

**Year 3 Evaluation
Whole Family Systems
Digital Equity Component**

Evaluation by Cradle 2 Career
June 2022

Executive Summary

This report looks at the impact of WFS's digital equity work over the course of the 2021-2022 funding year. The evaluation used process mapping, family exit interviews, and intake/attendance tracking forms.

Summary Recommendations

1. Continue to fill out process maps..
2. Reconvene the core team and identify goals, tactics, and implementation partners for the early education component of the grant.
3. Continue to collect and aggregate billing data.
4. Co-design technology tutoring curriculum with families and partners.
5. Engage with marketing agencies to visualize impact and share the story as an advocacy component.

Context

Whole Families Systems work in Rochester MN is funded in part by MDH. Whole Families Systems work is focused on collaboration and systems change work that impacts early childhood education, in particular for recent immigrant and refugee families. There are three main branches to the initiative: digital equity, transportation, and access to resources.

This evaluation is focused on the efforts made by the initiative with regards to digital equity, particularly the technology tutoring component piloted by SASSA and Project FINE.

The focus of this evaluation is two-fold:

1. What has been the impact of this work over the past year?
2. What are some changes we can make to the work moving forward?

Throughout this evaluation, we wish to draw special attention to the fact that this is an evaluation of a pilot, which may or may not be scaled in the coming year. More than the growth/expansion of the existing program, we want to call into question the assumptions that our initial work was built on, and identify ways in which the program may be improved - whether that is scaling, pivoting, or being incorporated into another branch of the work.

To that end, we are working directly with families served in order to understand the impact of the program on their families.

Description of Program Objectives in Year 3

As described in our May site monitoring report, WFS partners planned to build on the prototypes created in years 1 and 2, consisting of broadband relief and laptop distribution to increase access to early childhood education and learning. The greatest changes implemented in Year 3 was consolidating IMAA's focus from three major pillars (transportation, technology, and early childhood education) into the single pillar of technology. Within the technology focus, the largest change was the addition of new digital literacy training conducted by partner organizations.

Program goals have not changed:

- Increase access to technology by continuing to provide families with technology
- Support and empower families by providing resources
- Improve access to broadband
 - Short-term: paying for broadband
 - Long-term: policy and advocacy
- Access to early education

The target population remains low-income immigrant and refugee families with early childhood age children. We define early childhood age children as 0-5, but due to the longitudinal focus of our work, will expand this definition to include children ages 5-8. We define families broadly to include extended family members who often serve as caregivers including grandparents, aunts, etc. as well as expecting parents.

Limitations to this Evaluation

Two main barriers - staff turnover at both site and state as well as a shortened program year - have created limitations to this evaluation.

Firstly, we were not able to incorporate data on childrens' developmental milestones for all children in the program. We are able to receive data for children who received school readiness scholarships, but this is a small group and does not reach all students impacted by the technology program, nor do we know if the families participating in the school readiness component participated in the technology component. With additional time and direction, a more intersectional analysis will be possible in year four.

Secondly, the shortened program year has made it challenging to re-engage the core team with a shared purpose and direction. We plan to use the results of this analysis to jump-start the core team during July and August

Description of Partners

Throughout the first three years, a number of partners have participated in different components of Whole Family Systems work. In addition to the implementation partners listed here, a core team that aids in setting strategy exists. The core team includes leadership from each of the implementation partners in addition to leadership from United Way, Cradle 2 Career, and Olmsted County.

Component	Activity	Partners
Digital Equity	Laptop Distribution	Hawthorne Library Families First IMAA
	Broadband Support	IMAA Listos SASSA Project FINE
	Technology Tutoring	SASSA Project FINE
Early Education Access	School Readiness Slots	Listos Head Start IMAA ParentChild+

Families First has taken the lead on the FFN work as they are the ones who have received funding. IMAA has offered minimal support by informing staff of the program and sharing the information provided by Families First with clients. Currently, there are no plans to restart this work as Families First has its own navigator supporting them.

This report focuses primarily on technology tutoring. Two agencies were implementation partners.

Project FINE is a nonprofit organization that helps newcomers integrate into the Winona community. They provide foreign language interpreters and translators as well as opportunities for education, information, referral, and empowerment for immigrants and refugees. They serve families primarily from the Spanish-speaking and Hmong communities.

