

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING

1300 National Drive, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95834
www.aging.ca.gov
TEL 916-419-7500
FAX 916-928-2267
TTY1-800-735-2929

**PROGRAM MEMO**

TO: Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)
NO: 21-03
DATE ISSUED: January 20, 2021
SUBJECT: Guidance for Donated Google Home Smart Speaker (GHSS) Project
EXPIRES: Until Superseded or Rescinded

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: N/A

SUPERSEDES: N/A

Purpose

This Program Memo (PM) provides information on the donation, from Google, of 8,500 smart speakers to older adults and caregivers who are participating in AAA and Multipurpose Senior Services Programs (MSSP); this project is known as the Google Home Smart Speakers (GHSS) project. Following the direction of Older Americans Act (OAA) programs, all individuals 60 years of age and older, people with disabilities, and caregivers are eligible to receive a GHSS, and priority should be given to older individuals who are Black, Indigenous and people of color with the greatest economic and social need (OAA Section 206). This approach also reflects the equity focus of the Master Plan on Aging.

Background on Digital Divide Projects

On August 14, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) N-73-20 to improve broadband speed and access in California, including improving download speeds for all Californians and to bridge the digital divide for 2 million Californians that lack broadband access. The EO specifies older adults as a priority population to improve digital access.

The California Department of Aging (CDA) has been working collaboratively with a workgroup of AAA directors, the California Department of Technology, and other stakeholders on strategies to bridge the digital divide and address social isolation for older Californians, people with disabilities, and caregivers. This includes forming public/private partnerships to identify opportunities for donations from private companies and leverage federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to purchase devices and data plans for AAA program participants. CDA has also partnered with the University of Southern California's Graduate School of Gerontology to develop tools and evaluate the effectiveness of digital devices in reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation for device recipients. As mentioned above, CDA also has a project underway to use federal CARES Act funding to purchase and provide support for 4,000 tablets with data plans and dedicated technical assistance for low-income older adults who live alone; a separate PM will be forthcoming for this project.

CDA has additional projects planned for 2021, including seeking opportunities for additional device donations, partnering with government, foundations, and non-profits to expand access/services, and identifying areas in the state where older adults lack broadband coverage or access to high-speed broadband to help close the digital divide.

Please refer to CDA's Digital Divide page (https://www.aging.ca.gov/covid19/Digital_Divide/) for updates on these projects as well as continued opportunities for training and technical assistance.

GHSS Participant Requirements

An individual participant must meet the following eligibility criteria to qualify for a GHSS device:

- Be 60 years of age and older, or an informal caregiver of an older adult, or an informal caregiver of an adult with a disability.
- Not currently own a Google Smart Speaker or Google Nest, or similar smart speaker device.
- Have access to an Android, iOS or smartphone that supports the Google Home application
- Have access to a Wi-Fi network.
- Agree to establish a Google account including:
 - Accept Google's terms and conditions.
 - Create a user profile and password.
 - Verify mobile phone number.
- Be willing to receive the GHSS "As-Is" and without a Google warranty

AAA Responsibilities for GHSS Donated Devices

- AAAs must accept shipment of allotted GHSS from CDA's approved freight/logistics vendor (AdMail)
- Provide a secure location for storage of devices Issue GHSS to eligible participant(s)
- Perform surveys of participants via the Survey Monkey:
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ReadinessEvalGHSS2021>
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PreEvalGHSS>
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PostEvalGHSS>
- Provide technical assistance and training to recipients on the GHSS using the following links:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itKisGHUP4g>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFKWyMSwoCs>
 - <https://support.google.com/googlenest/answer/10347482>
- We encourage the AAAs to explore local resources to assist with access to the GHSS project for older adults in their areas, such as, free, or subsidized wi-fi and/or smartphones and sharing such examples across the AAA network.
- We encourage the distribution of the congratulations letter to the recipient.

Inquiries

For questions regarding the Google Home Smart Speaker (GHSS): CHAT@aging.ca.gov.

Irene Walela /s/

Irene Walela

Deputy Director

Long-Term Care and Aging Services Division

cc: Kim McCoy Wade, Director

Mark Beckley, Chief Deputy Director

Thomas Cameron, Deputy Director – Division of Administrative Services

California Association of Area Agencies on Aging (C4A)