



Digital Equity from Concept to Enablement

12/22/2023



Module 1: Digital Equity as a Concept

Digital equity and digital inclusion definitions



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.

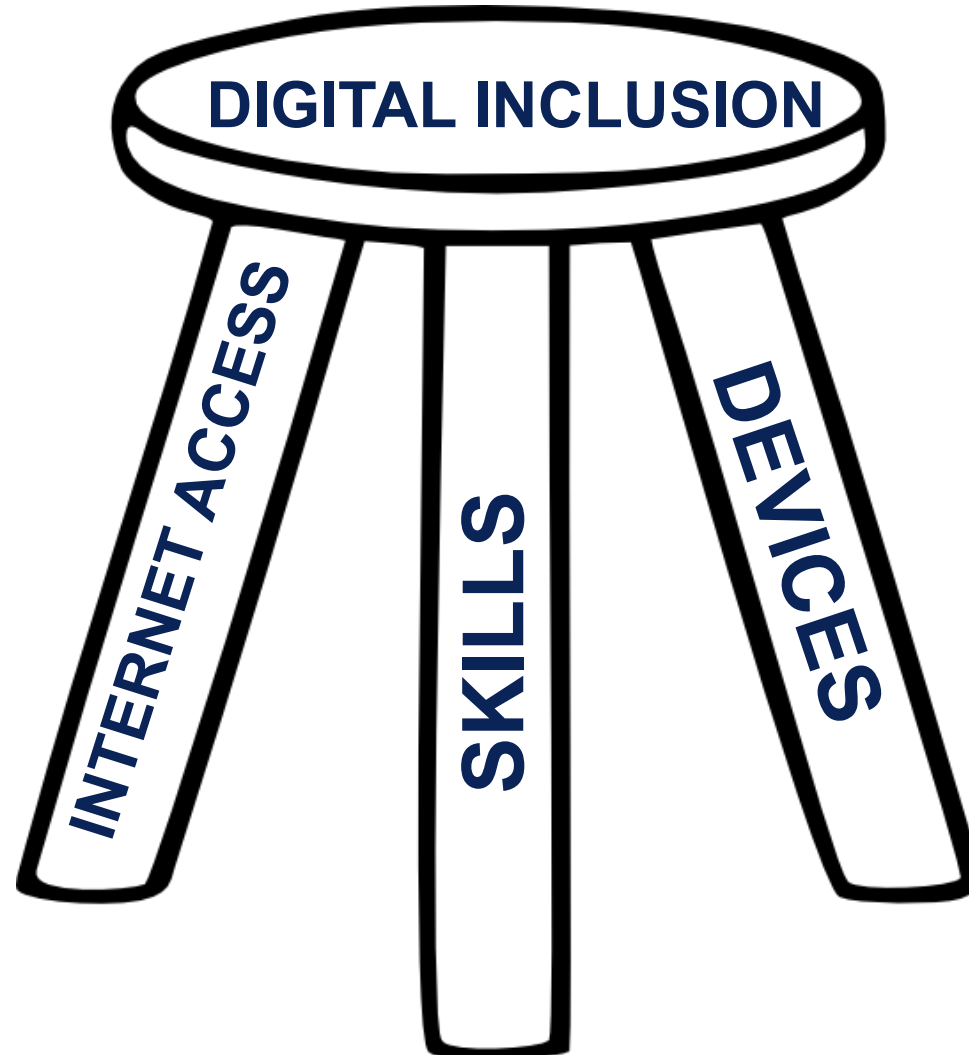
Community Definition



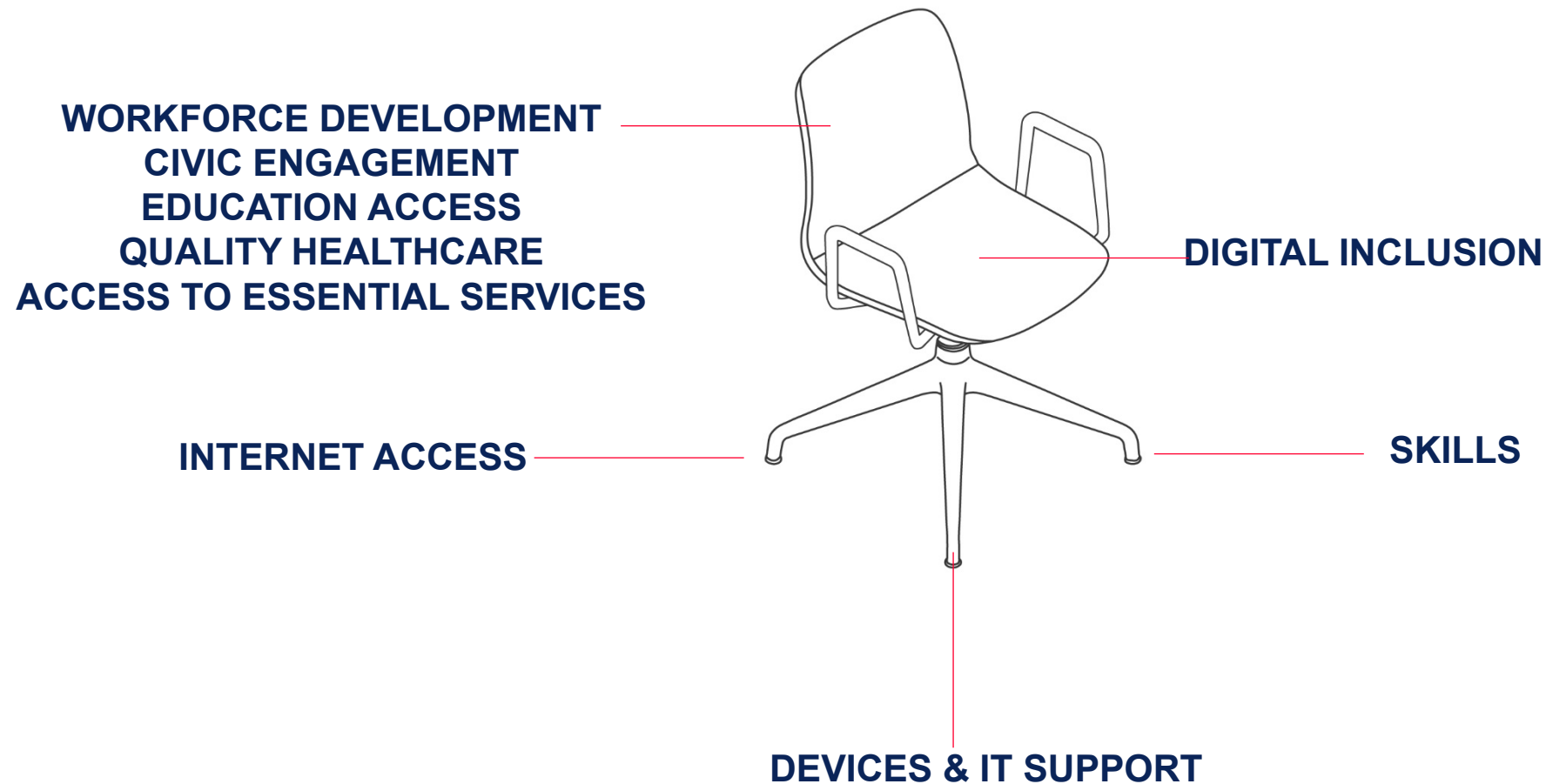
Note: Definitions above are from the Digital Equity Act Programs