SASSA (Somali American Social Service Association) is a non-profit organization that was previously known as Somalia Rebuild Organization and it was established in the mid of 2012. The Somali American Social Service Association, or SASSA, has worked to improve the situation of immigrants in Minnesota through education, planning, and resource development. SASSA serves Somali families.

Design of Tutoring Sessions

SASSA and Project FINE have both been planning and implementation partners since WFS year one. They volunteered their staff time and expertise to provide a pilot for the technology tutoring component of our digital equity work. SASSA and Project FINE were provided with intake, attendance, and exit interview forms. Program staff provided a list of potential topics and skills that families would request. Program staff were instructed to work with families to set goals in each of the six domains established by the Aspen Institute. WFS project staff encouraged program staff to develop their own process for providing tutoring.

SASSA provided sessions in a group setting, while Project FINE provided tutoring in an individual setting. SASSA delivered pre-determined program content, while Project FINE worked with program participants to establish individualized goals and program content. These differences in delivery model are viewed as cultural, geographical, and capacity adaptations that best serve each agency and their constituents.

Outcomes data is significantly different for the two delivery models - with 100% of individual session participants reaching their goals and 31% of group session participants reaching their goals. This is likely due to the different delivery mechanism. As we plan for future iterations of the technology tutoring, it is important to consider the balance of reach (group lessons) versus depth of service (individual lessons) and how that can be developed to be sustainable and replicable across sites. We will be working with SASSA and Project FINE to learn to what degree the different delivery model was a cultural adaptation or a capacity adjustment, and work to address any barriers preventing the agencies from operating under their preferred model.

Description of Families Participating in Technology Tutoring

	SASSA	Project FINE	All
Number of Families	18	35	53
Average Family Size	5.5	4.6	4.9
Average Adults per Family	1.7 (1, 2, or 3)	2 (1, 2, or 3)	1.9 (1, 2, or 3)
Average Children under 5 per Family	1.8	1.4	1.5
Participants per Family	1	range 1-4	range 1-4
Average Years in US	6.7	15	12.5
Children under Five in School	0%	24%	NA

A note on the average number of years in the United States: The average number of years in the US prompted a discussion amongst the team whether some of the technology tutoring work was perhaps out of scope, as the average number of years appeared high. However, upon further disaggregation, it became apparent that the number of years was highly associated with languages spoken in the home, likely reflective of the respective world events that prompted families to move to the United States. Nearly all families served by Project Fine who had been in the US for 0-5 years were Spanish-speaking families, while families in the US for more than 5 years served by Project Fine were predominantly Hmong-speaking. All families served by SASSA were Somali-speaking.

This is important to note when talking about designing responsive or culture-specific technology tutoring, as the culture served may also align closely to English language skills, general education levels across the population served, and the needs that the technology can help serve. Curriculum designed for one partner, in turn, may not be relevant for another partner if they serve a population that differs in these key parameters, making scaling somewhat more challenging.

Number of Years in US	Initial Interviews	SASSA	Project FINE
0-2 Years	13%	0%	14%
3-5 Years	39%	33%	18%
6+ Years	48%	67%	68%

