



Opportunity Blueprint

2021

Opportunity Blueprint

Building Transformative Change

INNOVATIONS FOR THE NEXT YEAR AND BEYOND



In 2020, Tech Goes Home—as an organization, as a team, and as a model for achieving digital equity—responded to previously unimaginable change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing national consciousness around systemic racism. Over the past year, TGH has:

- Revised previously fundamental elements of our model to adapt to the realities of the pandemic, including responding to the transition to telehealth, rise in unemployment, and shift to remote education.
- Taken the best of our hands-on, in-person digital skills building and developed effective approaches to provide virtual courses.
- Begun delivering devices to learners' homes at the beginning of courses—rather than upon graduation—to ensure learners had a device with which to take the course.
- Recognized that broadband adoption remains insufficient for too many constituents and found ways to provide adequate internet access at no cost to all learners who needed it.
- Redoubled efforts to raise philanthropic dollars for this work and launched multiple new earned revenue partnerships with organizations serving our target population.
- Shared our expertise and thought leadership in the media and other platforms, increasing the public profile of both the issue of the digital divide and our organization's work to close it.

The many changes and challenges that emerged in 2020, as well as the substantial and unexpected opportunities, led TGH to examine our strategic plan and identify the steps we need to take to have the greatest impact on digital equity in 2021 and beyond. Through a thoughtful process that engaged our staff and Board of Directors, we identified four areas for immediate expansion: growing our earned revenue partnerships, extending our geography, developing a robust Distance Learning model, and building public policy and advocacy capacity. The following Opportunity Blueprint provides an outline of our strategy for taking these critical next steps to move TGH, and our mission of closing the digital divide, forward.

Current Conditions

January 2021

As we developed our strategy for expansion, we took into account the current challenges and opportunities impacting our work and the issues that drive it.

Challenges:

- The COVID-19 pandemic is deepening digital inequities and will have long-lasting impacts on the economics, education, and health of the communities we serve in Greater Boston and beyond.
- The economic repercussions of the pandemic are straining public sector dollars and creating a surge of competing priorities for funding and support from donors and policymakers.
- A continuing national shortage of affordable technology, like Chromebooks, has posed new challenges for our operations getting learners the tools they need to thrive.
- The education, civic, healthcare, and employment systems that are essential to pursuing economic opportunity and accessing critical resources are moving increasingly online, and there is no statewide or national plan to provide internet access, technology, and training for those who are excluded.

Opportunities:

- An extraordinary increase in awareness of digital equity has triggered substantial growth in funding interest and commitments, as well as a growing urgency on the part of policymakers to address the issue.
- The forced transition from in-person operations to an entirely virtual model has created space for Tech Goes Home to reevaluate our operational and revenue models, and think through innovative ways to maximize our efficiency and explore new efforts like expanding our public sector advocacy, virtual offerings, and earned revenue partnerships.
- The growing national consciousness around racial injustice has led TGH to examine our programmatic models and reaffirm the importance of grounding our work in culturally competent offerings that recognize digital inequity as an issue rooted in systemic racism.

Operational Expansion: Earned Revenue

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Tech Goes Home had accumulated a significant waiting list of organizations seeking to partner with us to bring our programming to their constituencies. While our ability to take on those new programmatic partnerships has often been restrained by our ability to fund them, the surge in demand for our services, along with a heightened prioritization of digital equity by funders, has led to a rapid increase in new inquiries from organizations who are able and willing to provide the funding to establish new partnerships with us. As a result, over the past several months, TGH has begun to take on more partner sites and launch courses with organizations of all sizes that have committed to “self funding” our programming.

In 2021, to build off of this model and leverage the opportunity to engage more partners and learners, we will formalize an earned revenue strategy, examine how earned revenue can support our growth, and set goals and measurable outcomes for learners participating in TGH courses at self-funded sites.

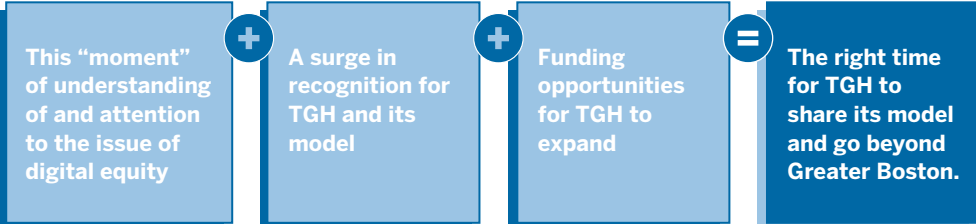
Expanding TGH’s service to organizations who can self-fund courses presents new challenges and requires new policies. It has also prompted an examination of how to ensure continued equity in providing the TGH model to communities in need. As part of developing the Opportunity Blueprint, we have drafted principles and standards for these types of partnerships, defined how its waitlist will operate going forward, and committed to clearly establishing two partnership pathways: a pathway for organizations where TGH funds the model and a pathway for organizations that can self-fund the model.

