

NC Department of Health and Human Services

Digital Inclusion and Equity for Farmworkers

Natalie Rivera, MPH
Internet Connectivity Project Coordinator

 **NC FARMWORKER HEALTH PROGRAM**

Date

04/09/2021

Internet Connectivity Project Overview

- ▶ **Purpose statement:**
To support farmworkers in gaining access to telemedicine, social support, emergency communication and educational opportunities by providing internet connectivity, digital literacy and technology resources.
- ▶ **Objective 1 - Emergency Response:** Ensure internet connectivity among farmworkers living in migrant housing, experiencing isolation/quarantine, are high risks with one or more chronic conditions or students or family members who are students.
- ▶ **Objective 2 - Medium-term Solutions:** Address the unique needs of migrant housing by providing technical assistance, reimbursements, internet hubs and hotspot lending programs.
- ▶ **Objective 3 - Digital Equity and Inclusion:** Ensure digital equity and inclusivity for farmworkers by collaborating, communicating, and strategizing among broadband initiatives to resolve the digital divide.



Special Thanks to Current Hotspot Outreach Partners



- ▶ Vecinos
- ▶ NC Farmworker Project
- ▶ Manos Unidas/Black River Health
- ▶ Rural Health Group
- ▶ Kinston Community Health Center
- ▶ AppHealthCare
- ▶ NC Field
- ▶ Access East
- ▶ Good Samaritan Clinic
- ▶ BlueRidge

2020 Hotspot Distribution Data

Between August to December 2020

- ▶ 83 hotspots were distributed to farmworkers
- ▶ 13 hotspots were utilized by outreach staff
- ▶ 712 farmworkers were reported to have access to the internet

ECU Internet Connectivity Evaluation Update



ECU Process Evaluation - an ongoing evaluation with our three internet connectivity models



Currently, finalizing a preliminary process evaluation paper on “Digital Inclusion for Farmworkers in a Pandemic...”



Participating outreach partners have been interviewed



Next step is interviewing growers and farmworkers around their experience

Let's Get Connected: Assessing the Digital Divide for Farmworkers

Common Themes

- ▶ Broadband infrastructure in rural areas is not sufficient for digital equity (added barriers exist in migrant housing) and should continue to prioritize
- ▶ Digital literacy education should be assessed and prioritized through both technology allocation and educational opportunities
- ▶ Uniting with whole farm initiatives inclusive of all members of the agricultural community (growers, farmworkers and family members) will have a stronger combined impact on economy and overall well-being



Challenges with Migrant Housing and Digital Inclusivity and Equity

- ▶ Migrant housing is typically located in rural setting with limited options for internet connectivity
- ▶ Migrant housing often hidden in remote locations contributes to structural vulnerability
- ▶ Migrant farmworkers could be excluded from broadband infrastructure planning due to remote location and seasonal nature of the work
- ▶ With term contracts, migrant farmworkers may have issues setting up internet connectivity under their own names
- ▶ With the number of workers typically living in one house or in one area, bandwidth is often over capacity; therefore slow.
- ▶ Signal may be impeded by metal or concrete building structure
- ▶ When cellular data is the only options, the cost may not be affordable



M H I C

MIGRANT HOUSING INTERNET CONNECTIVITY



Solution 1: Wired connection: Fiber, Cable, DSL or Fixed Wireless
Resource: Migrant Housing Internet Connectivity Reimbursement Program will provide up to \$1000.00 per migrant housing unit for setting up internet connectivity including: MIFI hotspots, routers, antennas/boosters, set-up, and service fees. Proof of payment required for reimbursement.



Solution 2: Cellular connection for small group
Resource: MIFI Hotspot Lending Program will provide through a local partner a MIFI hotspot with unlimited data. Available to migrant housing without access to alternative wired connection and with less than 20 workers in one location.



Solution 3: Cellular connection for large group
Resource: Internet Hub Pilot Project will provide a powerful cellular network router, antenna, installation and an unlimited data plan for the season. Available to migrant housing without access to alternative wired connections and with more than 20 workers in one location.



