Completed Projects

UJA-Federation | New York City

We have recently completed a project with the UJA-Federation of New York in to support their digital food pantry system, specificaly at the CUNY Hillels across the city. These systems allow users to order their own food, adding flexibility for family size, food choice, convinience, and most importantly dignity for the students and families using the system. As a result, more studetns are using these pantires than ever before. We specificaly provided the funds to help turn these existing locations digital with iPads and printers, and we want to thank anybody that supported this project!
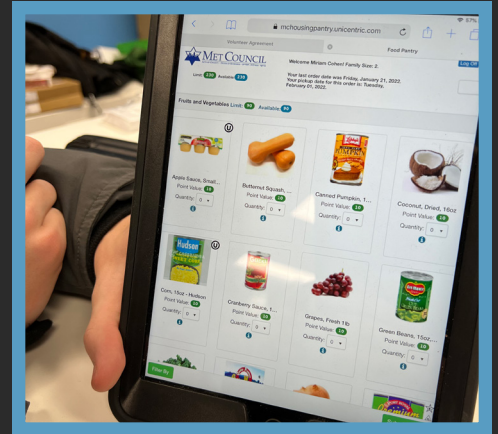
Thank You Letter

UJA-Federation | New York City

Here are some highlights from an amazing thank you letter we recived from UJA: "Thank you so much for your recent $5,000 gift from Philanthropy4Technology to UJA-Federation of New York to support the Digital Pantry system on CUNY campuses... We were committed to combatting food insecurity before the pandemic, and now - since the beginning of the pandemic – demand is up at UJA-Federation funded food pantries by 40%. As a result of Coronavirus, those who were already struggling with food insecurity were joined by hundreds of thousands of others. Though it wasn't designed for this purpose, the Digital Pantry system has proven to be a critical response tool, enabling us to safely offer clients choice at a time when so much else feels out of their control."
--Kerry Newman, Assistant Director Capital Gifts & Special Initiatives

Updates **Newsletters**

At the footer of our website, included in this email, is a new option to sign up for monthly newsletters like this one. It is the best was to quickly learn about new developments at P4T. You can also respond to this email to let us know if you're interested. Finally, there is an archive of past newsletters on the "Completed Projects" page.

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Philanthropy4Technology Winter Newsletter

New Project

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center | New York City

We are excited to announce that we are working on a new project, our second of 2022. While we are not fundrasing for this endeavor, and some details are still being worked out, we are proud to be able to work with Horace Mann School's Center for Community Values and Action and the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center and are excited to share updates once plans are finalized.

Blog Updates

A New Post!

Go check out the new blog article on our website! This article is written on new New York state govenor Kathy Hochul's $1 billion broadband initiative, and goes over the components of the plan, what may be missing, and looks at what states are doing to supplement the work of the federal government, corporations, and organizations like Philanthropy4Technology.

Updates **Become an Ambassador**

Philanthropy4Technology is always looking for more like-minded students keen on bridging the digital divide and sharing our message in their own community. Look for the application form at the footer of our website!

Contact

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New York. New Governor. New Broadband Plan.

While it is clear that the federal government, non-for-profit organizations, and ISPs are trying to do their part, how are states helping bridge the digital divide? New York and new governor Kathy Hochul may provide an answer.

In a digital age, it turns out that devices are not enough. Yes, there are all the benefits spoken about in past blog posts; yes, they provide accessible resources in education, finance, and all the other fields you can think of; and yes, organizations like Philanthropy4Technology, corporations, governments, and even sports leagues are doing their best to provide communities with access to these digital tools, whether in a classroom, a public library, or—as with our most recent project—a food pantry. However, most of these tools need something else to function; they need internet access, and the lack thereof is plaguing underserved communities whether they have access to devices or not. I have written three articles about this topic beforehand and focused on the federal government, a volunteer and community network based organization named NYC Mesh, and internet service providers. This time, I will be focusing on states' responses to this internet-based crisis, specifically New York State Governor Kathy Hochul's $1 billion ConnectALL plan, and I will be answering the following questions: what actually is the plan, how will it be funded, and what is missing from this toolkit the governor is using to improve internet access and online opportunity for her constituents?

