



DIGITAL EQUITY & INCLUSION

A GUIDE FOR STATES



APRIL 2022

AGENDA

Welcoming Remarks

Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator, NTIA

Overview

Rafi Goldberg, Telecommunications Policy Specialist, Office of Policy Analysis and Development, NTIA

Collaborate, Engage, and Develop Capabilities

Angela Thi Bennett, Director, Digital Equity Programs, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

Program Models and Wrap-Up

Rafi Goldberg, Telecommunications Policy Specialist, Office of Policy Analysis and Development, NTIA

Questions & Answers Discussion

Moderator: **Karen Archer Perry**, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

OVERVIEW

Rafi Goldberg, Telecommunications Policy Specialist, Office of Policy Analysis and Development, NTIA



TODAY, WE'LL DISCUSS HOW TO WEAVE EQUITY & INCLUSION INTO DEVELOPMENT & DEPLOYMENT OF ALL IJA PROGRAMS

NTIA will administer ~\$48B of new funding				Affordable Connectivity Program
BEAD	DIGITAL EQUITY	TRIBAL	MIDDLE MILE	
\$42.45B	\$2.75B	\$2.00B	\$1.00B	\$14.2B <i>FCC to administer, replacing the EBB program</i>
Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program	Digital Equity Act	Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments	Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure	Rural Utilities Service
Formula-based grant program for U.S. states and territories. Aims to close the access gap for unserved & underserved areas in the country	Three programs, established for planning & implementation of programs that promote digital equity, support digital inclusion, and build capacity related to the adoption of broadband	Furtherers current Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program by investing an additional \$2B to fund broadband adoption and infrastructure projects	Provides funding to extend middle mile capacity to reduce cost of serving unserved and underserved areas and enhance network resilience	\$2.0B <i>USDA to administer</i>
				Private Activity Bonds
				\$600M <i>Authorizes State/local gov'ts to use private activity bonds for rural broadband</i>

* Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Division F, Pub. L. 117-58 (Nov. 15, 2021) (IIJA).
Note: funding amounts inclusive of all administrative set-asides



TODAY'S FOCUS

What this webinar **is**



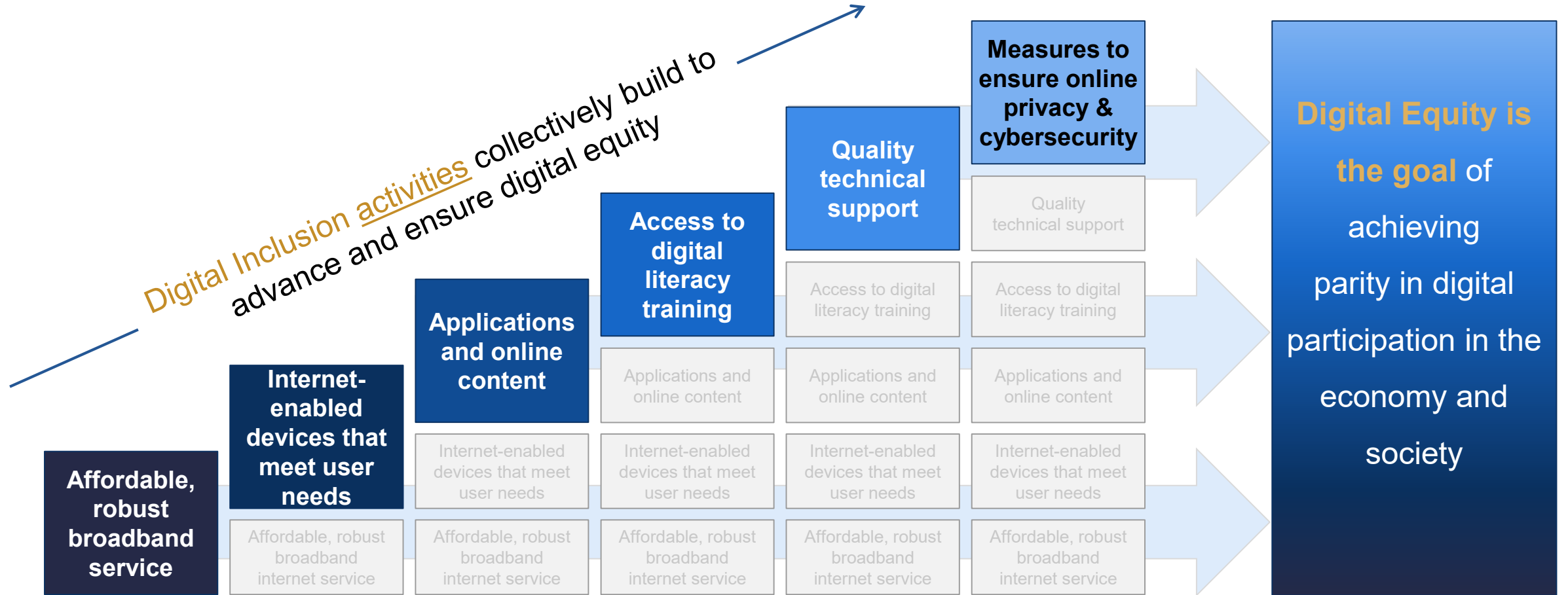
An **overview of digital equity and inclusion**, including definitions, importance, and considerations