**NORTH CAROLINA
AGROMEDICINE INSTITUTE**

Partners for Health and Safety In
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries

East Carolina University • NC State University • North Carolina A & T State University

	Migrant Housing Profile
Contact	Natalie Rivera
Farm Name	Rivera Farms
Farm Address	3XXX Jones Dr. Mebane, NC
County	Alamance
Camp Addresses	3XXX Jones Dr. Mebane, NC
Camp Description	Metal Barracks
Number of Housing Units	2
Number of Workers	8
Months Occupied	May to October
Current Services?	None
Satellite Image	
FCC Results	FCC Link
Internet Options	Results
Fiber	none
Cable	Yes, but not available
DSL	None
Fixed Wireless	None
Cellular WIFI Options	Verizon and AT&T
Satellite	Yes, but not sufficient
Space X	Pending

Migrant Housing Internet
Connectivity Worksheet

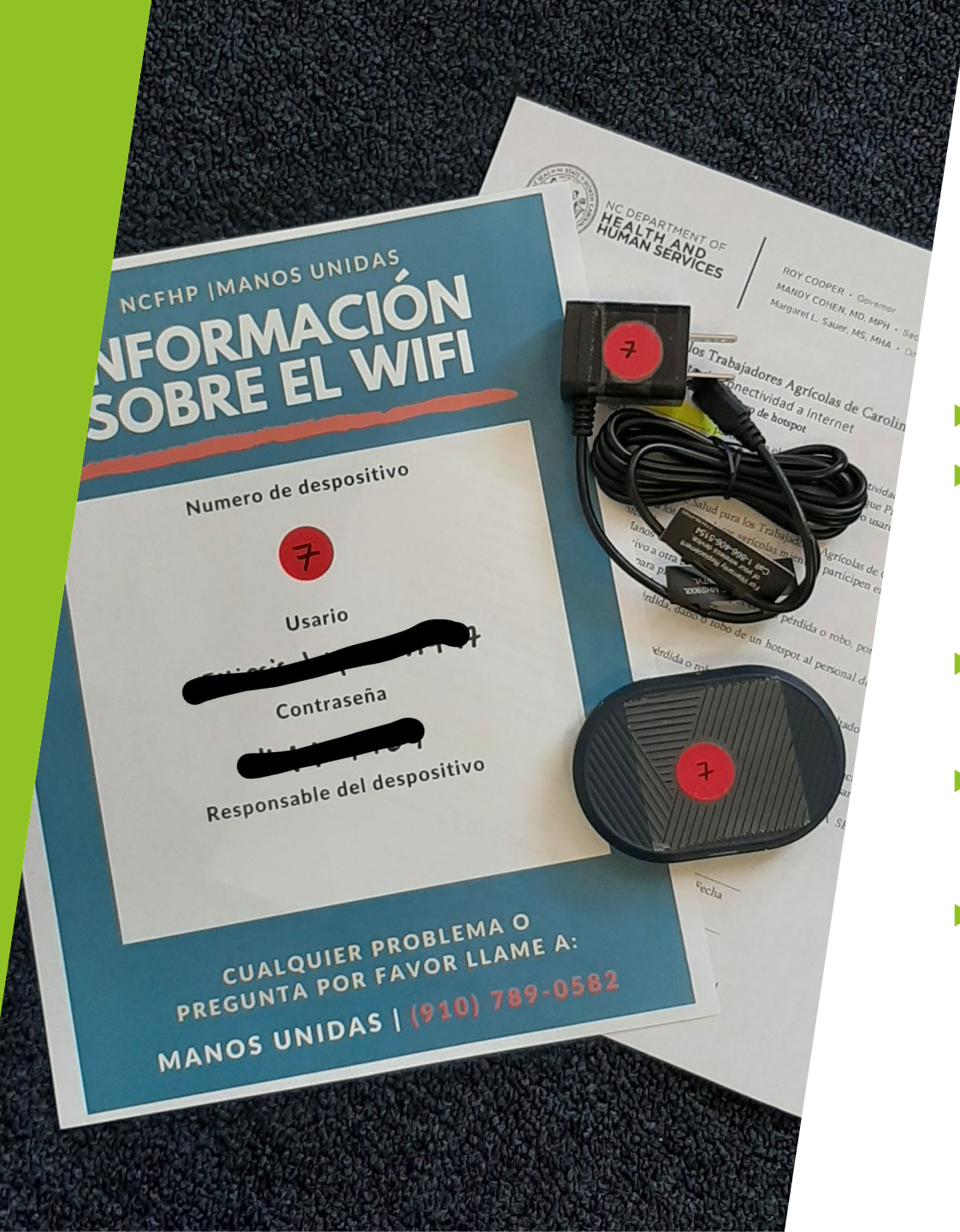
Data for Other Solutions

- ▶ Migrant Housing Internet Connectivity Reimbursement Program
 - ▶ Actively working with about 10 farms on setting up wired connectivity
 - ▶ 3 farms currently have set up connection in migrant housing reach a total of **326 farmworkers**
- ▶ Internet Hub Pilot Project
 - ▶ Requested 7 internet hub solutions for 3 farms
 - ▶ Once installed will serve **337 farmworkers**



Best Practice for Hotspot Distribution

- ▶ Provide Digital Literacy Education
- ▶ Provide WIFI Flyer with Network Name and Password
 - ▶ Consider changing network and password to easy name
- ▶ Test out WIFI upon distribution
 - ▶ Have someone practice connecting
- ▶ Have someone in the group sign the “lending form” and be the designated person in charge of the hotspot
- ▶ Talk about the evaluation opportunity (\$20 for all participants)
 - ▶ Paul’s WhatsApp is +1 (252) 714-8786





DIGITAL INCLUSION AND EQUITY FOR FARMWORKERS

The Farmworker Internet Connectivity project increases the number of farmworker labor camps that have reliable internet connectivity so that farmworkers can access lifesaving information throughout the pandemic. It provides telehealth services, and can stay connected to help workers to relieve the stress of isolation and quarantine.

Farmworkers are especially vulnerable in emergency situations.

Hurricanes, flooding, extreme heat, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic, have all demonstrated the need for reliable communication with migrant farmworkers. Throughout the COVID-19

Key Terms

