

Digital Bridges Initiative

Bridging the digital divide in El Paso, Texas through technology, broadband, and collaborations with local partners.

This effort was made possible thanks to partnerships with MasterCard and JackRabbit Wireless.

About the Digital Bridges Initiative

The Digital Bridges Initiative from Workforce Solutions Borderplex is designed to provide families with internet access and the technology needed to navigate modern life, build digital literacy, and explore digital opportunities for families to thrive in the areas of health, financial literacy, and workforce development. The Initiative is offered through a partnership between Workforce Solutions Borderplex, Mastercard, and JackRabbit, a local internet service provider. Broken down into four phases - Access, Adoption, Immersion, and Transformation - the initiative successfully supported 30 families in its initial run.

Phase One: Access

Phase one of the Digital Bridges Initiative focused on connecting families with internet access and affordable technology. During this phase, Workforce Solutions Borderplex worked to sign families up with internet access provided through JackRabbit internet provider. Since many families are only able to access the internet through mobile devices, Workforce Solutions Borderplex also provided families with laptops.

During this phase, WSB hired an intern and collaborated with JackRabbit to help ensure usage of products and services and to provide technology support for families in need.

Thirty families enrolled in the program during the first phase. Outreach began in February and March 2024. Families who enrolled received JackRabbit wireless internet for six months as well as a laptop kit, including the computer, mouse, case, office installation, and tech support.



Phase Two: Adoption

Phase two focused on the adoption of basic digital literacy skills through a series of workshops. From the original 30 who had signed up, 25 families enrolled in these workshops. Families who completed all six workshops received a \$200 incentive. These workshops were provided in partnership with Northstar.

Workshop Schedule:

- April 24th Pre-Workshop: Laptop distribution and NorthStar account setup.
- May 1st Pre-Workshop: Self-paced computer basics training
- May 15th First Official Workshop: Computer Basics Recap: Using the mouse and trackpad
- May 22nd Second Workshop: Internet Basics (Bonus Module: Email Basics)
- May 29th Third Workshop: Information Literacy
- June 5th Fourth Workshop: Digital Footprint & Intro to Cybersecurity

Phase Three: Immersion

Phase three focused on further immersing families in the digital sphere through a series of advanced workshops that were provided by local partners, including Raiz Federal Credit Union, Emergence Health Network, and El Paso Health. Twenty-two participants continued with the program through these advanced workshops. Families who completed the entirety of the Phase Three curriculum received a \$300 incentive as well six additional months of paid internet service through JackRabbit Wireless.

Workshop Schedule

- June 12th Workshop One: Introduction to Telehealth
- June 26th Workshop Two: Telehealth for Mental Health
- July 3rd Workshop Three: Personal Banking: Basic Financial Literacy
- July 10th Workshop Four: Banking Tools and How to Invest
- July 17th Workshop Five: Financial Security and Fraud Awareness
- July 24th Workshop Six: Phase Two Post-Assessments

Phase Four: Transformation

The fourth and final phase focused on the act of transformation by connecting interested participants with Workforce Solutions Borderplex services. Of the participants, 11 were interested and went on to utilize WSB services focused on GED acquisition, work-based learning programs, NextForce, career navigation, certifications, technical school application, healthcare certifications, and job prep.

Challenges



Some challenges experienced throughout the initiative included sudden cancellations of workshop participants, navigating language barriers for both English- and Spanish-only speakers, issues with workshop locations that led to needing to reschedule workshops, and the dropping off of workshop participant numbers. Looking to the future, Workforce Solutions Borderplex is exploring options to eliminate these issues, such as hosting workshops in both English and Spanish and exploring different event spaces.

Successes & Outcomes

In total, 30 families were connected to life-changing internet access, technology, and digital literacy skills. Of this original number, a significant portion continued to attend workshops and learn about the ways in which technology can be implemented into everyday life.