

University of Rhode Island
University of Rhode Island Engaging Generations Cyber-Seniors digiAGE Partnership Phase 2
Update Report to the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging
October 1 to December 31, 2023 (project end date: 6/30/2024)
Project Quarter 7

Purpose

During Phase 2 of this partnership with the Office of Healthy Aging (as part of the digiAGE initiative), we received funding to continue rolling out the iPad training program state-wide. This included the provision of an additional year of Internet connection to individuals from our pilot program who were interested in continuing to learn. We continue data analysis (both quantitative and qualitative) from the pilot project (2021 year), as well as data collection in Phase 2 to assess impacts of the program (2022 and 2023). As a final product for this project, the personnel will disseminate a report on program outcomes to key state/community stakeholders, make presentations to professional associations and to OHA, work on at least three publications in academic journals on program outcomes and findings, and complete a transition plan for the end of this program. In addition, we will develop a video as another means of outreach to the public about the value of the program. This video will provide information about the impact of our program and the experience of our participants.

Personnel

- The project is managed and directed by Dr. Skye Leedah, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development & Family Science & Principal Investigator/Director for the URI Cyber-Seniors program.
- Drs. Erica Estus and Melanie Brasher also play specific, key roles in the project.
 - Dr. Estus is the co-leader of the URI Cyber-Seniors program. She not only recruits and supports the Pharmacy students who serve as student mentors, but she also helps Dr. Leedah support the various community partners in Rhode Island. While she is not being paid for her time serving on this program specifically, her role is important to the program as well as this project.
 - Dr. Brasher helps with the research aspects of the Cyber-Seniors program. For this project, she will conduct the statistical and data analyses for the pre-and post-surveys collected from participants. The plan with the added funding is for Dr. Brasher to also lead data management efforts.
- Dr. Cindy Tsotsoros is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Development & Family Science with expertise in healthy aging, cognitive health for older adults, and

longevity. She is assisting with the data analysis and dissemination efforts for the project. Dr. Tsotsoros received some funding through the project to assist with these efforts.

- Kristin Fraton Souza is the administrative professional for the program and this project. Kristin continues to support students in the program, assist with developing monitoring systems and materials for the program, write manuscripts for the project, and aid with other tasks as needed.
- Meaghan Colvin has been working on the project since Fall 2023. She will now serve as a Graduate Assistant for the Spring 2024 semester, and she was also hired over the winter break to assist with pre/post survey data collection. She conducted pre-surveys with participants and a second pre-survey with select participants as part of her graduate school thesis.
- Gina Barbera was hired to serve as a graduate student coordinator for the program starting Summer 2023. She conducts pre- and post-surveys for the program, supports student mentors and older adult participants, and assists with data entry and data cleaning.
- Josie Santilli leads the implementation of the peer mentor training program and serves as a graduate student coordinator for the program. She is a doctoral student in the College of Health Sciences. Josie also aids with data collection and dissemination tasks. Josie will utilize data collected from this project as part of her dissertation research and may analyze or collect additional data as needed.
- Alejandra Rios is now serving as the Spanish-speaking student mentor/coordinator for the program. She is currently mentoring older participants in Pawtucket and Central Falls, and she is aiding with the re-development of the binder materials in Spanish.
- Leetal Young was hired over the winter break to assist with pre/post survey data collection.
- We are working to identify one paid student mentor to assist in North Providence where there will be a large group of participants in the Spring 2024 semester.

Key Project Tasks

This report is organized based on the key tasks identified in the Work Plan. The key tasks are listed in bold, and any progress and details related to each task is listed beneath.

1. Provide iPads, Hotspots (if needed), and training support to (at least) 170 additional older adults (including the peer mentors)

We will have handed out 227 iPads so far to our combination of older participants and peer mentors for the digiAGE Phase 2 project (30 for fall 2022, 76 for spring 2023, 41 for summer 2023, 34 for fall 2023, 46 planned for Spring 2024). See the Table at the bottom of the report for full details of all people who have taken part in the program through Phase I and Phase 2 of the program. To date, we have purchased 262 total iPads purchased through a combination of Phase 2 digiAGE project funds (170), remaining van Beuren funds (20 in 2023 +40 in 2024=60 total), and City of Providence grant funds (32). Some are being utilized by student mentors in the program.