Description of Device Usage by Families Participating in Technology Tutoring

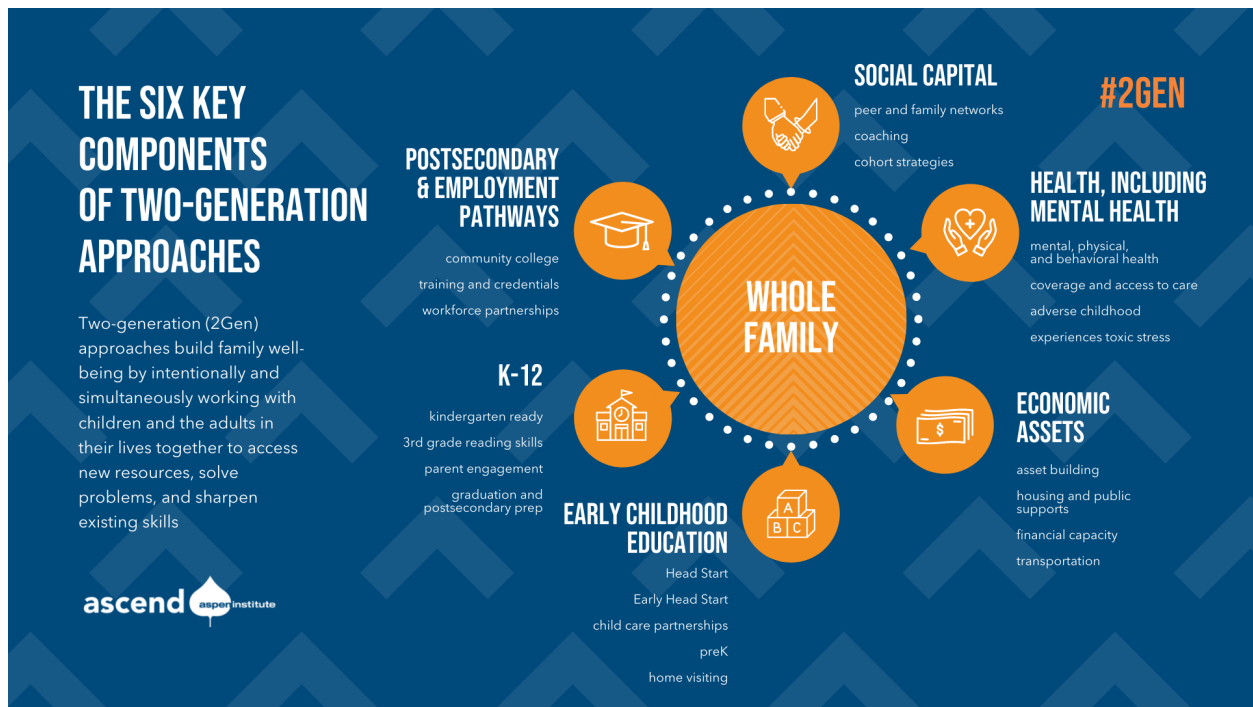
	SASSA	Project FINE	All
Received Broadband Only	0%	52%	37%
Received Laptop Only	28%	0%	8%
Neither Broadband or Laptop	44%	45%	44%
Both Broadband and Laptop	28%	2%	10%
Rely on Hotspot	5%	9%	8%
Frequently Connect with Work	0%	25%	17%
Frequently Connect with Resources	6%	82%	63%
Frequently Connect with Child's School	72%	75%	73%
Frequently Connect with Friends and Family	0%	100%	76%

Use of Distributed Technology: On average, families that received a laptop, broadband, or both had 3-4 people utilize the distributed technology. The average did not vary significantly based on the technology distributed.

Description of Sessions and Learning Objectives in Technology Tutoring Sessions

	SASSA	Project FINE	All
Number of Sessions by Partner	61	135	196
Number of Sessions per Participant	3.39 (2-4)	3.14 (1-15)	range 1-15
Average Duration of a Session	120 minutes	80 minutes	90 minutes
sessions 0-30 minutes	0%	1%	1%
session 30-60 minutes	0%	33%	20%
sessions 60-90 minutes	0%	30%	24%
sessions over 120 minutes	100%	36%	55%

Families worked with their tutor to identify their goals related to technology (such as connecting with their child's teacher or checking their child's grade) and the tutor assigned the goal to one of the six key components of well-being established by the Aspen Institute. The tutors were provided the graphic below to aid in assigning categories.



SUMMARY OF GOAL CATEGORIES SET BY PARTICIPANTS

	SASSA	Project FINE	All
Early Childhood Education	26%	37%	34%
Economic Assets	0%	10%	7%
Health, Including Mental Health	18%	10%	12%
K-12	33%	24%	27%
Post-Secondary and Employment	23%	12%	15%
Social Capital	0%	7%	5%

	Hmong	Spanish	Somali	All
Early Childhood Education	44%	30%	26%	34%
Economic Assets	10%	9%	0%	7%
Health/Mental Health	10%	11%	18%	12%
K-12	21%	26%	33%	27%
Post-Secondary and Employment	7%	21%	23%	15%
Social Capital	8%	4%	0%	5%

Families also provided an open-ended description of the goals they were setting during tutoring. For more insight, these responses will be available for future curriculum-planning groups.