[Learn more through the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office](#)

Digital Divide: The gap between those who have access to technology, the internet and digital literacy training and those who do not.

Digital Equity means that all people and communities can access and

NEW Digital Inclusion Webpage

NEW BAND-NC Mini Grant

- ▶ **BAND-NC will provide mini-grants to communities across the state who want to implement digital inclusion plans, begin a digital inclusion planning process, or who are looking to meet immediate digital needs.**
- ▶ **Only one grant per county**
- ▶ If you have questions or technical difficulties, reach out to Samantha Graham at sjgraha2@ncsu.edu.
- ▶ Natalie Rivera and Joseph Lee, PhD willing to review draft application

Upcoming dates:

- ▶ April 30 at 11:59 p.m.: Application Deadline
- ▶ July 2021: Second round of BAND-NC grants open

Digital Literacy Resources



Search



Cómo mantenerse informado

2

4

5

6

Quarterly Hotspot Survey

Organization: Kinston Community Health Center is selected

3

For each hotspot, indicate the current status and (if applicable) the name of farm or camp nickname where it is located and number of farmworkers with access.

	Column Options ▾	Column Options ▾	Column Options ▾
	Select current status	Options If applicable	If applicable
		Name of farm or camp nickname	Number of farmworkers with access
Hotspot 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hotspot 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hotspot 3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hotspot 4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

[Click here to edit items...](#)

Next Steps

- ▶ To join or to troubleshoot the Hotspot Lending Outreach Partner Program email Natalie.rivera@dhhs.nc.gov
- ▶ Report Quarterly on MIFI hotspot status next due date April 30th
- ▶ Check out the NCFHP Digital Inclusion Webpage for ongoing updates and resources (will also continue to include on the weekly newsletter)
- ▶ Keep an eye out for the next Digital Inclusion and Equity for Agricultural Community invite
- ▶ Connect farmworker participants to ECU evaluation team for qualitative interviews
- ▶ Share digital literacy videos with farmworkers
- ▶ Promote Migrant Housing Internet Connectivity Project
- ▶ More to come on Podcast, Space X and FCC Reimbursement Program.....

