

Digital Equity

COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS THEORY OF CHANGE

Commitment to Health Equity

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. believes that to improve the wellness of the least served and fully live out its mission of "Serving Humanity to Honor God," it must recognize the inequities inherent in its communities that contribute to poor health outcomes. **Health Equity is both the process and goal by which Methodist Healthcare Ministries seeks to carry out that purpose.** Health Equity is a framework of thought and action that strives to reduce racial and socio-economic disparities and create fair and just opportunities for every person to reach their full potential.

Current State

- 2.8 million Texas households do not have access to high-speed broadband
- 5.6 million households do not have quality internet
 - 20.9% of households within MHM's 74-County Region have no internet access
- 3.8 million Texas residents face digital literacy challenges
- Every day that a person is not connected to the internet, America loses \$2.16 of potential economic activity
- The digital divide currently costs our country over \$130 million a day in economic activity



Desired Future State

All people in MHM service region have access to reliable, afford-able broadband service and the skills and opportunities to use this technology safely and effectively to support economic, health and social needs.

Vision

To be the leader for improving wellness of the least served



Objective 1

Increase reliable broadband connectivity and affordability to achieve desired future state

PRIORITIES

- Support community led broadband plans, assessments and coalitions
- Promote low cost internet and public subsidies enrollment
- Support organizational capacity to access state and federal funding

Objective 2

Increase access to free or affordable devices and computer hubs to achieve desired future state

PRIORITIES

- Create and deploy device refurbishment training
- Develop public computer centers or Wi-Fi hubs in underserved communities
- Facilitate bulk purchasing and distribution

Objective 3

Increase digital skills to achieve desired future state

PRIORITIES

- Create or expand Digital Connector/Navigator programs
- Develop and implement culturally appropriate outreach and training
- Promote online safety to avoid security threats and preserve privacy

*MHM investments prioritize efforts serving economically disadvantaged, geographically underserved, and historically disenfranchised populations

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase Reliable Broadband Connectivity and Affordability to Achieve Desired Future State

Strengthen digital equity ecosystem to increase adoption of affordable broadband services and address infrastructure gaps. Increase number of households in MHM service with access to high speed broadband internet.

Priority	Support community led broadband plans, assessments and coalitions Efforts should identify opportunities and recommend improvements of broadband access and affordability Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased number of community members and other community organizations engaged in decision-making, strategy implementation and serviceNumber of community plans created and strategies implemented with the support of various stake-holders including but not limited to businesses, nonprofits, faith based, and other community groups
Priority	Promote low cost internet and public subsidies enrollment (Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), reduced-cost internet programs, etc.) Support outreach tailored to barriers faced by local residents and increase enrollment of eligible families Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Households who have newly adopted an internet access public benefit with the support of Digital Connector/NavigatorHouseholds who have newly adopted other public benefits, such as SNAP and Medicaid with the support of Digital Connector/Navigator
Priority	Support organizational capacity to access state and federal funding Facilitate coordination of local and regional planning efforts through collaborations and coalitions Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Amount of federal funding invested in community/programsNumber of applications funded by improving organizational programs, infrastructure, and systems to manage federal funding

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase Access to Free or Affordable Devices and Computer Hubs to Achieve Desired Future State

Increase the number of individuals who have access to a device that meet their needs.

Priority	Create and deploy device refurbishment training Efforts should establish or expand device refurbishment programs Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of participants trained to complete device repairs or refurbishmentsNumber of devices repaired or refurbishedNumber of low-cost, high-quality devices distributed
Priority	Develop public computer centers or Wi-Fi hubs in underserved communities Increase computer and telehealth access to individuals in un/underserved areas Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of computer labs or telehealth spaces createdTrack usage of computer labs and telehealth space
Priority	Facilitate bulk purchasing and distribution Source low cost, high quality devices at scale throughout a specific location/region Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of low cost devices sourced and distributed

OBJECTIVE 3: Increase Digital Skills to Achieve Desired Future State

Improve digital literacy skills to enable individuals to use the internet to meet their needs and maintain online safety and wellness

Priority	Create or expand Digital Connector/Navigator programs Support programs located in community hubs, trusted community organizations and health clinics Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of Digital Connectors/Navigators hired and trained
Priority	Develop and implement culturally appropriate outreach and training Facilitate, administer, and conduct outreach events to raise awareness of digital navigation services and digital skills programming Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of individuals served by digital navigation skillsDigital skills and achievement reached based on program performance metrics
Priority	Promote online safety to avoid security threats and preserve privacy Efforts should increase awareness and provide skills to foster safe internet use in vulnerable populations. Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Classes providedCertifications or digital badges earned