According to the state website, ConnectALL is the largest ever investment in New York's 21st century infrastructure. This initiative will deliver affordable internet access to millions of New Yorkers, bolster digital equity, and transform the state's digital infrastructure through new investments.

A central part of the effort relies on getting New Yorkers to sign up for the federal Affordable Connectivity Scheme, a new benefit created by President Biden's Investment and Jobs Act. It provides $30 per month toward internet services for families earning less than 200% of federal poverty guidelines or who qualify for federal aid programs such as Medicaid or SNAP (food stamps). To do this, the state will use some of their funding—separate from that of the federal government—to invest in marketing and outreach, alerting New Yorker's about the aforementioned federal program. A pandemic-focused Internet subsidy from the federal

government enrolled only about 600,000 New York households in 2021, which the state estimates is just 30% of eligible households. While many families already enrolled in that pandemic-based program will join the new one, the state has promised to use ConnectALL to reach that other 70%.

Also included in this initiative are four state-specific policies. They include the removal of outdated regulations and fees that make it hard to build broadband infrastructure in rural areas, the retrofitting of affordable housing projects with internet equipment, a map that will display areas that need the most support in terms of internet access, and finally three grant programs. Each will provide funding to local municipalities in order to plan, engineer, and construct broadband solutions. Specifically, the "Local Connectivity Planning and 21st Century Municipal Infrastructure" program will fund municipalities, nonprofits and other entities to construct open and accessible public broadband infrastructure, the "Rural Broadband" program will support rural broadband access, including last-mile connections and middle-mile projects, and the "Connectivity Innovation" program will provide competitive grants to entities statewide to pilot and construct creative, innovative, and new solutions to pioneer future breakthroughs.

However, how are all these aspects of ConnectALL going to be paid for? Governor Hochul plans to fund ConnectALL through a few different channels, but in general is taking some of the state and federal government's discretionary spending budget and applying it to this problem area. She plans to use $300 million directly from the state budget, and already has secured at least $345 million in federal funding for this project. Further, New York state expects hundreds of millions more in federal dollars from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act approved by Congress last year, hoping to bring ConnectALL's funding total to $1 billion.

Finally, what is ConnectALL missing in its fight against the internet side of the digital divide? While the initiative does a lot to bridge this gap (only time will tell if they are doing enough), the initiative does not include any form of the Affordable Broadband Act. This piece of legislature would require internet service providers to offer low-income families (who qualify based on the same definition used by the Affordable connectivity Service) a plan that costs $15 per month. Even though the state is making appeals, the current exclusion is probably due to multiple Telecom industry groups suing the same month the bill was approved by congress, arguing that the state did not have the authority to regulate broadband rates. They also claimed that the law could put small Internet providers out of business. The efforts for affordable broadband were hurt further when US Eastern District Court Judge Dennis Hurley sided with the industry and blocked the law's implementation in June, and, currently, there is still no decision on New York Attorney General Letitia James' appeal. If the state does win their case, however, these laws are likely to pass in many state legislatures, given that a bipartisan mix of 22 attorneys general, including those from California, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Nebraska, filed a brief in support of New York's appeal last month.

While this is only one example of how state governments are supporting internet access across the country, the high-level takeaway of this article is that bridging the digital divide is a fight that must be fought on multiple fronts. It is not enough to solely provide devices, and it is not enough to provide just broadband infrastructure. Without initiatives like ConnectALL or NYC Mesh, provided technology can never reach its potential, and without organizations like Philanthropy4Technology and all the other groups that provide technology to underserved communities, broadband infrastructure is irrelevant. Bridging the digital divide is a collaborative effort between governments, organizations, corporations, individuals, and more, and it is an effort that helps close a larger opportunity gap one step at a time.