

# Age-Friendly New Jersey Advisory Council: December 6, 2022

Topic: Open Discussion on Technology

## Janet Sharma's Meeting notes

The December 6 meeting was an open discussion on technology, a topic that spans across all work groups and breakout sessions since the Council convened last Spring.

### Big Question: How can technology help older adults?

Emily Greenfield, Rutgers School of Social Work Hub for Aging Collaboration, made two important points at the beginning of the discussion:

- First, we know from consistent research that technological skill and access are matters of intersectional social positions, not of age alone. In current cohorts of older adults, it is increasingly clear that educational levels, income, and socio-economic status, intertwined with structural racism that people experience throughout their entire lives, impact access to technology. It doesn't show up just when they age. Digital literacy and access should be considered issues of equity our discussions.
- Second, improving digital and technological access is a great opportunity for systems-level coordination. Much is being done at the hyper-local level. For example, visionary senior housing leaders are forging multi-sectoral collaborations to get all the pieces in place, such as wifi in senior housing buildings, grants for various social services needs, and partnering with local colleges and libraries for training. State policy and big-scale investments in digital infrastructure are as important as investment in other infrastructure: roads, bridges, electricity, and water. We can work to align state, county, and local policy efforts with actual implementation by community leaders that help people connect through access to a variety of resources.

### Summary of Recommendations/Options

- Be mindful that some older adults do not have the skills or desire to use technology to access services.
- Work to address systemic socio-economic factors/affordability of broadband and other services.
- Develop training on:
  - Using devices – through libraries and schools/college students – for providers as well as for older adults.
  - Topics such as fraud, online safety, and insuring privacy.
- Promote accessibility features for those with disabilities (such as hearing, dyslexia, other sensory issues).
- Invest in adequate infrastructure to support broadband across all sectors.
- Promote access to transportation options based on preferences and ease.
- Address social isolation through technology.
- Always provide an option to reach a human to help. Balance options and choices so people can get what they want and need: