

Westchester County Association Launches Y-Zone, Community Broadband Pilot in Yonkers

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Fulfilling Community's Urgent Need for WiFi as Part of Project Overcome in New York's 3rd Largest City

On October 21, the [Westchester County Association](#) in partnership with the [City of Yonkers](#), [STEM Alliance](#), [Yonkers Partners in Education \(YPIE\)](#), [Fordham University](#), and [Westhab](#) launched the much-anticipated Yonkers Zone (Y-Zone). This project is made possible through support from [US Ignite](#), the [National Science Foundation \(NSF\)](#) (Award # CNS-2044448), and [Schmidt Futures](#). By utilizing [Citizens Broadband Radio Service \(CBRS\)](#) spectrum, the newly deployed, digital opportunity zone provides free internet access to approximately 250 to 400 need-based households in downtown Yonkers.

"I can speak for our entire team when I say we are thrilled to have successfully launched Y-Zone as part of *Project Overcome*," said Michael N. Romita, President & CEO of the Westchester County Association. "The impact this project will have on the community in Yonkers will be life-changing for so many families who have struggled to have their basic internet needs met throughout their lives and especially this past year amidst the pandemic."

Y-Zone is more than an affordable new connectivity solution, the project is a digital ecosystem that incorporates three core principles. The first is establishing digital equity driven by a coalition of committed local stakeholders, including residents and program youth. Next, the project will aim to achieve widespread adoption through community input and engagement. Lastly, it plans to advance digital fluency by providing device ownership and tech education as well as connectivity.

Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano said, "Now more than ever, there is a growing need to bridge the digital divide that exists in communities across the country. I am so proud Yonkers families will be given an equitable solution to technology that supports the education of our students. Many thanks to our Y-Zone partners, led by WCA and US Ignite, for recognizing that affordable connectivity is vital to the success and future of the city."

The Westchester County Association was selected as a Project OVERCOME grant recipient in March 2021. The Project OVERCOME grant provided awards to seven communities in a \$2.7 million effort designed to connect the unconnected through novel broadband technology solutions. The U.S. NSF conceived of and provided \$2.25 million in funding for the project, and Schmidt Futures provided an additional \$450,000. US Ignite managed the selection process and continues to oversee these projects along with multiple efforts to connect the benefits of emerging technology with some of our community's most challenging needs.

“Not even one year ago, the Y-zone was something that we had just started to conceptualize as part of a National Science Foundation/US Ignite grant proposal by the WCA and its partners,” said Christopher Fisher, Managing Partner, Cuddy & Feder and Digital Committee Chair, Westchester County Association. “It’s amazing to see us less than one year later launch CBRS services and implement a plan to introduce digital equity to hundreds of households through an extraordinary array of partners!”

In order to qualify, residents must live in the service zone which reaches from Glenn Park to Park Hill Avenue, and from downtown Yonkers to Nodine Hill. If you are interested in signing up for Access or Access plus, please contact one of our community partners or email help@yzone.info. Click [HERE](#) to complete the application.

“When we launched Project OVERCOME, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that the projects would offer great insights on innovative connection methods,” said Lee Davenport, Director of Community Development at US Ignite. “This CBRS pilot in Yonkers advances an understanding of the intricacies of deploying this novel technology and highlights the strength among a community organization’s ability to find collaborative solutions to connect the unconnected.”

You can access the latest information on Y-Zone at: YZone.Info.

For more information on Project OVERCOME, please visit: www.US-Ignite.org.