

DIGITAL INCLUSION

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2024

WHAT IS DIGITAL INCLUSION?

For many Fort Collins residents, gaps in economic and educational opportunity exist between those who have access to digital devices, skills, and the Internet, and those who don't—the digital divide. The City of Fort Collins is committed to reducing this digital divide and increasing the digital literacy of Fort Collins residents through our Digital Inclusion program.

THE PILLARS OF DIGITAL INCLUSION IN FORT COLLINS

Our program is focused on promoting and increasing access to devices, skills, the Internet, and City programs. These pillars address a unique barrier that often hinders underrepresented and historically underserved residents from achieving digital equity and fully participating in our community. While it may not be possible to eliminate these barriers overnight, we can make meaningful strides by actively working to support these goals and gradually reducing their impact over time.

“Our program is focused on promoting and increasing access to devices, skills, the Internet, and City programs.”

DEVICES & SKILLS: COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

To ensure equitable access to digital devices and the skills needed, the City's Digital Inclusion program partners with local organizations committed to promoting digital equity in our community.

- **Poudre School District**

Digital Equity Liaison

PSD's bilingual Digital Equity Liaison directly supported over 300 families through 1:1 appointments, classes, and events. In addition, he also offered digital support and training to more than 50 PSD staff members and developed projects such as the Instant Language Assistant (ILA) protocol for schools: a step by step guide and training so PSD staff and families are familiar and comfortable with these language interpretation devices available at PSD schools.

Humberto Cruzado-Novoa, PSD's Digital Equity Liaison, was recognized by the state of Colorado as one of five 2024 Digital Equity Champions during Digital Inclusion Week in October 2024.

- **Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities**

Tech Buddy

PAFC's Tech Buddy Program works with volunteers who offer digital support to older adults, so they can gain confidence in accessing and navigating the digital world. Tech Buddies offer regular assistance at their clinics in locations such as Poudre Libraries, the Senior Center, and Senior Apartment complexes. In addition, they also offer 1:1 assistance at people's homes, coffee shops, and even Zoom and phone appointments.

- **Poudre Libraries**

Old Town Library

In partnership with the Occupational Therapy Department at CSU, Old Town Library launched an OT program for patrons experiencing homelessness. During the 480 hours OT grad students were available at the library, they assisted 112 individuals that received support learning how to check out laptops and use them to create resumes, search and apply for jobs, create email

accounts, look up bus schedules, access online banking, and a number of other daily online tasks that are sometimes taken for granted, but access is not guaranteed for all. Several patrons reported gaining employment after getting assistance with job searches and resumes!

- **Economic and Workforce Development**

Digital Roots

Digital Roots is a program dedicated to help job seekers learn or grow digital skills for a successful job search. In 2024, Digital Roots received over 200 requests for digital literacy support and 67 participants successfully completed the program and received a device to keep to assist with their job search efforts. In addition, thanks to their bilingual staff, 25% of participants were able to receive help in Spanish and 21% were over the age of 55.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025!
Awarded Digital Inclusion funding in late 2024.

- **The Family Center**

Mi Voz and Family Support Services

The Family Support Services team put together a “device library” for community members. These devices have already been used to access First Aid and Mental Health classes for youth and adults, GED classes, job search, etc. The leaders from the program Mi Voz received digital devices and training to support their community efforts.

- **Harmony Village Foundation**

A non-profit dedicated to supporting the residents of Harmony Village, HVF's committee members are now online and able to offer support to their residents from anywhere, as well as access the resources needed to help them thrive. This is important in any community, but it has been reported as specially needed and helpful for people living with disabilities, as is this case.



