Impact Update
On the Wrong Side of the Digital Divide

Just like any other tenant of poverty, the digital divide manifests across many aspects of society. Inequitable access to the internet contributes to the homework gap, adverse health outcomes, and wealth gaps. As new technology is deployed, those with resources and access can take advantage of their benefits and the opportunities it brings. Those without access to these tools are often left behind.

According to the 2018 American Community Survey, 49% of Detroit households have access to in-home internet, while 22% rely on their wireless phones for at-home internet browsing. 30% of Detroit households have no access to the internet at all.
Who is responsible for creating the digital divide? The answer is everyone. Years of disinvestment from anchor institutions, inequitable policy-making, and broken education systems have created a cycle of lack that traps many generations in poverty. If we want to see real digital inclusion and our communities become whole, we must coordinate our efforts to realize impactful and sustainable outcomes.

In 2019, the City of Detroit installed Joshua Edmonds as its first Director of Digital Inclusion, tasked with tackling Detroit’s status as the worst connected city in the nation.

There is a lot of stakeholder interest, energy, and resources pouring into Detroit to help close its digital divide; but, to date, there is not a coordinating mechanism to combine these distributed efforts in a data-informed way.

Rocket Community Fund, Microsoft, and United Way joined the City of Detroit to holistically address the digital divide. The public-private partnership set a goal to build a new model of engagement that places community interest at the center of the work and empowers residents as true decision makers.
Connect 313 is a City-wide, Data-Driven, Digital Inclusion Strategy

Connect 313 hosts a large governing body of community leaders who form initiatives, set priorities, research strategies, formulate plans, and oversee implementations. To become a member of Connect 313, one must live, work, or learn in the City of Detroit.
CONNECT 313’s goal is to make Detroit a national model for digital inclusion and ensure all Detroiters can access the digital world and the opportunity it brings.

**OUR VISION**
Ensure every Detroiter is fully digitally included, improving the quality of life for all residents.

**OUR MISSION**
To put in place by 2024 the means for all Detroiters to have access to appropriate devices, internet connections, technical support and digital resources for improved learning, employment and well-being.
Operationalizing an Ecosystem

We define an operationalized ecosystem as a body of partners systematically working together to move the needle on bridging the digital divide. These organizations move past project-based work to create scalable programs and initiatives that create higher returns on investments for all parties involved. Operationalized ecosystems are responsive to issues and replicate processes quickly.

Connect 313’s structure consists of three layers, governance, management, and implementation. These layers are dependent on the community governance for recommendations, feedback from the community, and approval of funds.
We are Locally-Led, Expertly Informed

Connect 313 is an ecosystem-wide mechanism that attracts, coordinates and distributes resources. The operation is a sustainable infrastructure designed to operationalize strategic plans into tactical action with insightful feedback. The structure consists of three levels of governance that steer the work: Board, Joint Assembly, and Council. These groups produce recommendations with feedback, provide approval, and allocate funding.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
Provides mission-based leadership and strategic governance and stewards the organization’s mission, values, resources, and results. Make final decisions about recommendations that fall under $50k.

**JOINT ASSEMBLY**
Coordinate the governance of the Connect 313 initiative and make final decisions about recommendations that fall under $50k.

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL**
Develop the values and hold all recommendations to those values. Be the voice of the community, provide community sentiment, delineate needs. Act as a source for membership of Committees.
CONNECT 313

Community Council Committees

Devices and Connectivity Committee
Ensure all Detroiters have access to quality devices, high-speed internet, and technical support.

Digital Literacy & Upskilling Committee
Ensure that all Detroiters can build digital skills, to support their employability, lifelong learning, and well-being.

Policy, Advocacy, & Ecosystem Committee
Develop an ecosystem-based approach that builds on and enhances existing work; to devise strategies that allow Connect 313 to contribute to advocacy and fundraising efforts for specific, data-informed needs at the local, statewide, and national/federal level, and work to attract net new resources locally.

Shared Resources & Special Projects Committee
Develop the tactics by which the stakeholders are convened & organized, and by which capacity-building resources are coordinated & developed.

Structure & Operations Committee
Develop the organizational structure of Connect 313 including the function and composition of each level of the decision-making process.
We strive to be flexible and agile.

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the digital divide to the forefront of every facet of society. As families were forced online to work, learn, and connect to essential services, the disparities of who were unconnected and under-connected captivated the nation. Images of youth sitting in fast food parking lots trying to connect to the internet personified the problem and shone a light on the digital divide happening in our neighborhoods.

