

## ConnectHomeUSA (CHUSA) Expansion

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **1. What is the CHUSA Program?**

CHUSA is HUD's signature digital inclusion program that assists Public Housing Authorities, Tribes, and Multifamily housing providers in narrowing the digital divide by addressing the three legs of the digital inclusion stool: digital devices, internet access, and digital skills. CHUSA was originally launched in 2015 to close the homework gap in twenty-eight pilot communities. Since 2015, 100 communities have participated in CHUSA, and the program has been recognized as an effective strategy at closing the digital divide.

#### **2. What does the CHUSA Expansion include?**

The CHUSA Expansion restructures and expands the program to 50-100 new communities. The restructuring establishes three tiers of participation:

- Tier 1: is reserved for communities that are new to digital inclusion and want to begin addressing the digital divide;
- Tier 2: is reserved for existing (or former) CHUSA communities that are interested in deepening their work to narrow the digital divide; and
- Tier 3: is for communities that have achieved significant results in promoting digital equity and closing the digital divide. Applications are not being solicited for this tier at this time. However, selected communities will be able to advance to this tier after reaching program-specific milestones.

#### **3. How do I determine which tier I am eligible for?**

It's easy! Tier 1 communities are communities that may be somewhat familiar with the concepts of digital equity or digital inclusion but may be unsure how to bridge the digital divide in their own communities. HUD is looking to accept between 50-100 new communities in this tier.

Tier 2 communities are reserved for existing CHUSA communities or communities that participated in the past. There is no limit to the number of communities that HUD will accept in this tier. Tier 3 communities will not be accepted at this time. Instead, Tier 3 will be reserved for communities that achieve key benchmarks along their CHUSA journey.

#### **4. How do I apply to the CHUSA Program?**

To apply for the CHUSA Program please submit a Letter of Intent that responds to the criteria outlined in the [Federal Register Notice](#) for the tier to which you are applying. Please send your Letter of Intent to [CHUSA\\_applications@hud.gov](mailto:CHUSA_applications@hud.gov). Please also register for the webinar the

CHUSA team will host to explain the application process. The webinar will be held on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024 from 1-2 p.m. eastern. [Click here to register.](#)

## **5. When is the application deadline?**

Applications are open from December 19, 2023, to February 15, 2024.

## **What type of community/organization is eligible to apply to join this new phase of CHUSA?**

Public Housing Agencies, tribes/Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs), and Multifamily owners/operators are all eligible to apply.

## **6. What is the benefit of participating in CHUSA?**

CHUSA is recognized by digital inclusion practitioners as an effective approach to addressing the digital divide in HUD-assisted communities. By participating in CHUSA, staff from selected communities will:

- Join a national community of practice,
- Have access to a wide range of technical assistance products such as newsletters, webinars on timely topics, toolkits and the annual CHUSA Summit that brings speakers from a wide range of organizations associated with digital inclusion.
- Enjoy support from HUD in understanding the requirements of and accessing federal funding programs for broadband such as the Affordable Connectivity Program, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, the Digital Equity Act (DEA) and other programs. HUD staff communicate regularly with communities to inform them about the latest federal policy and funding updates.
- CHUSA communities will also have access to special offers by private-sector stakeholders that are committed to their success.
- Provides you an organizing platform upon which to build your digital inclusion efforts.
- Finally, HUD's nonprofit partner, [EducationSuperHighway](#), can serve as a resource in a variety of ways, including providing tools and thought partnership for communities in the design of ACP adoption and multifamily housing connectivity solutions.

## **7. What is a Quality-of-Life partner?**

A quality-of-life partner can be a community college, a workforce agency, a local employer, or any other type of organization that can support residents' attainment of additional skills that lead to improved employment, health outcomes, educational attainment. Applying with the support of a quality-of-life partner is only applicable to Tier 2 communities. This is because they have already addressed the digital inclusion stool. Now, we are asking them to build on their past work to create pathways to greater opportunity for their residents.

## **8. What are the elements of a successful CHUSA Community?**

While no two communities are identical, those that have experienced success have the following elements in common:

- Leadership support;
- A dedicated staff person; A strong relationship with municipal government/programs;
- Committed local partners; and
- Robust resident engagement.

For this reason, the [Federal Register notice](#) outlines specific criteria that an applicant's Letter of Intent should address corresponding to the tier to which they are applying.

## **9. If I have additional questions, who should I reach out to?**

Please reach out to [connecthome@hud.gov](mailto:connecthome@hud.gov) with any questions about applying to the expansion. But applications (Letters of Intent) should be sent to [CHUSA\\_applications@hud.gov](mailto:CHUSA_applications@hud.gov)