What this webinar **is not**



Guidance on **requirements** that will be included in IIJA Notices of Funding Opportunities

DEFINING EQUITY AND INCLUSION | DIGITAL INCLUSION ACTIVITIES BUILD TOWARDS ACHIEVING DIGITAL EQUITY



UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE | DIGITAL EQUITY IS NECESSARY FOR FULL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Illustrative, non-exhaustive



- 1 Increases social connectedness & enables telehealth, improving patient outcomes *For example: Telehealth helps **reduce emergency department visits***¹
- 2 Advances employment by facilitating job seeking and improving digital skills *For example: People without broadband are more likely to have difficulty **finding jobs** in their area²*
- 3 Promotes education access through hybrid/online schooling and adult education *For example: Most U.S. 8th graders use the **internet every day or almost every day** for their homework³*
- 4 Improves access to essential services, like public safety and transportation *For example: Enabling comparisons of cost, time, and distance across **public transport options***
- 5 Enables online civic engagement, like connecting with state/local representatives *For example: Virtual townhalls connected **elected officials and constituents** during COVID⁴*

1. [Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas / Broadband USA](#), 2. [Pew Research](#), 3. [Pew Research](#), 4. [Democracy in a Pandemic](#)

UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE | DIGITAL INEQUITY DISPROPORTIONALLY IMPACTS COVERED POPULATIONS

The Digital Equity Act defined 'covered populations' as:

- 1 Individuals living in households **earning at or below 150% of the poverty level¹**
- 2 Individuals who are members of a **racial or ethnic minority group**
- 3 Individuals who primarily reside in a **rural area**
- 4 Individuals with a **language barrier²**
- 5 **Aging** individuals
- 6 Individuals with **disabilities**
- 7 **Incarcerated** individuals³
- 8 **Veterans**

Note: Numbers do not represent a ranking

1. Poverty level as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census, 2. Including individuals who are English learners and individuals who have low levels of literacy, 3. Other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility

UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE | FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO INEQUITIES IN DIGITAL ADOPTION

Illustrative, non-exhaustive



Devices access

For example:

Minority populations are **~10-15%** less likely to own a computer than white populations¹



Affordability

For example:

34% of lower income households² have had trouble paying for high-speed internet during the coronavirus outbreak³



Perceived value

For example:

70% of Seniors (65+) who are not online at home say they "don't need (it) or not interested"¹



Existing inequities

For example:

Years of policies have limited generational wealth accrual in minority communities, driving **digital red-lining**⁴

Exact factors vary community to community—engage in localized research to understand the specific, unique drivers in your context

1. Nov 2019, [NTIA Internet Use Survey](#), 2. Households making <\$30K annually, 3. [Pew Research](#), 4. [Cnet / NDIA](#),

COLLABORATE, ENGAGE, AND DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

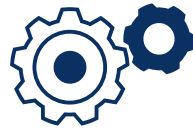
Angela Thi Bennett, Director, Digital Equity Programs, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

