

## Championing Access to Technology for Individuals Living in Poverty



### The Challenge

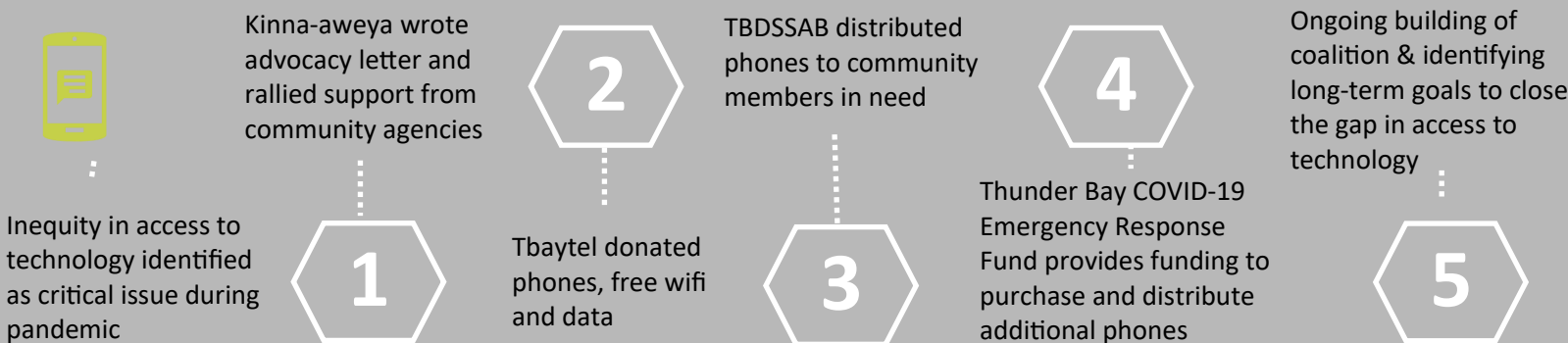
Lack of equitable access to technology has been a long-standing issue for vulnerable community members in Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay's Barriers to Employment & Training Working Group had already identified access to technology as a major barrier prior to the global pandemic; however, the pandemic has greatly exacerbated this and a host of other pre-existing equity issues. With mental and physical health services being delivered virtually, with financial supports requiring online applications and with food security being linked to communication (phone requests for food hampers), access to technology has become a critical issue.



### The Solution

- Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic wrote a letter to the local telecommunications company requesting access to technology support for those living in poverty.
- Organizations represented by the Barriers to Employment & Training Working Group and numerous other community organizations signed on to form a coalition in support of the request for access to technology.
- Tbaytel responded to the request from the community and donated 61 free cell phones with voice and data plans until end of June. The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) supported with distribution; the need was so great all phones were allocated in just a few days.
- Tbaytel also worked with TBDSSAB to identify 5 community housing buildings where wifi hotspots were installed on a trial basis.
- Telus #AllConnectedforGood program reached out and donated cell phones to numerous community organizations.
- Thunder Bay COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund, administered jointly by the Thunder Bay Community Foundation and United Way Thunder Bay, have approved a funding request to provide an additional 50 phones that include a free data plan until the end of June 2020.
- The quick response of community partners to recognize the need for access to technology and to share that information helped to accelerate progress for those in need.
- This coalition continues to move forward with plans for a cell phone drive as well as municipal and provincial advocacy for engagement and results on the equity issue of access to technology.

### The Process



For more information on the Championing Access to Technology for Individuals Living in Poverty, contact:

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