Connect 313 activated the ecosystem and displayed the strength of a community of stakeholders being responsive to the community, while pursuing similar goals and shared commitment of bridging the digital divide.
Our interventions are high impact and transformative.

With the existing structure, Connect 313 was able to quickly stand up hyper-local campaigns, projects, and operations that address access to the internet, devices, and digital literacy and upskilling. We also focus on building awareness to the issue and advocating for the Detroit community.

Touting local data, social capital, and strategic thinking, Connect 313 attracts new net resources into the ecosystem while leveraging existing funding and infrastructure for a greater return on investments.
The FCC launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit program in May 2021, with the purpose to help low-income Americans connect to the Internet during the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants would receive a $50/mo. subsidy on their bill and a one time $100 credit for a device.

Connect 313 & Rocket Community Fund stood up a hyper-local media campaign to supportDetroiters who otherwise would have to navigate the cumbersome enrollment alone.

Detroiters can call a local number and find out if they qualify for the benefit, connect to their internet service provider, or choose a new service provider. If residents need additional assistance, they can go one of 12 community partners to receive in-person assistance.
On March 23, 2020, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued the first ‘Stay At Home’ order, forcing all Detroit students to start remote learning. Joshua Edmonds convened Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) along with the Detroit Public Schools Foundation, DTE Energy Foundation, Rocket Community Fund, Skillman Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, General Motors and the Kellogg Foundation to address a historical digital divide, by providing students with wireless tablets and 6 months of connectivity through a $23 million investment. Human-I-T provided virtual and in-person technical support for families across Detroit.
Connecting Seniors

Low-income seniors remain the most disconnected demographic when examining the digital divide. During the pandemic, this status meant many Detroit seniors were left without the resources to access essential services including health resources.

In partnership with Accenture, Wayne State University, Focus: HOPE, and human-i-T, Connect 313 was able to secure a $3.9 million grant from the Michigan Coronavirus Task Force on Racial Disparities Rapid Response Initiative.

Not only did participants receive devices and hotspots, but many were connected to health resources at Wayne State including COVID saliva testing and mental health resources.
Neighborhood Tech Hubs

Neighborhood Technology Hubs were created to serve as a community-centered resource to close the digital divide in Detroit communities. We envisioned that these hubs would supply the community with a physical place to go that would support them with providing access to computers, strong internet access points, and digital literacy training opportunities. Ultimately, providing these resources to our communities would lead to more families being digitally included and connected, leading to myriad opportunities for social, economic, and educational growth.

We have supported the creation of 4 Neighborhood Technology Hubs in partnership with Brilliant Detroit. To manage and expand the reach of their newly formed Technology Hubs, Brilliant Detroit has hired a Digital Navigator, who will lead community and staff digital literacy and technology trainings.

Brilliant Detroit Locations:
Morningside: 5048 Balfour, Detroit, MI 48224
Chandler Park: 5312 Newport, Detroit, MI 48213
Dexter Linwood: 2634 Webb Street, Detroit, MI 48206
Cody Rouge: 7425 Fielding Street, Detroit, MI 48228
Southwest: 5675 Larkins Street, Detroit, MI 48210

Community Ambassadors

The Community Ambassador role was created to operationalize and expand the efforts of Connect 313 by offering each of the seven districts of Detroit access to their own Community Ambassador, who will serve as a digital inclusion advocate and resource liaison. Community Ambassadors will report to a local nonprofit or community development corporation, who will serve as their host organization and central hub for community engagement.

The Community Ambassadors will collect data and feedback from residents, and working with Connect 313 to identify interventions and solutions to the needs of residents; conversely, the Community Ambassador will be able to provide its residents with the resources of Connect 313 in real time. Lastly, Ambassadors will conduct town hall meetings, and engage local leaders and officials in their districts to amplify the work of Connect 313 and to advocate on behalf of the need for more digitally included communities.

Participating Organizations:
MACC Development
Eastside Community Network
Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation
Bridging Communities
Lack of access to devices is one of the barriers to Detroitors becoming digital citizens. In a city with a 30% poverty rate, affordability is a major barrier to owning a device.

The City of Detroit Office of Digital Inclusion, Office of Sustainability, and Connect 313 teamed up with human–IT, a national non-profit and e-waste recycler, to demonstrate what happens when organizations, businesses, and municipalities divert dormant technology to digital inclusion efforts.