2. Connect with 2-3 new community site partners to implement the iPad training program

As previously reported, our community partners through this grant period have included: 1) Progreso Latino in Central Falls, 2) Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket, 3) Department of Senior Services in Providence, 4) Pilgrim Senior Center in Warwick, 5) West Warwick Senior & Community Center in West Warwick, 6) Narragansett Community Senior Center, 7) Beechwood Senior Center in North Kingstown, 8) The Senior Center in South Kingstown, 9) Swift Community Center in East Greenwich, 10) Edward King House Senior Center in Newport, 11) Jamestown Senior Center, 12) Charlestown Senior Center; 13) North Providence Mancini Center; 14) Aging Well Inc. in Woonsocket. This included three new partners as part of the digiAGE Phase 2 project. They were Charlestown Senior Center, North Providence Mancini Center, and Aging Well Inc. in Woonsocket.

For the fall 2023 semester, we partnered with 10 sites where we were able to identify a student or peer mentor and that had the most demand. This includes: Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket (Spanish-speaking mentor & peer mentor), Providence (peer mentors at Fox Pointe Manor), Pilgrim Senior Center in Warwick (student mentor and peer mentors), Narragansett Community Senior Center (peer mentor), Beechwood in North Kingstown (student mentor), Senior Center in South Kingstown (student mentors), Swift Community Center in East Greenwich (student mentor), Edward King House in Newport (peer mentor), Jamestown Senior Center (student mentor), and North Providence Mancini Center (peer mentors).

For Spring 2024, we will be working with 11 communities: North Providence Mancini Center (peer mentors), Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket (Spanish-speaking mentor), Jamestown Senior Center (student mentor), Pilgrim Senior Center in Warwick (student mentors and peer mentor), Senior Center in South Kingstown (student mentors), Narragansett Community Center (student mentors), Providence Fox Point Manor (peer mentor and some

Providence phone/virtual (student mentors), Edward King House in Newport (peer mentor), Charlestown Senior/Community Center (student mentors), Beechwood in North Kingstown (student mentor), and Swift Community Center in East Greenwich (student mentor) based on numbers of interested older participants and student availability.

3. Analyze data from the pilot in order to disseminate information to the Rhode Island network and beyond

We already reported about a manuscript accepted to the *Journal of Elder Policy* about the technology outcomes of the pilot program (linked here:

<https://www.journalofelderpolicy.org/journal-of-elder-policy-volume-2-number-3-summer-2023.html> to download a copy).

We also submitted an article to the *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* about the student internship model that was created as part of this program, and we sent back revisions in December and are awaiting a final decision.

We also have an article about the social well-being impacts of the program that was submitted to a special issue on social isolation and loneliness for older adults in the journal *Frontiers of Public Health*. We will be sending back revisions by next week and hope to hear back quickly.

In November 2023, we attended the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Annual Scientific Meeting that was held in Tampa, FL. From our team, Skye Leedah, Josie Santilli, Meaghan Colvin, and Cindy Tsotsoros were able to attend and present. The symposium with the research team from the University of Southern California (who is also implementing a digital inclusion initiative where iPads are provided to older adults from Area Agencies on Aging throughout the state of California) was very successful, and we received many great questions from the audience. We presented two potential papers during this symposium that we anticipate working on in the next year.

4. Collect and gather pre- and post-data from older participants

We have continued our efforts to collect pre- and post-survey data from all older participants. Please see the Table at the end of the report for details. We continue to train students to assist with the data collection efforts via telephone calls to participants.

5. Provide Internet connection through Hotspots to past iPad program participants and new participants in need of internet connection

As previously reported, we are no longer offering Hotspots to any participants. We have 39 people who will maintain internet connection through March 2024.

6. Offer high-quality programming to older adults who speak Spanish through materials and Spanish-speaking student mentors

Alejandra Rios has been serving as the Spanish-speaking student mentor. We also identified a Spanish-speaking peer mentor who is available to help as needed. Alejandra helped three participants in Pawtucket and Central Falls with the program in the Fall of 2023. She has translated the new binder materials into Spanish. In the Spring, we anticipate Alejandra to begin partnering with the ATAP program to begin providing technology support to Spanish-speaking individuals through that program. We anticipate she will mostly work in Pawtucket.

7. Enhance the quality of our programming through offering scheduling assistance to student and older persons in the program & checking in with older persons to ensure support is being offered and sustained

Josie Santilli & Gina Barbera are continuing in their roles as the graduate student coordinators during the spring 2024 semester, and Meaghan Colvin will join them as a graduate research assistant. This team will check-in with students and peer mentors on a consistent basis, check on progress for older participants, contact older participants who are struggling to meet with students, and assist as needed. They also conduct pre/post surveys with participants. We have scheduling sheets that the senior/ community center staff and students utilize to schedule appointments. We use these scheduling sheets to help keep track of what the students are doing at each of the sites.