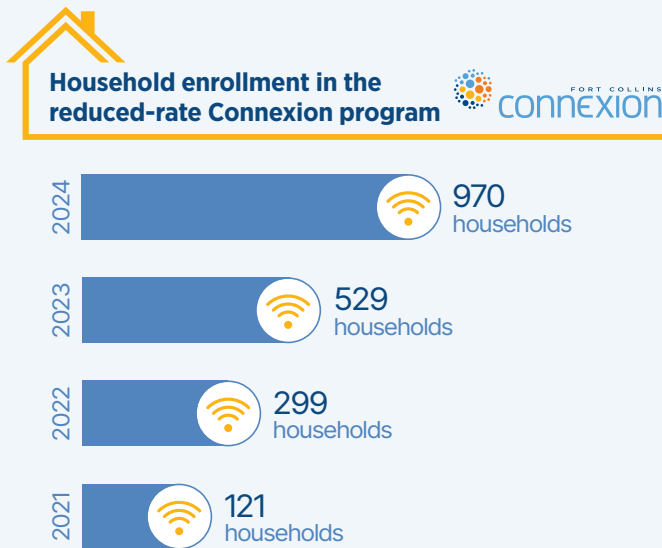
INTERNET CONNECTIVITY:

• Reduced Rate Connexion

Despite the disappearance of the Affordable Connectivity Program in early 2024, municipal-owned broadband proved to be a game-changer. We saw a record enrollment in our reduced-rate Connexion Internet package, with almost 1,000 income-qualified households benefiting. This success story is a testament to the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives in addressing digital equity.

• HeartSide Hill

The City's Digital Inclusion program has partnered with Connexion and CARE Housing to guarantee that the Heartside Hill development, now under construction, will be equipped with the essential infrastructure for delivering complimentary Connexion services to all residents. This initiative reflects our commitment to enhancing community connectivity and supporting the needs of future residents.



Inter-departmental Collaboration

A new Digital Inclusion initiative was launched in 2024! We believe this is a team effort, and there's room for Digital Inclusion in all departments. This year, we collaborated with Volunteer Services to donate digital devices that were no longer needed/in use to Poudre School District, who will identify the families that could benefit the most from these devices.

2024 Digital Inclusion Trailblazer

The City of Fort Collins was awarded the status of Digital Inclusion Trailblazer by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance- a recognition reserved for local governments leading the way in the digital inclusion space.

CITY PROGRAMS: GET FOCO

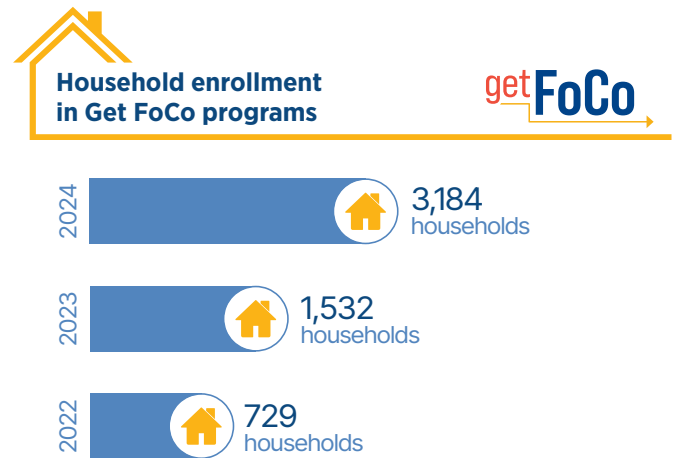
Get FoCo is an all-in-one online platform for accessing the City's income-qualified programs. By collecting City programs under one umbrella, we have simplified the application process and increased access through the standardization of requirements, the cross-promotion of programs otherwise unknown, the convenience of applying at any time from anywhere, and more.

However, we also understand that online applications require technology and skills that not everyone possesses. For this reason, and to ensure equitable access to our programs, the City offers in-person (and phone) appointments in English and Spanish at multiple locations. We also partner with organizations such as the Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities, Poudre School District, and Poudre Libraries, among others, that have trained staff to help residents with their Get FoCo application.

In the fall of 2024, as part of our commitment to continuous improvement and growth, Get FoCo introduced a new income-qualified initiative: the Gardens on Spring Creek Access Program. Although the Gardens program became available on Get FoCo in mid-October, it had already received nearly 300 applications by the end of the year.

Get FoCo now offers access to 5 different programs for income-qualified residents:

- Grocery Tax Rebate
- Reduced-Rate Recreation
- Reduced-Rate Connexion
- Spin Access
- The Gardens on Spring Creek Access



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