**How do you define
Digital Equity?**

Pillars of Digital Equity



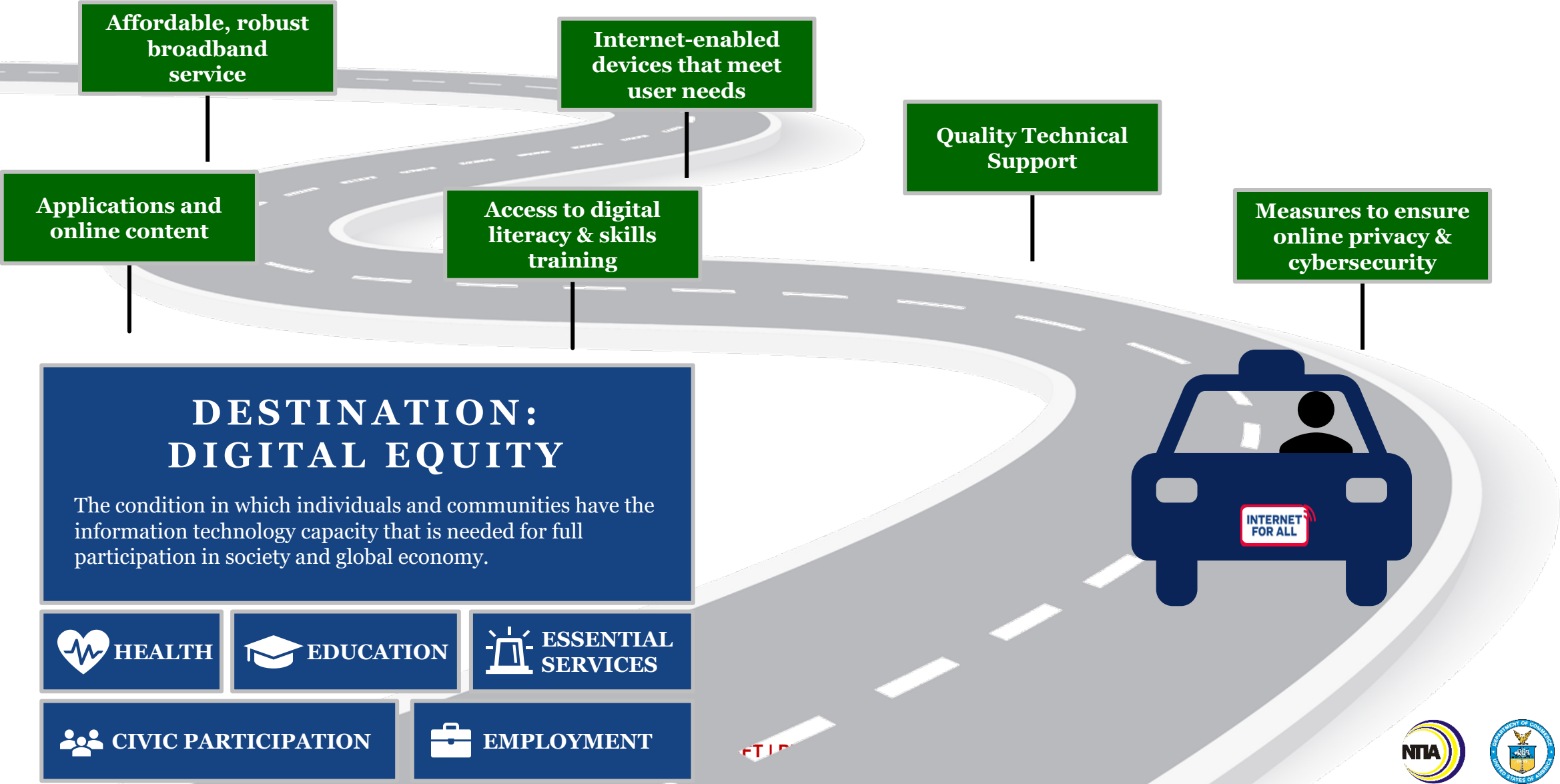
Pillars of Digital Equity (continued)