FAMILY EXIT INTERVIEWS

All families completed a final interview with the program staff who lead the tutoring sessions. A summary of goals and outcomes are listed below. 31% of SASSA participants and 100% of Project FINE participants reported that they were able to reach their goals over the previous month. As noted above, this difference is likely due to the difference in program delivery/design

SASSA

100%

Of all the participants in technology tutoring, all of them are in families that have children under the age of five. Many families have more than one child under the age of five, with the average being 1.8 children under five years old per family.

0-39%

Of the families that participated in technology tutoring, none of them had children enrolled in school. However, this may have been a misinterpretation of 'schooling' as 39% listed reasons why their children were enrolled in their current early education option.

100%

Of the parents whose children under the age of five were not currently enrolled in any early education or schooling option, all were receptive to learning more about potential learning options for their children.

Project FINE

100%

Of all the participants in technology tutoring, all of them are in families that have children under the age of five. Many families have more than one child under the age of five, with the average being 1.4 children under five years old per family.

24-32%

Of the families that participated in technology tutoring, approximately a quarter of them had children enrolled in school. However, this may have been a misinterpretation of 'schooling' as 32% listed reasons why their children were enrolled in their current early education option.

71%

Of the parents whose children under the age of five were not currently enrolled in any early education or schooling option, most were receptive to learning more about potential learning options for their children.

Reasons families that give to explain why their children under five are not in school		
	SASSA	Project FINE
Age of Child	18%	76%
Fees/Price	0%	10%
Child not Ready	0%	5%
Don't Know Options	27%	5%
Transportation Issues	0%	5%
Applied but not Admitted	54%	0%

These findings are considered important. Given that 71% and 100% of parents whose children under the age of five not enrolled in school are receptive to learning more about schooling options, incorporating an awareness component into the tutoring curriculum would likely be well-received by families. For SASSA participants, 27% of the parents whose children under the age of five are not enrolled in school say that is due to now knowing the options available to their children, indicating that a culture-specific or population-specific awareness component may be particularly relevant to the Somali community.

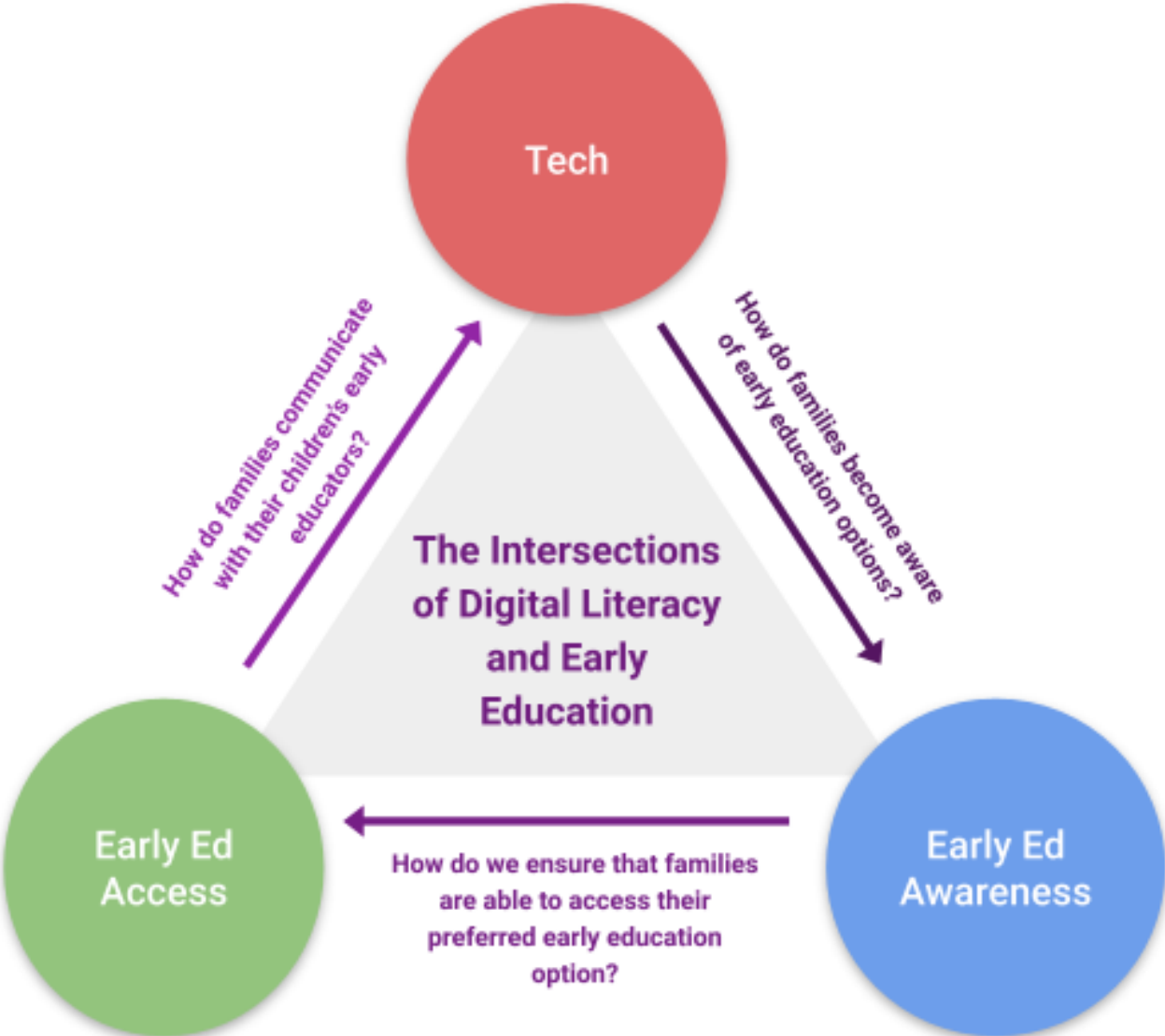
The different reasons given by SASSA and Project FINE families as to why their children are not enrolled in school may be further investigated. In particular, 54% of SASSA participants whose children are not enrolled in school say they applied but their child was not admitted. Many state that this is because they 'applied too late.' **This may warrant additional exploration - is this because there were no more available slots, or because a deadline was missed, or because parents were only aware of one option and did not apply to a second school?**


