



Bridge the Digital Divide

Lead Partners San Mateo County Office of Education, San Mateo County Information Services Department

Support Partners SAMCEDA, Community-based organizations and nonprofits, school districts, San Mateo County libraries, internet service providers, tech firms

Implementation Objectives

- Provide Wi-Fi access countywide
- Increase access to computers and Internet for small businesses, job seekers, the isolated, and families and parents engaging in virtual home learning
- Expand tech training and support options
- Leverage state and federal resources and legislative opportunities

With social distancing requirements and businesses and schools operating remotely, it is now more critical than ever for all residents to have access to quality Internet and technology as well as the necessary training and support to utilize this technology. Lack of digital access is an equity issue because the pandemic is exacerbating the educational and economic disparities created by the digital divide.

Challenges

- Increasing digital divide among students, families, seniors, and businesses
- Lack of Wi-Fi, technology, and digital literacy have had greater impacts on vulnerable populations during the pandemic due to social isolation and job loss

Identified Needs

- Access to high-quality broadband Internet for everyone in San Mateo County
- Technology support and training in multiple languages to seniors and others who require assistance
- Messaging concerning access to Internet and connectivity that reaches all communities
- Financial assistance to pay ongoing costs for Internet services and other utilities

Relevant Data

- Households and businesses without Wi-Fi by geographic area, income, and demographic data such as age, race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, etc.
- Areas of the County not covered by public Wi-Fi or other public Internet connectivity options
- Students requested and/or granted technology

Current Programs

- ✓ [Free public County-operated Wi-Fi access – 100 locations](#)
- ✓ [San Mateo County Internet Access Initiative pilot in three school districts](#)
- ✓ [San Mateo County Libraries Hotspot Initiative](#)
- ✓ School district provision of connectivity and technology to students
- ✓ [Comcast low cost Internet program](#)

Community Infrastructure Committee Members

- Hon. Hector Camacho, San Mateo Board of Education
- Susie Castoria, D2 San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
- April Chan, SamTrans
- Sean Charpentier, City/County Association of Governments
- Hon. Ken Chin San Mateo, Foster City School District
- Fred Hansson, San Mateo County
- Ellen Kamei, AT&T
- Hon. Cliff Lentz, Brisbane City
- Ortensia Lopez, El Concilio of San Mateo County
- Benjamin McMullan, San Mateo County Paratransit Coordinating Council
- Lisa Nash, Resident
- John Nibbelin, San Mateo County Counsel
- Derek Ouyang, Stanford University
- Matt Petrofsky, San Mateo County Office of Sustainability
- Jim Porter, San Mateo County Public Works
- Everardo Rodriguez, North Fair Oaks Community Council
- Tony Rose, MedCredits
- Hon. Ann Schneider, Millbrae
- Emma Shlaes, Silicon Valley Bike Coalition
- Ann Stillman, San Mateo County Public Works
- Hon. Charles Stone, City of Belmont
- Theresa Vallez-Kelly, San Mateo County Office of Education
- Jon Walton, San Mateo County Information Services
- Christy Wegener, SamTrans
- Mike Wentworth, San Mateo County
- Hon. Bill Widmer, Atherton



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Objectives	Recommendations
1. Provide Wi-Fi access countywide	1.1. Expand the most cost-effective solutions to increase access across the County by convening community partners and building on the results of existing efforts, including partnerships with private-sector partners to provide financial support for connectivity programs and Internet expansion
2. Increase access to computers and Internet for small businesses, job seekers, the isolated, and families and parents engaging in virtual home learning	2.1. Provide targeted financial assistance to small businesses for technology equipment, Internet service, and technical assistance and training 2.2. Partner with regional organizations addressing the digital divide 2.3. Reach out to local tech firms about providing financial support for connectivity programs and Internet expansion across the County
3. Expand tech training and support options	3.1. Expand current programs to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate training and instruction through community-based organizations and nonprofits and other organizations 3.2. Provide funding for community-based organizations and nonprofits to provide technology training and information and referral to affordable technology programs
4. Leverage state and federal resources and legislative opportunities	4.1. Monitor and analyze state and federal legislation and grant programs; advocate for policies that expand financial assistance programs, access to broadband, navigation support, and technical assistance and training