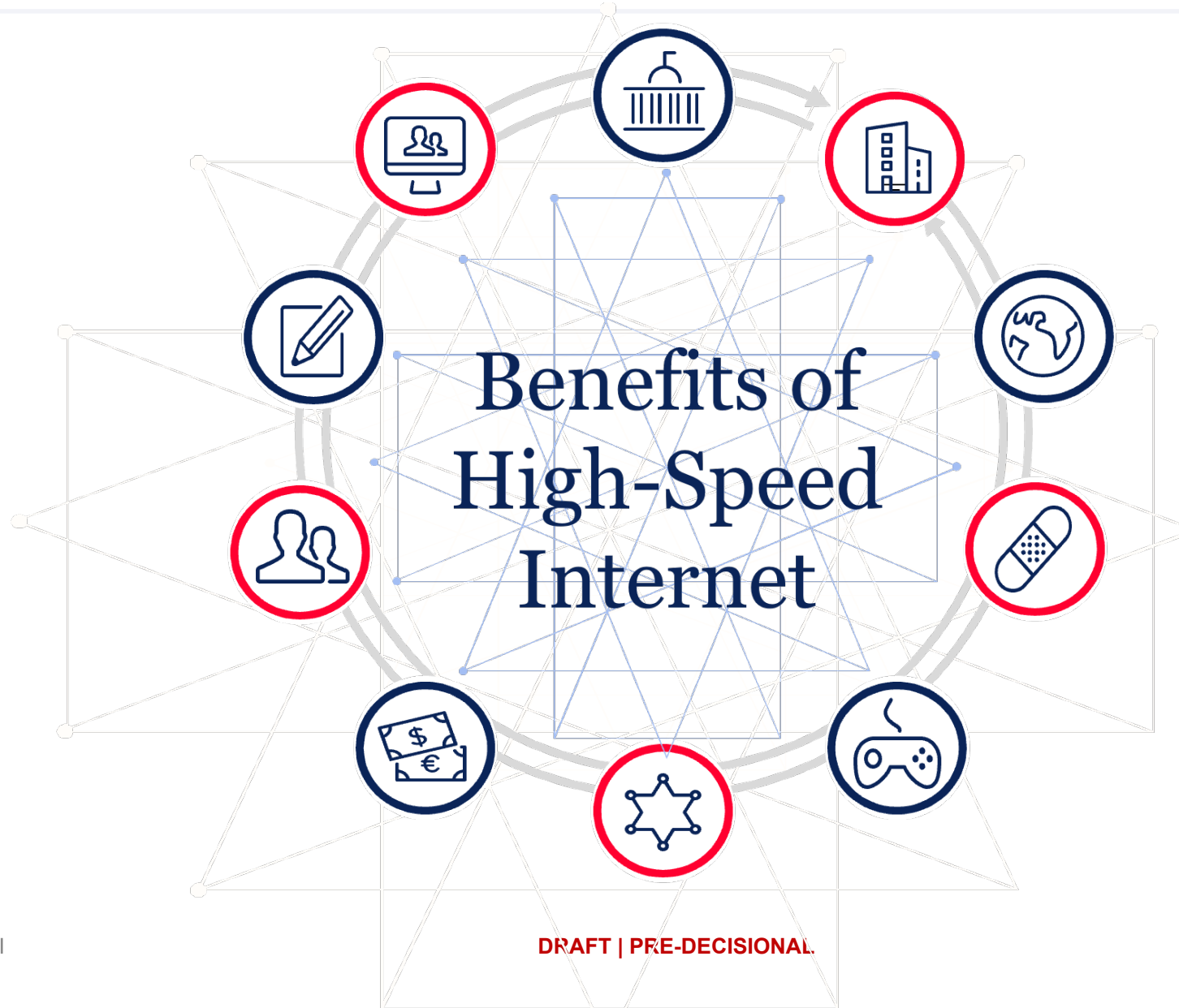
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Digital inclusion activities collectively build to advance and ensure digital equity & improve outcomes for unconnected communities



Why Does Having Access to High-Speed Internet Matter?



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Why High-Speed Internet Matters



Government Services

High-Speed Internet helps government agencies improve quality, lower costs and increase transparency by improving internal operations and making it easier for residents to interact with them online.

Telework

High-Speed Internet allows teleworkers opportunities to more readily live and work in locations of their own choosing, without having to be within commuting distance of a corporate center or another base location.

Education

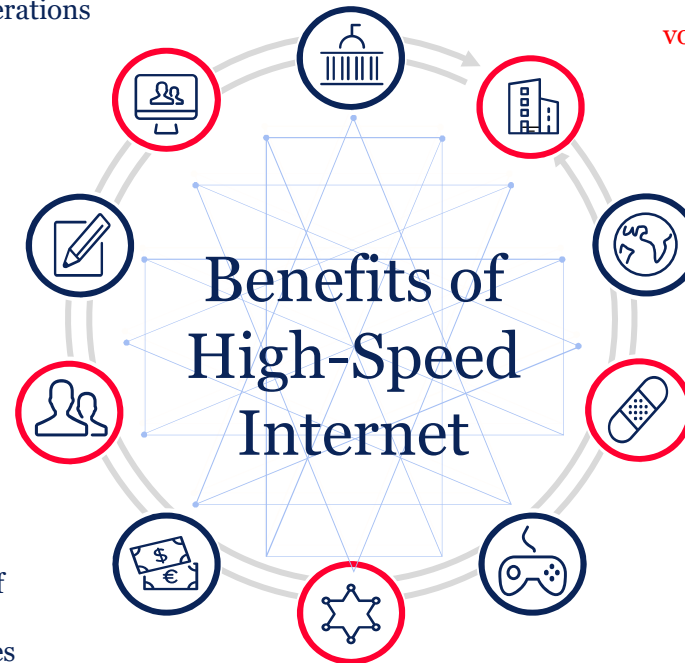
High-Speed Internet networks enhance educational experiences by providing students and teachers with access to an array of resources and the opportunity for distance learning.

Accessibility

High-Speed Internet is an important tool to address the needs of people with disabilities. Through various broadband-based applications and supporting technologies, people with disabilities have access to a new array of smart devices improving quality of life.