GAPS IN OUR CURRENT PROCESS

Upon examining our current digital equity and early education efforts, two primary points of disconnect occur:

- If the ultimate goal of our efforts is to increase the number of students enrolled in early education, we must more intentionally leverage our distributed technology and tutoring sessions to both increase awareness of early education options and early education access
- Similarly, the partners engaged in one component of the work (whether that is technology, early ed access, or early ed awareness) are not necessarily engaged in any other components and may in fact be serving entirely distinct populations from other partners - meaning some populations are receiving one or two components, but never all three

Below is a rough outline of three potential programmatic elements - technology, early education awareness, and early education access. Between each pair of elements is a question, asking how we can best leverage the connection between these two elements.



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Early Education Awareness	<p>What our work around early education awareness and identification of partners will be one of the primary July/August activities as we reconvene the core team.</p> 	

RESULTS FROM STAFF INTERVIEWS

At the midpoint of the program year, program staff were asked a handful of questions both to inform future design processes and aid in the interpretation of data collected. Questions were generated in consultation with state partners and by checking on data collected on families and sessions thus far. Key feedback was:

- Early education and K-12 education remain high priorities for families, with 72% of goals set by families being in this domain at the time of the survey
- Program staff would benefit from additional training or developed materials/curriculum
- Program staff were willing to collect billing information

Other findings were consistent with input from families, including how referrals are made. It was also noted that SASSA was doing some empowerment training with families focused on differential pricing. Process learnings from the empowerment training are anticipated to inform the design of future curricula developed jointly with WFS partners and families.

For future process mapping, we would like to conduct interviews with program staff to help further fill in the map provided above to more fully explore how families become aware of early education opportunities and what role partners may take engaging with families.

PRICE ANALYSIS FOR TECHNOLOGY TUTORING - EXIT (SELF-REPORTED)

	SASSA (18 participants)	Project FINE (34 participants)
Primary Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charter/Spectrum - 78% ● Phone Hotspot - 17% ● CenturyLink - 6% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charter/Spectrum - 66% ● HBC - 21% ● Phone - 3%
Duration of Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 0-6 months - 11% ● 7-12 months - 44% ● 13+ months - 44% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 0-6 months - 13% ● 7-12 months - 13% ● 13+ months - 74%
Pricing Analysis	Pricing for SASSA participants using Charter/Spectrum was as expected - participants paid roughly the same based on their speed.	<p>Not enough data from FINE participants using HBC to do a pricing analysis.</p> <p>Project FINE participants using Charter/Spectrum appeared to have pricing irregularities - below, we attempt to determine if this is true or is due to participants mis-remembering billing details.</p>

Broadband Stipends

IMAA received approval from the state to offer families \$500 broadband stipends through our Whole Family Systems program. Of the Project FINE and Listos families receiving broadband stipends, one family had received a laptop through WFS, but aside from that, no recipients of broadband stipends had received a laptop, previous broadband assistance, or technology tutoring through WFS. In other words, families receiving this round of \$500 broadband assistance are families new to WFS digital equity work and may be engaged in future iterations of the technology tutoring program.

