Setting up your initiative to succeed

> "In real estate, they say it's location, location, location.
> In ConnectHome, it's collaboration, collaboration, collaboration."
>
> —*Kim Cole, Director of Strategic Planning, DC Housing Authority*

Public housing agencies provide essential leadership in confronting the digital divide. But they cannot make significant progress acting alone. They need partners to help them understand what's needed, assess options, fill gaps, and ultimately implement sustainable solutions.

Collaboration is crucial, and it is **at the heart** of ConnectHome.

Identifying partners

To develop a deeper understanding of the resources and opportunities in your community, ask questions such as:

→ Who currently provides high-speed Internet to residents and businesses in your area, and at what prices and speeds?

→ Is your community located within the service footprint of ConnectHome's national Internet Service Provider stakeholders AT&T, Comcast, or Cox, which offer heavily discounted Internet plans for approximately $10 per month to eligible households?

→ Which organizations can provide discounted or refurbished computers to residents in need?

→ Where are digital literacy trainings currently offered—such as community colleges and libraries—and what do they offer?

In addition to local partners, engage national partners, including ConnectHome's official stakeholders. National-level partners tend to contribute in different ways than partners rooted in your community, and you can use the strengths of **both** to achieve greater results.

For example, when national ConnectHome stakeholder GitHub wanted to offer digital literacy classes in Kansas City, it collaborated heavily with a local nonprofit, the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center, to coordinate space, logistics, and outreach.

Scope	Contribution
National	→ Digital inclusion expertise, resources, networks → Participation of local affiliates
Local	→ Knowledge of and interest in the community → On-the-ground assistance for national partners

The following table lists organizations that are either officially committed to ConnectHome or have frequently partnered with pilot communities:

Partner	Role
Core Team	
Public housing agency	Leadership, communication, staffing, resources
Local elected officials	Leadership, outreach, goals, convening, funding
Critical Partners	
HUD	Guidance, benchmarks, collaboration, national platform
EveryoneOn & U.S. Ignite	Leadership, expertise, guidance, resources
ConnectHome stakeholders	Free and low-cost Internet, devices, digital literacy training
Internet Service Providers	Affordable Internet service and devices
Libraries	Expertise, outreach, staff, facilities, digital literacy training
Resident councils	Needs assessment, survey, outreach, feedback, excitement
Other Important Community Partners	
Device providers & refurbishers	Affordable computing devices
Local technology community & digital inclusion advocates	Expertise, passion and energy, financial resources
HUD-assisted multifamily owners	Ensure residents have affordable Internet access
School districts & schools	Assisting students with Internet access and devices at home
Universities & colleges	Survey research partner, devices, digital literacy training
Local media	Awareness, interest, and momentum
Funding Partners	
Foundations	Financing and coalition building
Local banks	Investments through the Community Reinvestment Act

Case Study
Cleveland, OH

TIPS

Build on existing efforts
Identify partners already invested in digital inclusion work in your community, like libraries. Invite them to play a leadership or partnership role.

Community meetings
Presenting at community meetings allows you to engage multiple potential stakeholders at once and creates a wider community forum for discussing digital inclusion. Avoid technical jargon in public presentations.

Share your goals
Explain how connectivity promotes civic engagement, improves educational opportunity, connects individuals to job markets, and much more.

Lay the groundwork
Your conversations with potential partners will generate valuable new ideas for collaboration.

Building community partnerships

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority used their already-existing channels of community influence with local and national partners to build partnerships for their ConnectHome effort. In doing so, they were able to access a range of community resources and expertise, as the table below illustrates:

Partner	Contributions
Cleveland Public Library	Outreach, hosted resident engagement events and digital literacy trainings, served as "Tech Central" for device distribution
National Digital Inclusion Alliance & American Library Association	Wealth of experience and best practices
Local non-profit organizations	Grant writing, resident relationships, and deep knowledge of community needs
Catholic Charities Hospital	Connected seniors living in nearby high-rise buildings with an Internet transmitter
Local companies	Transported residents to training sessions

KEYS: Maintaining Strong Partnerships

How long will it last?
Clarify the longevity of your commitments. Some partners may be interested in helping for a year or two, whereas others may be able to commit to a longer-term involvement.

KEY 1: Build from areas of mutual interest

When approaching a potential partner, rally around areas of agreement and overlapping interests. For example, when partnering with your local library, explore the mutual benefit of how hosting training events at a library can cultivate new audiences for library services.

KEY 2: Establish clear roles and responsibilities

Outline the scope and scale of each partner's participation. Be as clear and concrete as possible when establishing roles, responsibilities, and timelines.

KEY 3: Designate partnership leads

Each partner should identify a clear lead to manage communication, arrange and participate in meetings, and share issues. To avoid confusion, these leads should take ownership of the relationship.

KEY 4: Maintain regular communication

Regular calls, in-person meetings, and status reports are important tools for collaborating toward meeting your mutual commitments. Memorialize key decisions to ensure everyone is on the same page. Maintain regular communication to proactively address any potential issues.

KEY 5: Track progress and celebrate successes

Monitor progress toward milestones and track deliverables on a regular basis. Establish each partnership's metrics for success, which might involve the number of families newly connected to high-speed Internet, the number of devices obtained, or the number of training opportunities provided. Measuring and reporting progress is vital to maintaining the enthusiasm of your partners. (See *Playbook 12*.)