Economic Development

High-Speed Internet enables local communities, regions and nations to develop, attract, retain and expand job-creating businesses and institutions.



Community Development

High-Speed internet enables communities to come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common issues such as voting, registering to vote, volunteerism/community service, advocacy and activism, as well as engaging in city wide projects.

Environmental Sustainability

High-Speed Internet enables buildings to communicate with utilities and the energy market. Smart buildings and smart grids, hold great promise for greater efficiencies in energy consumption.

Healthcare

High-Speed Internet makes remote access to clinical services possible and cost-effective. It also allows physicians to monitor their patients through innovative home health devices.

Entertainment

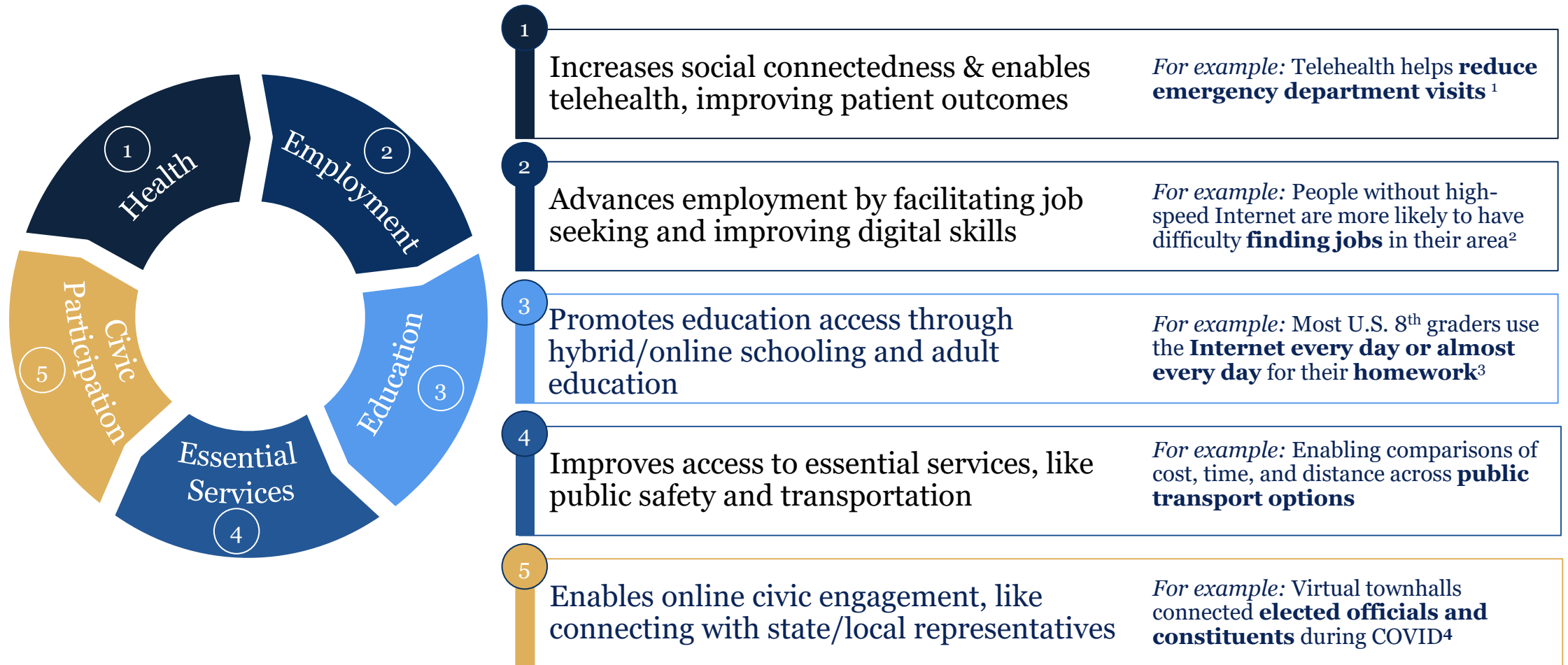
High-Speed Internet is essential to enjoy 21st-century entertainment. Streaming video, online gaming and connecting with friends and relatives via social media are only possible because of broadband.

Public Safety

Wireless broadband, is becoming indispensable to the interoperability of police, fire, health and other government entities in both day-to-day and crisis situations.