For SASSA families, 57% had received a laptop previously, and 60% had received broadband assistance previously, with most families either receiving both or neither. When compared to families participating in technology tutoring, families receiving this round of broadband stipends were similar in terms of internet providers and length of contract with the current internet provider. Due to indications of pricing irregularities noted above, copies of family bills were collected to learn more.

One sample size large enough to gain any insight from was Project FINE participants subscribed to either HBC or Charter/Spectrum. HBC showed a small range for similar service (\$60-\$70 for 150 MBPS). Charter/Spectrum showed a similar range. Prices paid by customers served by Project FINE are shown on the next page.

Charter/Spectrum - FINE			HBC Customers - FINE		
Customer 1	\$ 54.99	150 MBPS	Customer 1	\$ 59.56	150 MBPS
Customer 2	\$ 68.99	150 MBPS	Customer 2	\$ 59.66	150 MBPS
Customer 3	\$ 54.99	200 MBPS	Customer 3	\$ 60.00	150 MBPS
Customer 4	\$ 74.99	400 MBPS	Customer 4	\$ 69.66	150 MBPS
Customer 5	\$ 74.99	400 MBPS	Customer 5	\$ 70.40	150 MBPS
			Customer 6	\$ 70.40	150 MBPS

The other sample large enough to do a small pricing analysis was SASSA families purchasing Charter/Spectrum services. The majority (21 out of 28) submitted the envelope for their bill, and those who submitted a bill did not include the speed. There was very little variance in price paid. Prices paid by customers are shown on the next two pages.

Charter/Spectrum Customers - SASSA	
Customer 1	\$ 79.99
Customer 2	\$17.99 (assist only)
Customer 3	\$74.99
Customer 4	\$79.99
Customer 5	\$79.99
Customer 6	\$69.99
Customer 7	\$79.99

Federal Broadband Assistance Program

12% of participants engaged in technology tutoring were already utilizing the federal broadband assistance program, but nearly all of those who were not enrolled were interested in learning more about their eligibility. In speaking with program staff, many front-line staff were unaware of the broadband assistance program and had not been promoting it to families. Anecdotally, when staff do work with families to enroll in the program, it is difficult to correctly fill out the application due to the amount of time it takes to complete (about 45 minutes) and language barriers (Somali is currently unavailable). Similar barriers may exist in collecting accurate billing information - a number of families appear to misremember or not know the speed or cost of their internet. Anecdotally, program staff say that the internet bill is often paid by a family member outside the household or is set to autopay, and tracking down an actual bill often proves difficult.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