Geographic Expansion

In 2021, Tech Goes Home is providing ongoing programming in ten communities around Greater Boston. The vast majority of this programming—as well as TGH partnerships, instructors, and learners—are in the city of Boston (approximately 90%). For several years, TGH has experienced far more demand from neighboring communities than we have funding to meet.

With the increase in public understanding and concern about digital equity in 2020, along with an unprecedented need for our services, we see a number of opportunities to expand our impact by establishing programs and partnerships beyond the Greater Boston area. We plan to expand into communities that will most benefit from digital equity programming and are strategically aligned with our mission.

Tech Goes Home’s team is confident that:



By the end of this current calendar year, we will have made considerable progress toward a formal geographic expansion strategy including securing funding for new sites. We will begin by evaluating the demand for TGH partnerships and expertise from outside our current service area, alongside in-bound inquiries, and build a strong framework for expansion. Our initial pilot expansion may target select Massachusetts Gateway Cities, where substantially similar populations to TGH’s current learners and both known and unknown potential partners are available to pilot expansion. With significant investment, we would launch a rapid expansion of staff and resources, funded exploration of new geographies, and immediate pilots. The level of funding we secure will determine how quickly we reach our expansion milestones and grow our impact beyond our current Greater Boston footprint.

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Course Expansion: Distance Learning

Out of necessity, Tech Goes Home's long-standing model of in-person digital learning pivoted during Spring 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several courses changed mid-term to become entirely virtual. Throughout the remainder of the year, we were able to provide a virtual learning model with more than 150 partner organizations and approximately 300 instructors. As TGH supports learners who have little or no previous experience in the digital world, this pivot has been an extraordinary shift. Transitioning to our Distance Learning model has had massive logistical implications: for instance, how does one supply disparate learners, for many of whom English is a second language, with a device and set up internet access in a timely fashion? Piloting the Distance Learning model has nonetheless provided us with immediate data on how the model works outside of the classroom and how an entirely remote approach could be used to scale the program going forward.

As virtual courses continue into 2021, TGH will focus on closely examining our Distance Learning model for success: are learner outcomes as strong in the virtual setting as they are in the classroom? Preliminary 2020 data suggests they are. Further questions that TGH will examine in the upcoming year include: how can TGH adopt rapidly advancing Distance Learning principles to the 2021 course offerings and build a Distance Learning solution that augments its core in-person model? How could a permanent Distance Learning strategy permit TGH to scale even faster than a solely in-person approach would allow? Can the TGH model now reach individuals previously unable to participate in an on-site course due to the fluctuations of an hourly job, health constraints, limited access to transportation, or other barriers to in-person learning?

In 2021, TGH will bring our Distance Learning model into our broader programmatic and operational models in an intentional and measurable way that offers substantial opportunities for expansion. We will integrate Distance Learning with our core model for digital equity and use the data to evaluate how to best continue Distance Learning when no longer required because of the pandemic.

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Operational Expansion: Advocacy

Tech Goes Home has grown rapidly in the past few years in terms of learners served, as well as with regard to quality measures, support for instructors, and integration with partners. While multiple digital equity organizations have sought TGH's expertise, we have not previously engaged in a targeted effort to engage public decision makers about digital equity or TGH's model, whether for replication or simply to inform about the issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the realities of the digital divide and caused local, state, and federal legislators and policymakers to consider policies and programs to support remote students, reduce seniors' isolation, ensure virtual healthcare access, and broaden access to online resources for the newly unemployed. From our years of experience in this work, we believe that it is essential that any policy directed at addressing digital inequity be deeply connected to community-based programs that focus on providing people with the digital devices, connectivity, and skills necessary to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the online world.

As a result, in 2021, TGH hired a Director of Advocacy and launched an advocacy initiative. TGH hopes to share our experience and strategies in pursuing digital equity and serve as a resource and thought partner for the public decision makers responsible for developing a state and nationwide approach to closing the digital divide. The Director of Advocacy will also cultivate and motivate mission-aligned allies and partners to strengthen the coalition of voices calling for an urgent and bold approach to digital equity.

Conclusion

2020 brought enormous challenges to the communities that Tech Goes Home serves and highlighted the urgency of advancing digital inclusion. In response, we are redoubling our efforts to make strides towards digital equity and expand our impact. By committing to expansion—in revenue strategy, geographic reach, course design, and organizational influence—TGH has set an ambitious agenda for 2021 and beyond. The extraordinary response to the COVID-19 pandemic by our staff, board, partners, instructors, volunteers, funders, and, most importantly, our tireless learners, proves that 2021 can be a year of tremendous growth as well, through the pursuit of expansion and the achievement of the Opportunity Blueprint goals.

Tech Goes Home is grateful to our community of givers at all levels who help make our work possible. We are proud to recognize the following lead supporters:

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