3 KEY ACTIVITIES TO DRIVE EQUITY AND INCLUSION ACROSS IJA PROGRAMS



Collaborate, engage, and conduct outreach

- Create an inclusive stakeholder engagement plan
- Be intentional with your language and the details
- Engage diverse communities
- Meet people where they are—literally



Develop knowledge and capabilities to execute

- Learn from individuals from covered populations and historically disconnected communities
- Use a holistic data collection approach
- Build state digital equity capacity
- Build/partner with digital equity and inclusion coalitions



Consider digital inclusion programs, including

- Digital skills training
- Affordability programs
- Digital equity ecosystem mapping
- Digital support programs (e.g., Digital Navigation)
- Digital participation in society



COLLABORATE AND ENGAGE | CREATE AN INCLUSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN



Create an inclusive engagement plan

- Ensure your stakeholder list includes orgs / people that directly work with or who have been disconnected
- Create a feedback loop around your state plans
- Ask stakeholders if your plan is comprehensive and truly addresses needs
- Engage stakeholders during the entire planning process

Employ a mix of engagement approaches

- Use diverse channels (e.g., websites, social media, phone calls, info sessions, town halls, door-to-door outreach)
- Vary the size of your engagements (e.g., 1:1, 1:Many)
- Engage across geographically diverse locations in your state

To create a strong relationship, share with stakeholders:

- ✓ Your goals
- ✓ A description of the information you're looking to gather
- ✓ How their input will be used
- ✓ What type of follow-up you'll conduct
- ✓ How they can keep track of your work (e.g., website, listserv, ongoing public check-ins)



COLLABORATE AND ENGAGE | BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR LANGUAGE AND THE DETAILS



SPEAK INTENTIONALLY

- Use language that signals equity is central to your work (e.g., *“Leading with equity”* vs. *“equity lens”*)
- Create simple and accessible content (i.e., not exceeding 5th grade reading level), translated into the state’s predominant languages
- Ensure targeted outreach is culturally appropriate
- Translate and publish materials into accessible formats for all (incl. those with limited vision, hearing)

ACT INTENTIONALLY

- Ensure leaders prioritize DE&I (e.g., attend both BEAD and Digital Equity listening sessions)
- Select event dates and times best for a diversity of individuals (e.g., working adults, parents)
- Ensure outreach event reach the disconnected
- Consider event accessibility (e.g., are locations accessible by public transport, is there childcare)



We intentionally avoid the language ‘equity lens,’ because a lens can be taken off. Equity should be a forever understanding

—Ernie Rasmussen, Digital Equity Manager, Washington State Broadband Office, WA Department of Commerce



COLLABORATE AND ENGAGE | ENGAGE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES



Conduct broad outreach

Organizations to consider engaging

Illustrative, non-exhaustive

- Cast a wide net
- Ask your community who are the trusted voices (orgs and individuals)
- Identify orgs already serving the disconnected
- Leverage existing resources to identify new organizations (e.g., NDIA's Asset Mapping Tool)

IIJA statute lists some organizations to engage, including CAIs¹ and CBOs²

In addition to this prescribed list, consider engaging:

- State agencies who serve covered pops. (e.g., DOE, HHS, WD³)
- Lived experts
- Local digital inclusion coalitions
- Chambers of commerce
- Higher education institutions
- Public / affordable housing associations
- Labor unions
- Healthcare systems and networks
- Homeless continuum of care providers
- Multi-family housing developers / owners
- Faith-based institutions
- Entrepreneurs and business owners
- State or local foundations and funders
- Advocacy organizations
- Refugee resettlement organizations
- Re-entry organizations
- Orgs. serving undocumented residents
- Early intervention coordinators (i.e., offering in-home therapy for children ages 3 to 5)
- Cultural organizations
- Local media outlets, such as PEG station leaders and ethnic media

1. Community Anchor Institutions, 2. Community Based Organizations, 3. Department of Education; Health and Human Services; Workforce Development





COLLABORATE AND ENGAGE | MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE—LITERALLY



Inclusivity requires meeting your community where they are. Two examples include:



Louisiana's traveling roadshow

- Visited 50+ towns throughout 64 parishes
- Reached out to mayors and local elected officials to organize listening sessions on broadband
- Brought simple, one-page flyers with data representing community's broadband access, adoption, EBB enrollment, and digital literacy rates
- Purposely didn't use PowerPoint presentations, opting instead for roundtable-style sessions



Hawaii's Broadband Hui

- In March 2020, virtually convened a group of allies working towards digital equity
- Have grown to consist of 400+ individuals and organizations
- Meet weekly, with virtual attendance of roughly 60-70 participants
- The sustained engagement has greatly benefited both the stakeholders and the state leaders



DEVELOP CAPABILITIES | LEARN FROM INDIVIDUALS FROM COVERED POPULATIONS AND HISTORICALLY DISCONNECTED COMMUNITIES

To establish a more equitable planning process and resulting plan, uplift the voices of those most affected by the digital divide



Identify experts



Lived experts are members of covered populations with direct, lived experience of being disconnected



Center experts



- ✓ Invite lived experts to join a core planning team, participate as a research member, or engage through other touchpoints
- ✓ Financially compensate lived experts for their participation
 - Compensation may be contingent on participation (e.g., attending 80% of meetings, leading meetings, and/or actively engaging with subcommittee work)



DEVELOP CAPABILITIES | USE A HOLISTIC DATA COLLECTION APPROACH



As you quantify gaps in connectivity and digital equity, **utilize a holistic approach to data collection**

Factors

Only tracking availability may lead to inaccurate assessment of the digital divide

Additionally, collect data on **factors impacting adoption**, such as:

- ✓ Subscription pricing
- ✓ Internet speed and quality
- ✓ Digital skills
- ✓ Availability of discounted internet service
- ✓ Devices used / preferred and online activities

Methodologies

Don't stop at numbers—collect **qualitative data** too, using methods like:

- ✓ Surveys
- ✓ Interviews
- ✓ Focus groups

Qualitative research can provide a richer understanding of lived experiences and unique barriers

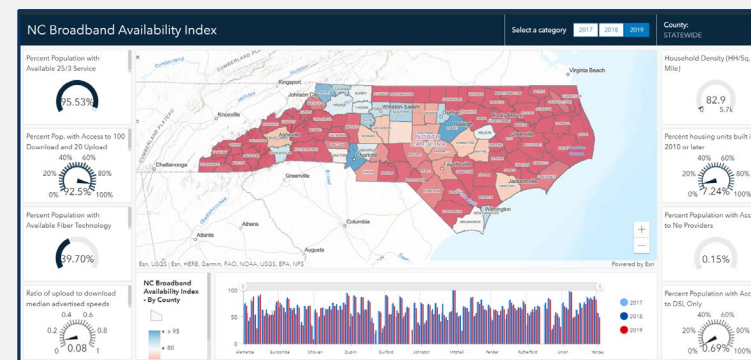
Increase reach by canvassing in high-traffic areas, social service offices, and town meetings



Example: North Carolina's Broadband Indices

The Broadband Infrastructure Office partnered with Dr. Roberto Gallardo (Purdue University) to create 2 indices comprising 19 variables. The indices help:

- Demonstrate need at the county and census tract level
- Identify the most beneficial types of investment, and
- Determine where resources should be deployed



For more on North Carolina's Broadband Indices, visit: <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/data-reports/nc-broadband-indices>



DEVELOP CAPABILITIES | BUILD STATE DIGITAL EQUITY CAPACITY



Find and train the right people

- Ensure your staff and collaborators reflect the diversity in your state (geographic, racial, ethnic, economic, educational)
- Train program developers and managers on digital equity
 - May include internal staff, sub-grantees or sub-contractors, committee/task force members, and others



Set up your people for success

- House digital equity personnel within the existing state broadband office to link broadband efforts
- Equip digital equity staff with the resources they need to lead digital inclusion activities
- Authorize digital equity staff to lead and coordinate statewide digital inclusion activities

Consider how to advance similar equity-centered capacity building across all processes, stakeholder engagements, and sub-grantee relationships





DEVELOP CAPABILITIES | BUILD AND PARTNER WITH DIGITAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION COALITIONS



What do coalitions do?

