



Bringing your community together

Convening *all* of your stakeholders is a critical first step to successfully narrowing the digital divide in your community.

Your convening is an opportunity for your community's key stakeholders to come to the table with residents and discuss implementing your community's digital inclusion initiative.

Bringing together all stakeholders in the same room allows everyone's voices to be heard, promotes effective discussion of your community's ConnectHome goals and objectives, and ensures that everyone is on the same page.

Goals of your first local convening

1. **Energize** digital inclusion advocates, **mobilize** a diverse—sometimes even unlikely—group of stakeholders around a common vision, and **spur dynamic collaboration** going forward.
2. **Identify a local champion** who will propel the day-to-day operations of your digital inclusion initiative to maintain momentum from your convening.
3. **Lay the foundation for your action plan.** (*Playbook 5*)
 - Identify and assess available resources for high-speed Internet connectivity, computing devices, and digital literacy training. Clarify any gaps.
 - Identify who will lead the development of the plan. Include a housing agency lead and a city lead.
 - Establish the timeline for completing your action plan.
4. **Begin to assign partner roles and responsibilities.**
5. **Establish a process for moving forward**, including dates for subsequent meetings and touchpoints. Consider also establishing committees for different stakeholder groups around project themes, and identify a lead for each group. Each lead will be responsible for managing deliverables and for reporting back to your local champion.

Playbook 4: Organizing a Local Convening

KEYS:

Planning your convening

KEY 1: Who should be there?

Consider the same list of stakeholders used when mapping your community's resources:

| | |
|---|---|
| State and local elected officials | Public housing agency leadership and staff |
| Resident groups and leadership | Internet Service Providers |
| EveryoneOn and US Ignite | National ConnectHome stakeholders |
| HUD staff | Libraries |
| Device providers and refurbishers | Technology community |
| Local media | Local banks |
| School districts | Colleges and universities |
| Prominent foundations and local funders | Owners of HUD-assisted multifamily properties |

TIP →

Transportation

Consider travel distance and share transportation timeframes with participants. If your location is remote, it may be beneficial to meet stakeholders who are coming from out of town at a convenient location and escort them to your convening. You also may want to arrange a meet-and-greet the day before to allow for travel delays and ensure the entire team is on time.

KEY 2: Where will it be?

To enable as many stakeholders as possible to attend, choose a centralized location with convenient access to public transportation for attendees, including residents assisted through HUD programs.

Options include onsite community space, other community centers, libraries, nearby campuses, and civic space. Some of these locations, like libraries, are sure to already have Wi-Fi-enabled meeting spaces.

Select a neutral location where everyone, from residents to ISP stakeholders, will feel comfortable. Your convening is an opportunity to highlight the participation of a key stakeholder, and you may want to host your convening at or near their location.

Case Study

Kansas City, MO

The Sprint Accelerator

Kansas City leveraged space from a key stakeholder. In choosing the Sprint Accelerator as the location for their convening, Kansas City highlighted Sprint as a key stakeholder and leveraged its innovative and open space environment to create an interactive convening. Importantly, this site delivered the strong message that the Kansas City government is a place where technology happens. The venue also was centrally located, which allowed easy access for HUD-assisted residents and those taking public transportation.

KEY 3: Who will set the agenda?

Your core planning team is typically best positioned to set the agenda. Consider also working with skilled facilitators who have experience organizing events in your community.

KEY 4: Who will facilitate the convening?

Determine who will take ownership of leading the discussion and reaching consensus around key decisions. Choose someone with the experience and skills to facilitate a diverse group of folks working on complex issues of digital inclusion.

KEY 5: Who will invite participants?

Personally invite stakeholders to the convening. Follow up your email invitations with telephone calls and in-person meetings to explain the importance of the initiative and the initial convening. This is the first step to building a powerful coalition.

Case Study

Choctaw Nation, OK

Confirming key players

Choctaw Nation first brainstormed key players from their existing networks and collected contact information. They then contacted key players to gauge their interest and availability, identify further contacts, and determine a date and time for the convening. It was important to ensure the availability of key stakeholders before settling on a particular date. Finally, they followed up with key players to encourage their participation and verify their attendance. Consistent communication reminded people to attend and reassured them that the convening was actually happening.

Playbook 4: Organizing a Local Convening

TIPS: Day of your convening

TIP 1: Break the ice

Begin the convening with simple, relationship-building exercises. Develop ground rules to establish expectations for the conversation during the convening.



Structure the convening in an interactive, participant-oriented manner with small group activities.

TIP 2: Include diverse voices

Encourage those directly impacted by the digital divide—HUD-assisted residents and families—to play direct roles in the process.

During the convening, ask, “Who is Missing?” and invite them to join the initiative.

TIP 3: Create a safe space

Consider keeping detailed minutes anonymous for people not formally representing an organization. This creates a comfortable environment where participants feel safe being creative and honest.

To encourage as much candor as possible for the convening, limit media attendance to a specific time-window. Let participants know when that media timeframe will be.

TIP 4: Thank everyone for attending!

Contact attendees to share key takeaways and next steps.

