



Tips can help you become a #LaptopHero

by: Jeremy Hegle

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Early inquiries tell us what employers need to know to join the Employer Laptop Challenge

On April 13 the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City launched the [Employer Laptop Challenge](#). The campaign's goal is to reduce the digital divide by getting other employers to join us in donating used computers to nonprofit refurbishers. Refurbishers then provide the computers to lower-income people who need them to do homework, attend college, apply for jobs, and more. The need was great before COVID-19 - about a third of low-income households do not have a computer at home - and since the pandemic it has become critical.

The launch triggered interest from employers across the country. A few, such as the Platte Valley Bank in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and Snap IT Solutions in Overland Park, Kansas, had devices ready to donate and just needed to know where to send them. Other employers were interested but needed some guidance on how to make it work. Answers to these questions may also help you become a #LaptopHero.

Desktops are also welcome ...

... as are tablets, Chromebooks, docking stations and other ancillary devices.

Your employer's process for handling older computers might need to be revisited.

One employer we talked to said his company shreds the hard drives, then recycles the rest. The company is in a Tennessee town that lacks a computer refurbisher to "wipe" data from their machines (a process known as data destruction). They thought that shredding the hard drives was the only way to ensure their data didn't end up in the wrong hands.

We connected him with the National Cristina Foundation (NCF), which supports a network of nonprofit computer refurbishers across the country. NCF is connecting the employer to a nonprofit refurbisher that can address security concerns at little-to-no cost and get the computers into the hands of those in need.

The Employer Laptop Challenge has no geographic boundaries.

Some employers outside of Kansas City or the seven states of the Tenth District wanted to know whether they could participate. The answer? Absolutely.

In Kansas City, business and civic organizations have united to spread the word to their membership. These organizations include: the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Council and Connecting for Good.

We're working to develop similar partnerships in regions across our District. We're also happy to talk to both employers and community leaders outside the Tenth District. [Send us an email](#) to start the discussion.

You don't need to donate 1,000 computers to participate.

Nor do you need to donate 100, or even 50. Not every employer has that many computers available at any one time. That's OK.

Your devices can be a little older.

One company had some older iPads and asked us whether they could be of use. We contacted Tony Frank at PCs for People in Denver to see. Tony said that the iPads' age does limit their ability to be used for telehealth applications, however, they can still support internet browsing and other applications. The donation was arranged and now some low-income seniors will be able to access services online and FaceTime their grandkids.

If you are unsure of how to make a donation work, but are interested in trying, let us know.

The approach you take to donating computers may vary from that of other employers. There is no one right way to do it. If you have questions or want tips from how other employers addressed internal challenges, [let us know](#). We're happy to help.

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Jeremy Hegle is assistant vice president and Community Affairs Officer (CAO). In this role, Hegle leads the Tenth District's [Community Development department](#) with responsibility for leading and executing the Bank's districtwide community and economic development initiatives, which address challenging issues affecting lower-income individuals, underserved communities and small businesses' access to credit. He also represents the Kansas City Fed on the Federal Reserve System's CAO subcommittee and will manage the Bank's [Community Development Advisory Council](#). Prior to being named CAO in 2023, Hegle led the Bank's digital equity efforts. In 2019 Hegle co-authored [Disconnected: Seven lessons on fixing the digital divide](#), a layperson's overview of the digital divide. He led efforts to narrow the digital divide using three strategies: Expanding access to affordable home broadband. [Collaborating with state broadband directors](#), federal agencies, and local government on broadband deployment strategies and increased access through [affordable internet programs](#). Increasing the supply of low-cost computers by encouraging employers to [donate their used computers](#) to nonprofit refurbishers, schools and community organizations. [Informing banks](#), foundations, government and policymakers of the complex factors that cause the digital divide, the latest research on the topic, and creative solutions to fix it. Hegle joined the Kansas City Fed in 2015. Previously, he served in the Army National Guard and later helped launch KCSOURCELINK, a small-business support organization that links thousands of entrepreneurs with resources to start, grow and accelerate their businesses. Hegle has a bachelor's in business administration and an M.B.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is one of 12 regional Reserve Banks that, along with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up our nation's central bank. We work in the public's interest by supporting economic and financial stability. The Kansas City Fed's territory includes Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Our headquarters is in Kansas City, with branch offices in Denver, Omaha and Oklahoma City. The Kansas City Fed Community Development Department promotes economic development and public understanding that leads to progress for lower-income individuals and communities. Our focus areas include community development investments, digital inclusion, small business / entrepreneurship, and workforce development.