- Promote professional development, strategically-aligned programming, advocacy
- Increase awareness of digital inclusion, local barriers, and current approaches to the work
- Educate policymakers & community leaders
- Meet member needs through networking, collaborative goalsetting, awareness, and resource development
- Explicitly address racial equity and justice
- Facilitate partnerships between coalition members to strengthen their programming

Key elements of successful coalitions

- Often comprised of a community's digital inclusion practitioners, community-based orgs, and other stakeholders
- With careful consideration, governments and internet providers may be direct members of or serve as partners for a coalition
- Establish a shared understanding of a community's digital inclusion needs
- Engage in regular meetings and collective goal setting
- Guiding documents include a decision-making process, leadership selection, and member orgs' rights / responsibilities
- Access the right resourcing (e.g., paid staff or funding)

For more, consult NDIA's Coalition Guidebook:

<http://mediaethics.ca/the-digital-inclusion-coalition-guidebook/>

PROGRAM MODELS AND WRAP-UP

Rafi Goldberg, Telecommunications Policy
Specialist, Office of Policy Analysis and
Development, NTIA



PROGRAM MODELS | SETTING UP DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SUCCESS



Overview

- Skills can be foundational or industry specific
- Skills are often not binary
- People often have fragmented knowledge
- Small businesses face greater challenges in addressing digital skills gaps (vs. larger counterparts)

Work to identify the skills your community residents and local economy most need



Creating impactful programs

- ✓ Identify and partner with existing programs
 - Existing programs may be supported by another state agency; consider how to coordinate IIJA funds
- ✓ Engage community residents in identifying interventions
- ✓ Integrate digital skills training with other technical training
- ✓ Foster industry sector partnerships (training providers and employers)



Example: Tech Goes Home Chattanooga (TGH CHA)

Offers digital inclusion programs for adults and children (early childhood and up)

- Run by the Enterprise Center, a non-profit economic development partner of the city
- Provides 15 hours of digital skills training
- Upon course completion, participants can purchase a new Chromebook for \$50
- Also offers assistance in securing low-cost home Internet service

For more, visit:

<https://www.techgoeshomecha.org/>



PROGRAM MODELS | STRATEGIES TO BOOST ADOPTION OF EXISTING AFFORDABILITY PROGRAMS



Overview

States can increase affordability by ensuring eligible households are aware of, understand, and enroll in **discount service and device programs**, like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

Requires:

- Outreach across mediums (at home, social service locations, by phone, etc.)
- Using simple and accessible terms (multilingual outreach, plain English)
- All-hands-on-deck collaboration, across offices and state agencies who already interact with the underserved



Example: New York State

- In early 2022, conducted a campaign to educate consumers on the ACP
- In less than 3 months, signed up an additional 100,000 households
- To make the largest impact, multiple state agencies were involved:



Department of Public Service (DPS) led the multi-agency, multi-pronged marketing outreach plan



Housing and Community Renewal reached out to housing nonprofits and landlords



Department of Labor developed a PSA video



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance directed social services agencies to share outreach materials with clients and contracted service providers



Department of Motor Vehicles pushed ACP information at state-operated offices and committed to sending 5M flyers to all New Yorkers renewing or receiving a license



PROGRAM MODELS | MAPPING TO INCREASE VISIBILITY AND LINKAGES IN YOUR DIGITAL EQUITY ECOSYSTEM



Overview

Asset mapping **identifies existing resources, networks, and strengths** in a community to build on them and facilitate more coordination / collaboration

It helps to:

- Shift the focus from documenting what's wrong to inventorying available resources / expertise
- Identify ways to support and scale existing strategies
- Empower community residents and local institutions



Assets to map

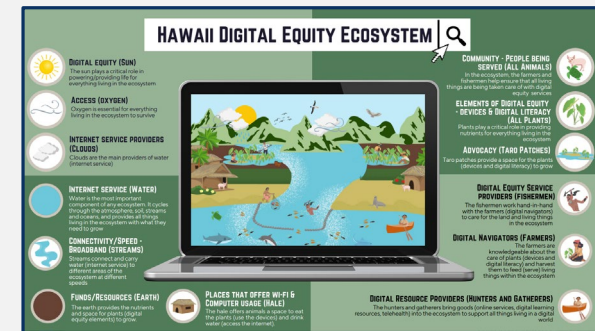
- ✓ Organizations, programs, and individuals delivering digital inclusion services
- ✓ Funding sources supporting digital equity work
- ✓ Any other resources characterizing the digital equity landscape