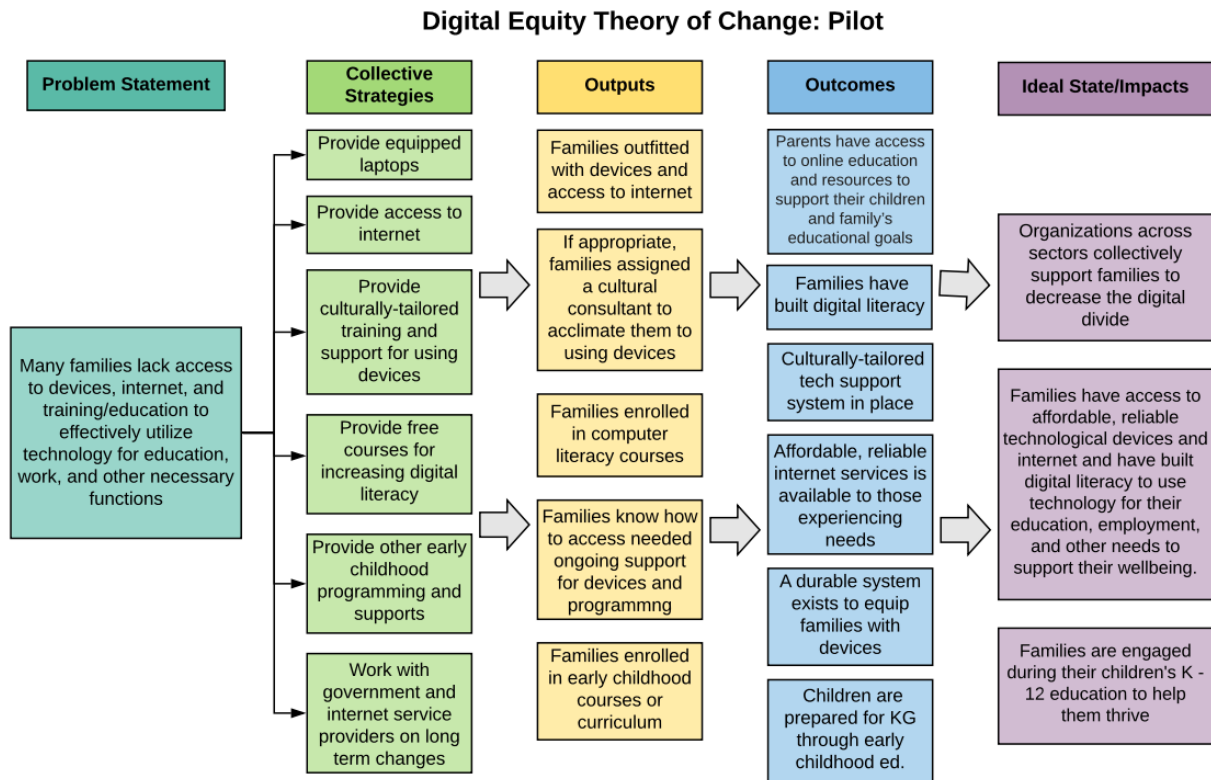
Our current digital equity work has three primary gaps:

1. The three program elements (technology, early education access, and early education awareness) are not intentionally connected across partners
2. There is not a clearly-identified way that partners are increasing awareness of early education options, other than word-of-mouth and pre-existing relationships
3. Program staff are constrained both in terms of capacity to provide tutoring and enroll participants in the federal broadband assistance program

If we are to use the triangle illustrating the intersections between technology, early education awareness, and early education access, it can be seen that our program model can be modified to more fully leverage the technology to increase early education awareness and support parents in engaging with their children’s education.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Our theory of change for the digital equity pilot (below) has largely been validated by our experiences during this program year. However, as stated above, the early education components have remained largely disconnected from the technology tutoring and a more intentional conversation about their intersection will be discussed this summer to propel the partners to the next phase of our two-gen work.



NEXT STEPS - RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Continue to fill out process maps.** We will work to clarify each partner's role within their component (technology, early education awareness, early education access) and create pathways to ensure that families are able to fully engage in each component of the work, either with one primary partner or by referrals to other partners. A key element within this discussion is to understand the availability of early childhood programming in our communities, the requirements for children, how future families will be identified for scholarships, to ensure that families are aware of all the opportunities across all partners and not relying solely on word-of-mouth and pre-existing relationships.
- 2. Reconvene the core team and identify goals, tactics, and implementation partners for the early education component of the grant.** The opportunity exists to embed early childhood awareness and access elements into technology tutoring. Another opportunity that exists is to embed technology tutoring (as well as distribution) within early education components. An exploration into the pros and cons of each delivery model (individual session and group sessions) will be essential prior to scaling.
- 3. Continue to collect and aggregate billing data.** Currently, our pricing analysis is limited by a small sample size. Current findings do not indicate pricing irregularities, but anecdotally, many individuals at both the program and leadership levels have worked with families (or themselves) who have experienced differential pricing.
- 4. Co-design technology tutoring curriculum with families and partners.** Regardless of how the pilot is scaled in the future, it is important to identify a couple of core content components that are implemented across partners. These may be pre-existing curricula (such as [Parenting in the Moment](#)) that leverage technology, pre-existing curricula that teach technology, or curricula that are co-created by families and partners.
- 5. Engage with marketing agencies to visualize impact and share the story as an advocacy component.** This work is already started and is expected to be completed in the fall of 2022.