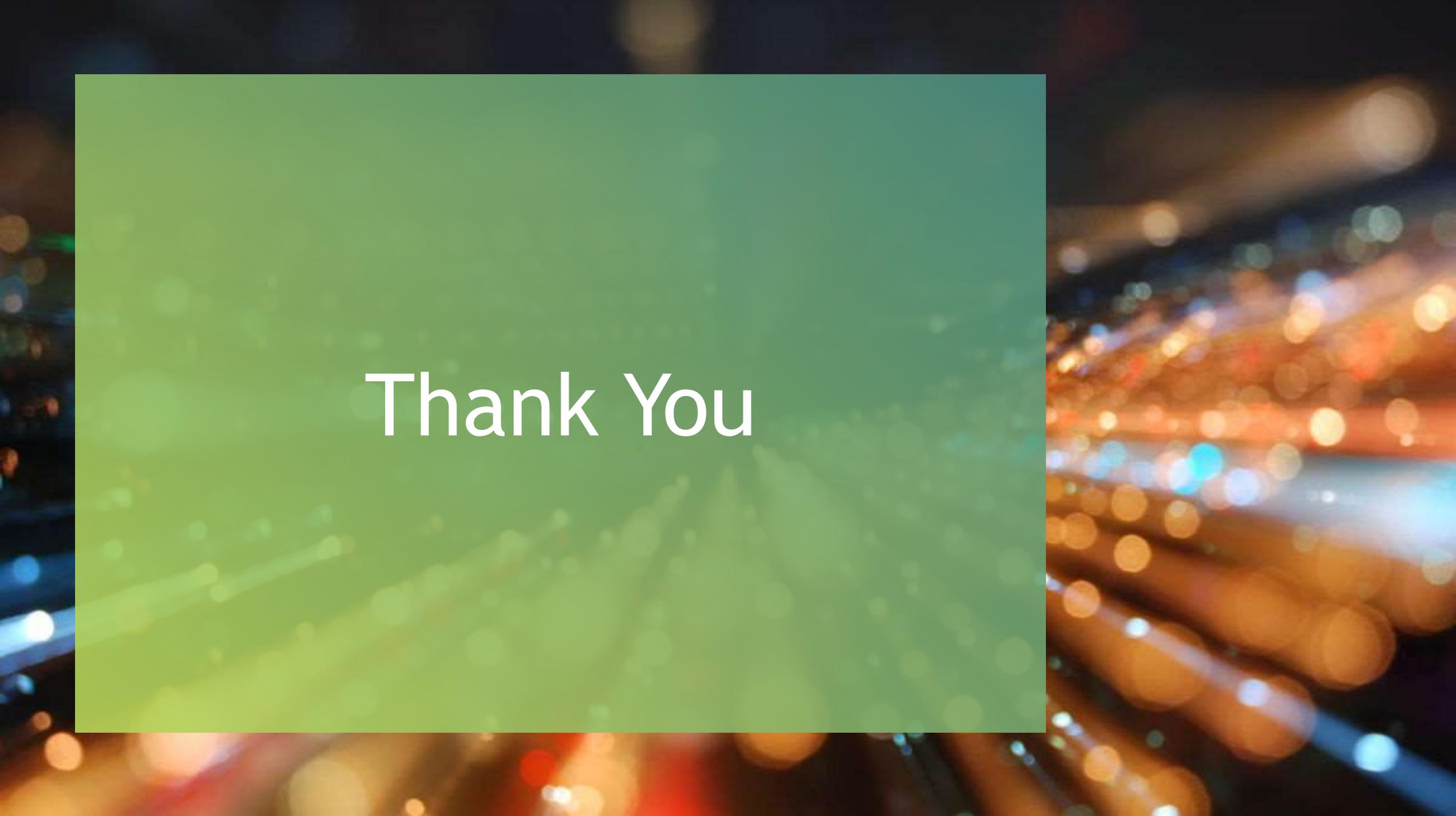
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## Affordable housing solutions

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### Detailed recommendations

- 2A **Determine required infrastructure upgrades needed to ensure wi-fi access for affordable housing**
  - Offer open public access internet to public housing campuses, including upgrades to older properties (e.g., modern electrical circuitry)
  - Establish other mechanisms to offer lower cost internet (e.g., subsidies, bulk device procurement) for individual household subscriptions
  - Utilize financial and policy levers to incentivize ISPs to participate in deployment (e.g., grants, cost sharing, demand aggregation)
  - Identify both current (e.g., ARPA, CARES) and ongoing (e.g., HUD) funding available to support public housing deployments
  
- 2B **Partner with other organizations to support residents across the full range of digital access needs (i.e., devices, digital literacy, adoption)**
  - Expand existing partnerships (e.g., Bibliotech, ConnectHome, Goodwill) to create shared pool of community resources that can drive adoption and increase digital literacy / skills support
  - Leverage housing community network to facilitate information sharing among organizations and device procurement for residents



Thank You