For more on mapping physical assets (incl. existing infrastructure and ongoing deployment projects), please refer to materials from [NTIA's Enabling Conditions webinar](#) (April 6, 2022)



Example: Hawaii Digital Equity Ecosystem Map

- Map is a visual representation of the current digital equity ecosystem
- Based on virtual 1-on-1 interviews with more than 30 local companies, organizations, state departments and individuals
- Includes an explanation of how each organization or individual fits within the map



For more, visit:

<https://broadband.hawaii.gov/deemap/>



PROGRAM MODELS | UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL NAVIGATORS, ONE MODEL FOR HOLISTIC DIGITAL SUPPORT

Overview

Digital Navigator programs **provide digital support**

- 'Digital Navigators' are trained to assist community members in internet adoption, device use, or skill-building
- Programs are based in community orgs (e.g., libraries, health centers)

Digital navigator programs are just one model for support

- As you develop plans, consider which model will best meet your goals

Creating impactful programs

- ✓ Community trust is vital
- ✓ Prioritize 1:1 attention for the most tailored and useful participant experience
- ✓ Work with community partners to conduct outreach
- ✓ Conduct thorough skills assessments to truly understand learner needs
- ✓ Ensure your Navigators have strong relational skills

Example: Salt Lake City Public Library Digital Navigator Pilot (2020)

During this pilot, Navigator activities included:

- 1 Responding to calls for support from community members; members may reach out via “hotline” or be referred by CBOs
- 2 Establishing relationship of trust and determine what the client needs to meet their personal connectivity goals (e.g., affordable internet or devices, skills)
- 3 Gauging client's motivation to participate, presenting options and formulating a plan with each client
- 4 Working individually with client to meet their goals



PROGRAM MODELS | PROMOTE DIGITAL PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY



Access to digital applications and content is foundational for full participation in society....

Essential services: Virtual applications for benefits, finding a bus schedule or route online

Education: Online GED certification courses and exams, remote K-12 learning

Health: Telehealth, online patient records, making an appointment with a provider or system

Government: Online SNAP registration, access to rent assistance, applications for business loans or licenses



..and enabling access through existing touchpoints can encourage digital participation



When an unemployed resident approaches a Workforce agency, consider (1) assisting in completing online benefit applications and (2) connecting them to a CBO for digital skills training



Use annual school enrollment to gauge student access to home devices; connect device-less students to a program distributing low-cost devices



During in-home health visits, ask about connectivity; if disconnected, refer to partners for low-cost subscription access



Work with faith-based institutions to share information about accessing e-Gov benefits (like SNAP) during community events

REMEMBER:



Embed equity and inclusion across all IJA efforts—resist programmatic silos



This will amplify, accelerate, and give your digital equity efforts a longer runway to tackle the digital divide

For further guidance, access our additional NTIA materials

NTIA's State and Local Government Page
<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/federal/state-local-governments>

To ask questions about IJA broadband programs or provide additional feedback:

BroadbandForAll@ntia.gov

Please join us for our upcoming broadband program public virtual webinars!

May 11, 2022

For more information about upcoming sessions:

<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/latest-events>

THANK YOU FOR
JOINING TODAY'S
SESSION





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APPENDIX

STATUTE DEFINITIONS | DIGITAL EQUITY AND DIGITAL INCLUSION

Digital Equity

The condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States

Digital Inclusion

The term "digital inclusion":

1. Means the activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals in the United States have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies, such as—
 - Reliable fixed and wireless broadband internet service;
 - Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user; and
 - Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration; and
2. Includes—
 - Obtaining access to digital literacy training;
 - The provision of quality technical support; and
 - Obtaining basic awareness of measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity.

Note: Definitions above are from the Digital Equity Act Programs