Starting during Earth Week and ending during Digital Inclusion Week, we set a goal to collect 500,000 ponds of e-waste from businesses and organizations that would usually end up in landfills and give out 1,000 devices across the City of Detroit.
Digital Inclusion Week

Connect 313 hosted its third annual Digital Inclusion Week October 4th through October 7th at Tech Town’s Innovation Center and Marygrove Conservancy. We gathered stakeholders from across the ecosystem to celebrate, educate, activate and connect to the community and each other.

Key-note Francella Ochillo, Executive Director of Next Century Cities, set the tone for the week with an impactful message to the Detroit ecosystem. Businesses received resources and tips to maximize their online experiences. Community organizations gave boots on the ground updates on the work they’re doing to connect the disconnected. Lastly, students from kindergarten to 12 grade were exposed to the possibilities of the future of technology.
Raising Detroit Voices on National Platforms

Detroit is well on its way to being a national model on digital inclusion. Initiatives such as the Connecting Futures program and EBB 313 has garnered the attention of key national decision makers and has expanded partnerships with national brands.

March 2020, FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks spoke with multiple Detroit Public School District students regarding remote learning. Commissioner Starks mentions his experience with the students in his official statement regarding support for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and the Internet for All Act.

Detroit’s EBB 313 campaign attracted additional interest from the FCC. The City of Detroit hosted a candid conversation with FCC leadership and community partners regarding their experience assisting residents in completing the EBB application. From this meeting, the FCC released additional support for communities and data sets regarding sign-ups.

In celebration of Digital Inclusion Week, the FCC partnered with the City of Detroit to host its first Digital Inclusion Week Forum. On October 6, 2021, Joshua Edmonds lead the conversation with other national practitioners, and highlighted innovations and new programming in the space.
At least one member in the household has:

- A reliable broadband connection (internet)
- and a (non-smartphone) computer/tablet (device)
- that works and they know how to use it (technical support)

Definition of a Digitally Included Household:

At least one member in the household has:

- A reliable broadband connection (internet)
- and a (non-smartphone) computer/tablet (device)
- that works and they know how to use it (technical support)

Local data drives our decision-making.

How do we know we’re winning? When every household is digitally connected.

67.5%
178,065 of 263,688 households (85,623 remaining)

Households Needing:

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<th>Intervention(s)</th>
<th>Polling 2021 Mar 05</th>
<th>Interventions 2021 Mar 05</th>
<th>Projected 2024 Dec</th>
<th>2024 Dec 94.8%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>34,280</td>
<td>58,012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
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<td>34,280</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Support</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>32,434</td>
<td>58,012</td>
<td>58,012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historic: 40.2% 2018 Dec
Polling | Interventions
2021 Mar 05 | 2021 Mar 05

18,065 of 263,688 households (85,623 remaining)
Data Cycle

01 Data Inputs (Data Lake)

All data from all external & internal sources.

Interventions are tracked and accounted for.

02 Intermediate Data set (Basefile)

Disparate datasets get processed: cleansed, standardized, centralized, deduped, etc.

03 Data Products (Visualizations/Portals)

Analytic-ready datasets get delivered on-demand via Core Files

Interventions are tracked and accounted for.

04 Intervention List

Decision tool outputs are used to prioritize resource allocation.
We are always listening and learning.

CONNECT 313 is committed to learning and improving our member’s experience. Every year, we conduct our Annual Review where every level of governance can tell us what is and what is not working. As we continue our efforts to bridge the digital divide, we aim to do so with community voice at the center of our efforts.

Communication
“Connect 313 did great with seizing opportunities such as EBB but could improve its communication to the community.”

Action Items:
• Develop communication strategy
• Create opportunities for storytelling
• Utilize regular e-newsletters and social media to deliver consistent and clear messages about the work of Connect313

Community Engagement
“Galvanizing a community of volunteers as well as corporate stakeholders around closing the digital divide was the success. The biggest opportunity for improvement is to get the community more engaged and not the corporates.”

Action Items:
• More meaningful opportunities to engage with Connect 313
• More opportunities for folks to ask questions

Accessibility
“Put in larger print”, “Less confusion”, “Better clarity”

Action Items:
• Conduct an accessibility review of materials
• Create a handbook for immediate access to information

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Contact Us

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THANK YOU