Defining Equity and Inclusion | Digital Equity is necessary for full society participation



Illustrative, non-exhaustive

1. Barton, J. (2018). *Promising telehealth initiatives highlight the need to close the digital divide*. Federal Reserve Bank of Texas. <https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/pubs/2018/telehealth> 2. Smith, A. (2015). *Lack of broadband can be a key obstacle, especially for job seekers*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/28/lack-of-broadband-can-be-a-key-obstacle-especially-for-job-seekers/> 3. Auxier, B. & Anderson, M. (2020). *As school close due to the coronavirus, some U.S. students face a digital 'homework gap.'* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/16/as-schools-close-due-to-the-coronavirus-some-u-s-students-face-a-digital-homework-gap/> 4. Lacelle-Webster, A., Landry, J., & Smith, A. M. D. (2021). *Citizen voice in the pandemic response: Democratic innovations from around the world*. In G. Smith, T. Hughes, L. Adams, & C. Obijaku (Eds.), *Democracy in a pandemic* (pp. 155-168). University of Westminster Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctv1v3gqz6.24.pdf>



Digital Equity and the Social Determinants of Health




Digital inequity disproportionately impacts our stakeholders



DE & BEAD

Covered Populations and **Underrepresented Communities** *Identity groups and communities disproportionately impacted by digital inequity*

 Low-income households	 Indigenous and Native American persons	 People with language barriers
 Aging individuals	 Members of ethnic and religious minorities	 Racial and ethnic minorities
 Incarcerated individuals	 Women	 Rural inhabitants
 Veterans	 LGBTQI+ persons	 Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality
 Persons of Color	 Persons with disabilities	



DE NOFO



BEAD NOFO

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Who is missing?

Factors that contribute to Inequities in digital adoption



Illustrative, non-exhaustive



Devices access

For example:

People of color 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

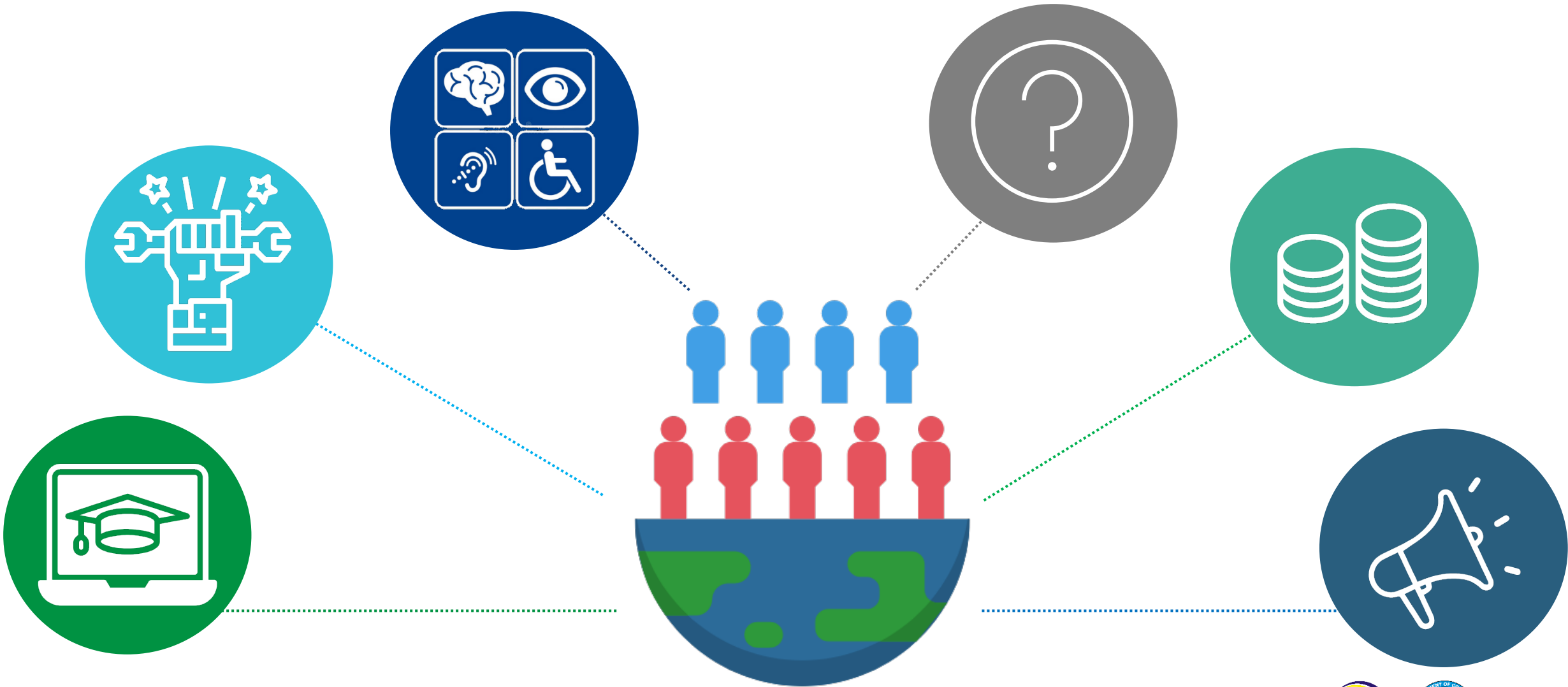
For example:

Years of policies have limited generational wealth accrual in marginalized 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

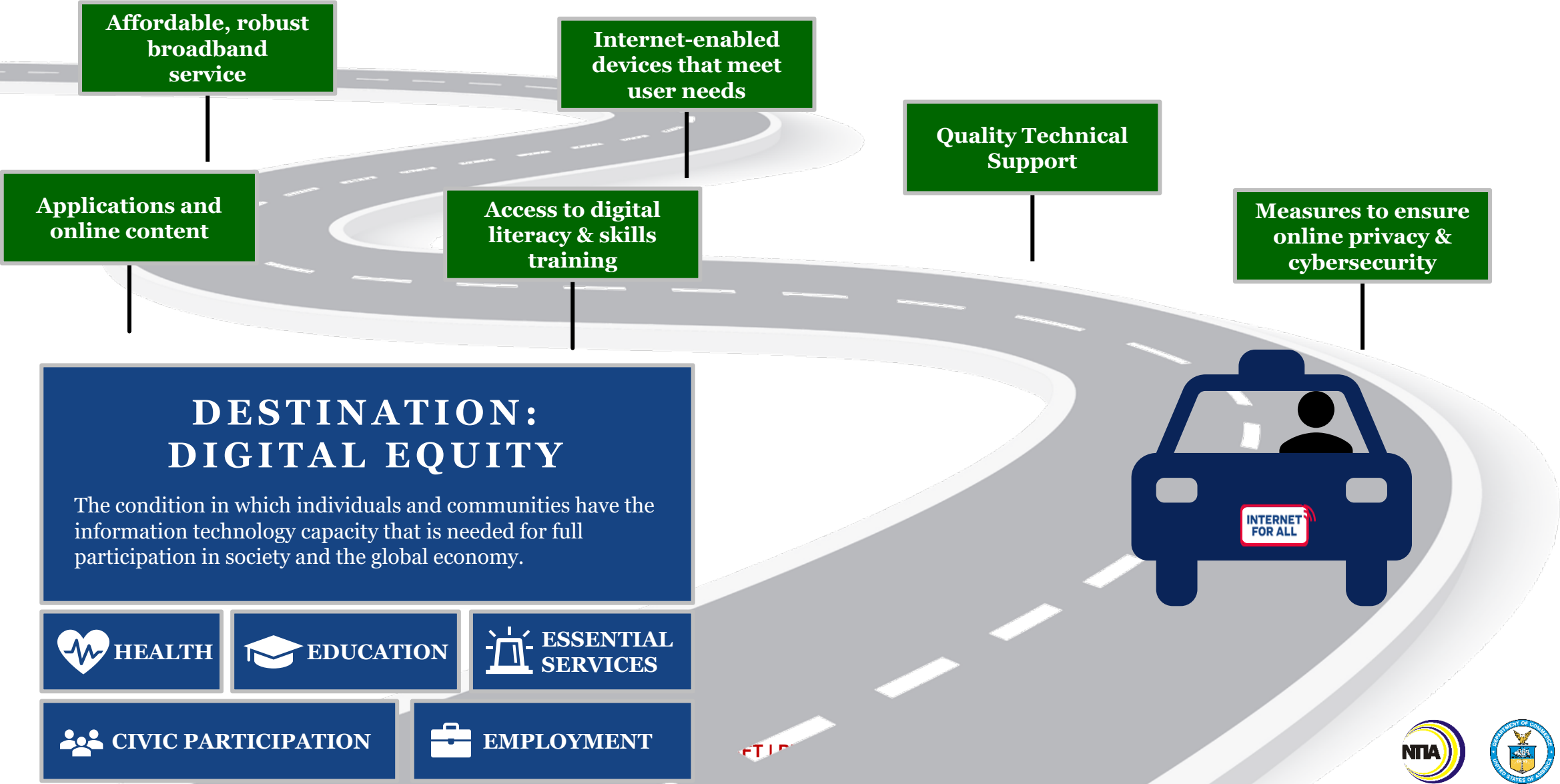
1. National Telecommunications and Information Administration. (2022). Digital nation data explorer. NTIA.gov. <https://ntia.gov/other-publication/2022/digital-nation-data-explorer#sel=laptopUser&demo=race&pc=prop&disp=chart> 2. Households making <\$30K annually 3. McClain, C. (2021). *34% of lower-income home broadband users have had trouble paying for their service amid COVID-19*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/06/03/34-of-lower-income-home-broadband-users-have-had-trouble-paying-for-their-service-amid-covid-19/> 4. Communications Workers of America and National Digital Inclusion Alliance. (2020). AT&T's digital redlining: Leaving communities behind for profit. DigitalInclusion.org. https://www.digitalinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2020/10/ATTs-Digital-Redlining-Leaving-Communities-Behind-for-Profit.pdf