8. Implement the peer mentor training program at each of our sites with at least 1 peer mentor available each semester

Individual outreach and positive program experience within the community continue to be the best marketing and recruitment method along with a great deal of encouragement and support by the URI program coordinator (Josie Santilli). For the Spring 2024 semester, we anticipate nine peer mentors to assist in North Providence, Providence, Narragansett, Newport, and Warwick. For the Fall 2023 semester, we had nine peer mentors who worked in Narragansett, Newport, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, and Warwick. All peer

mentors complete peer mentor orientation, which includes an introduction to the program, presentation on teaching guidelines, review of handbooks and checklists, and training on scheduling documents and student progress tracking sheets. The feedback from peer mentors and their older adult students continues to be extremely positive and uplifting.

9. Consult with the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging and other entities as needed related to technology devices, Internet connection, and training and support for older adults

Dr. Leedahl is available to consult with OHA or others as needed.

10. Offer consistent Zoom calls to iPad training program participants to share technology and Rhode-Island based resources

We offered a group Zoom call on Friday, November 3rd, 2023 and invited all past and current program participants to attend; 29 people attended. We discussed program updates, GetSetUp, Cyber-Seniors organization, Elder Info, and ATAP/ATEL resources. We received positive feedback from participants related to the call.

11. Evaluate program implementation and outcomes

We have nothing new to present for this as new information was provided last quarter.

12. Develop transition plan

We plan to submit the transition plans for the program as part of the final report due in June. Our latest plans include continuing with student mentoring in areas where there is enough older adult interest in technology assistance to warrant placing a student there for the semester to complete field hours or internship hours and assist older adults bringing in iPads from this program or other own devices. We also plan to work closely with the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Assess Partnership (ATAP) Program to implement a “Tech Time” program. Denise Corson is currently working out the details of how this might work for this semester to see if this would be a sustainable partnership. They have a large amount of technological devices to give out, and our program has the potential for student involvement in assisting with providing technology support; therefore we believe that a partnership might be the best path forward. We will report more details as we figure them out.

Continuing with the peer mentor program in some capacity is also very promising, and many of the peer mentors are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to engage in this way with

the program. We may partner with ATAP on this program as well to identify ways for the peer mentors to continue being on a support team and identify additional individuals willing to join the team. We have sent out a series of emails to various community entities to let them know about our peer mentor offerings and see if they are interested in working together.

Last, we have begun identifying teams of students to help develop technology resources for older adults. See this website for current resources:

<https://web.uri.edu/human-development/outreach-and-research/cyber-seniors/older-adults/>

Another student also developed some additional materials that we are currently editing that will be uploaded to this site, and my class of students this semester will also be developing some additional resources. We are working to utilize best practices for older adult resource development, but we also hope to obtain feedback from older adults themselves so that we can further refine these resources.

For the future, I am hopeful that OHA and OSCIL might be able to fund our URI team to continue offering training for university student and older adult teams to assist older adults across the state. I would also like to continue conducting research utilizing the data already collected, and I would like to develop a survey that could be sent to all older Rhode Islanders to gather information about health, technology, social connections, and community resources. I hope to discuss these ideas with someone at OHA in upcoming months.

URI Cyber-Seniors digiAGE iPad Project from January 2021 to January 19, 2024 (From Pilot Through State-Wide)

Current Numbers from January 2021 to 1/12/2024	Warwick	Pawtucket	West Warwick/Coventry	Providence	Central Falls, start here	South Kingstown	North Kingstown	Narragansett	James town	Newport	East Greenwich	Charlestown	North Providence	Woonsocket	Total
1: # on initial list signed up by partners	75	101	75	145	59	44	10	22	65	61	7	17	48	10	739
2: # completed survey & assigned iPad	65	67	59	84	48	30	6	16	53	51	4	13	37	9	542
3: # currently on list ready for pre-survey call (waiting list)	1	1	0	16	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	1	0	0	25
4: # of iPads Delivered To Individuals	60	66	59	82	46	27	5	15	38	49	4	11	21	9	451
5: # of Hotspots	15	33	21	26	30	4	1	1	15	2	1	1	3	4	157
6: # of post-surveys completed	38	51	49	62	38	12	2	12	33	42	2	7	11	1	360
7: # of returned iPads or never picked up	4	3	4	5	3	2	2	1	2	3	0	1	2	0	32
8: # of Spanish-speaking Participants	0	10	1	5	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64
9: # of Minoritized Participants	3	22	4	65	47	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	6	0	150
10: #Phase 2 ipads TO hand out (Fall 2022-Spring 2024)	31	17	4	35	15	18	2	5	28	12	1	13	37	9	227

* 32 Providence iPads purchased through a City of Providence grant. All Jamestown and Newport iPads purchased through remaining van Beuren charitable foundation funding.