Driving Digital Equity & Economic Empowerment in **Houston** through Digital Access And Collaboration

Mayor Sylvester Turner's Health Equity Response Taskforce – Technology Subcommittee

Overarching Goal:
To drive digital equity for School-Age Children and Houstonian's seeking employment, telehealth and workforce development.

Definition of Digital Equity:
Access to reliable at-home or personal low to no cost high-speed internet and a keyboard-enabled portal device such as a laptop or tablet, both of which are supported with access to digital, literacy and learning tools.

Mission Statement:
Expanding opportunity through technology

Health Equity Response Taskforce – Technology Subcommittee Has Three Working Groups:

(1) Implementation Logistics
This working group is focused on developing, funding and implementing short-term connectivity pilot programs for households and students.

(2) Playbook Development
This working group is responsible for converting the learning of the Taskforce's pilot programs into a "Playbook" to be shared with school districts, elected officials and NGOs seeking to implement connectivity strategies in the Greater Houston Region.

(3) Meshed Community Connectivity Development
This working group is tasked with developing, funding and implementing long term plans for community wide digital connectivity centered in hubs such as libraries, community centers, clinics, etc.

CONNECTIVITY PROBLEM 1:
Underserved Houstonians without School Age Children

Disparity in Access to tools for Telehealth, Tech Workforce Development and Digital Community Engagement

In excess of 160,000 households, without school-age children, in the City of Houston lack a device and/or internet connectivity that would enable digital access.

Pilot Goal for Non-student Connectivity:
To partner with NGO's, public leaders, medical service providers and industry partners to develop connectivity solutions as well as adoption and service implementation programs that leverage the Complete Communities foundation and partners.

The Approach:
(1) To launch two pilots in two of the Mayor's Complete Communities that will bring digital connectivity and content to those areas where it has not previously existed.

(2) Leverage the "playbook" from these pilots to work with the remaining Complete Communities to launch similar efforts with them.

(3)   Roll-out End-to-End connectivity plan for the City of Houston by 3/31/2021.

CONNECTIVITY PROBLEM I STATUS UPDATE:

Data gathering process underway to more accurately size the need for connectivity in the non-school age population

Wired internet voucher programs in other regions are being studied for efficacy

Active engagement with ISPs to develop technology for hub-based networks, beginning with libraries
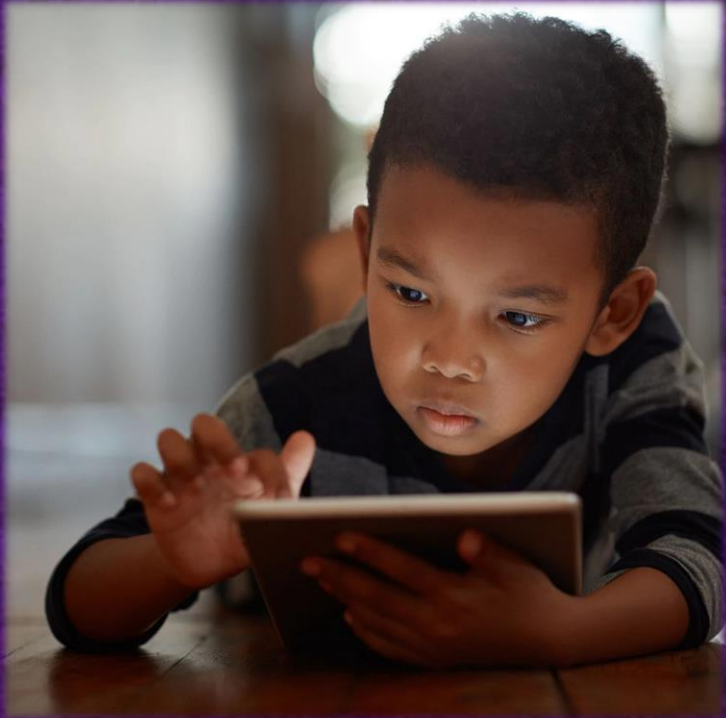
CONNECTIVITY PROBLEM 2:
School Age Children

Disparity in Educational Access

At least 230,000+ Students and 20,000+ Teachers in Region 4 are not able to access or provide digital learning due to one or more missing components in the connectivity continuum.

Pilot Goal for Student Connectivity:
To convene a collaborative of industry leaders who will each enable and support the development of an end-to-end solution that provides digital access to at least 230,000 students and 20,000 teachers with the greatest need, before the end of the 2020 calendar year.

The Approach:
(1) To launch two pilots in smaller districts with significant economically disadvantaged populations in order to fully develop an implementation "playbook" and funding model.

(2) Share the "playbook" with remaining districts and potential funding sources and collaborate to develop an implementation plan for each.

(3) Roll-out End-to-End connectivity plan for all districts by 12/31/2020.

CONNECTIVITY PROBLEM 2
STATUS UPDATE:

A collaborative of industry partners has agreed to aggressively discounted pricing for Region 4 Districts for both internet access and keyboard enabled devices

Connectivity pilot framework and structure has been developed with two pilots planned for late summer/early fall

Project plan is in development to support all ISDs in Region 4 to take advantage of aggressive collaborative pricing implementation playbook in order to the 12/31/2020 completion goal