Module 2: Enablement of Digital Equity

Digital inclusion activities collectively build to advance and ensure digital equity & improve outcomes for unconnected communities



Breakout Activity

**If you had to select one album to be
your playlist, what would it be?**

Questions to Consider



- Can you think of any albums that relate to the 5 measurable objectives for DE plans?
 - Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes
 - Educational outcomes
 - Health outcomes
 - Civic and social engagement; and
 - Delivery of other essential services.



What is your first stop?

Questions to Consider



- What are your primary areas of focus based on:
 - Challenges heard from community
 - Existing barriers to adoption
 - State/ Territory goals and priorities
- What are your secondary areas of focus?
 - Local coordination and outreach strategy
 - Tribal engagement
 - Asset mapping / needs assessment



**Who do you need to visit while
there?**

Eligible entities are required to engage with key stakeholders as a part of developing digital equity plans

Key stakeholder groups may include:

- Community anchor institutions
- County and municipal governments
- Local educational agencies
- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations, where applicable
- Nonprofit organizations
- Organizations that represent covered populations
- Civil rights organizations
- Entities that carry out workforce development programs
- State agencies that administer or supervise adult education or literacy activities
- Public housing authorities

What are your rest stops?

Questions to Consider



- What are the **solutions, strategies, and feedback** that will help develop the plan?
- What are the anticipated **challenges or barriers**?
- What are the **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR)** that can help your state reach its destination?
- How will your state **identify and communicate with the local organizations** that are doing digital equity work?



**What souvenirs are you
bringing back?**

Questions to Consider



- What are some of **best practices, tools, connections, stories**, etc. that will help inform your plan?
- How do you plan to **co-build** the plan with stakeholders?
- What are the solutions or strategies you would like to see incorporated in the DE State Plan?
- How will your state collaborate with stakeholders to **identify and prioritize policy outcomes** in the areas of **workforce development, education, health, civic & social engagement, and delivery of essential services**?



Conclusion

3 Key Activities to Drive Equity and Inclusion Across BIL 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



Digital inclusion programs

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

Be Intentional with the Language and the Details



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

SPEAK WITH INTENTION

- 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)

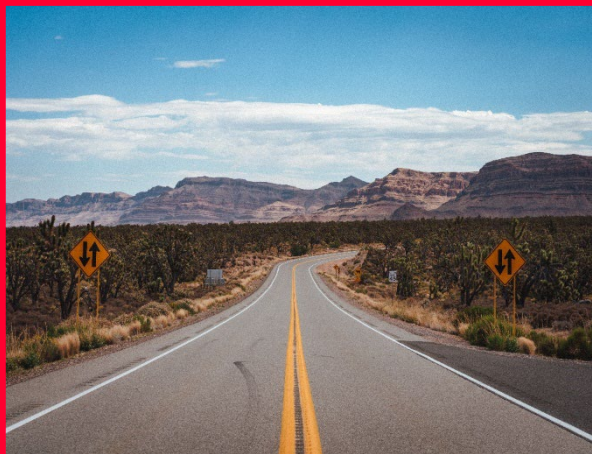


ACT WITH INTENTION

- **Ask, don’t assume** (e.g. what do you want to use the internet for?)
- 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 events **reach the disconnected and underserved**
- **Consider event accessibility** (e.g., are locations accessible by public transport, is there childcare)



Wrapping Up



Digital Divide



Digital Inclusion



Digital
Empowerment/Equity