Connectivity with a Purpose:
Considerations for Planning Digital Inclusion Efforts

Digital inclusion implies that individuals have **access** to robust broadband connections; Internet-enabled **devices** that meet their needs; and the **skills** to explore, create and succeed in the digital world. Digital inclusion programs tackle challenges associated with connectivity, devices and skills. They focus on enhancing broadband use for residents, both connecting underserved populations and increasing the value for those already online. These considerations are particularly important in today's economy, where technical skills and infrastructure are critical to economic mobility and opportunity. As a result, local leaders should consider digital inclusion planning--thinking about how, where and why people use the Internet--as part of their economic development planning initiatives.

For help developing, planning or implementing your digital inclusion strategy, please contact our technical assistance staff at *broadbandusa@ntia.doc.gov* or 202-482-2048.

Using the Resource:

BroadbandUSA developed this resource to help leaders consider factors that could impact or influence their digital inclusion efforts. **Considerations** are questions that will help users evaluate their local demographics, identify resources and assess the current state of broadband connectivity. **Context and Applications** describe why these questions are worth considering, how users can find the data to help answer these questions and how this information can inform digital inclusion efforts.

These considerations are a starting point for digital inclusion work. Collecting this information can help you determine residents' needs, address gaps in services and identify opportunities to improve existing programs. The most successful digital inclusion initiatives draw from local data. BroadbandUSA encourages you to adapt this information to fit your residents' needs and to use all relevant and available resources at your disposal.

What are the characteristics of your community?

Considerations	Context and Applications
Age — What is the age distribution in your locality? What is the median age?	**? Why is this information important?** Collecting demographic and socio-economic data will help you build a digital inclusion plan and curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of all residents. Traditionally, seniors and people with lower incomes, lower education levels and disabilities have lower rates of broadband adoption and skills. Your digital inclusion program should take these populations into account and be tailored to meet their needs.
Education — What percentage of your locality has a high school diploma? Some college or associate degree? Bachelor's degree or higher? None of the above?	
Language — What percentage of your locality speaks a language other than English at home? What languages do residents speak?	**🔍 Where can you find this information?** ✦ **American FactFinder:** Retrieves population, economic, geographic and housing information from the Census Bureau's surveys and censuses: *https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml#*
Diversity — What is the racial, ethnic, religious and cultural makeup of your locality?	
Disability — What percentage of your locality has a disability? What difficulties do they experience?	✦ **Your residents:** No one knows a community better than those who work and live there. Local meetings, surveys and structured conservations with residents can provide valuable insight into your community's needs and goals
Income — What is the median income in your locality? What is the rate of unemployment?	**💡 Additional Notes** Evaluating the characteristics of your community will help you streamline digital inclusion planning efforts and more effectively utilize local resources. In addition, this information may shed light on why past activities may have proven unsuccessful (e.g., offering classes on Friday evenings, only to learn that a significant portion of your community has religious services) and will highlight opportunities to address previously unknown gaps.
Poverty — What percentage of residents are at or below the poverty level?	
Housing — What is the percentage of owner-occupied housing units versus renter-occupied units? What percentage of the population lives in public housing?	

What are the characteristics of your community?, *continued*

Considerations	Context and Applications
Industry & Business — What are the predominant industries, businesses and occupations in your locality? Does your locality have an economic development strategy?	**Why is this information important?** Taking inventory of the local businesses, industries, anchor institutions, organizations and public transportation services will help you identify existing resources in your community and potential partnership opportunities.
Local Institutions — How many anchor institutions, such as libraries and schools, are in your locality? Where are they located? Do they have full-time staff? Is their equipment up-to-date? How many non-government and philanthropic organizations are in your locality? Local businesses? What populations do they serve? What services do they provide?	**Where can you find this information?** ✦ **American FactFinder:** Retrieves population, economic, geographic and housing information from the Census Bureau's surveys and censuses: *https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml#* ✦ **Guidestar:** Provides extensive information on charities and other non-profit organizations operating across the country: *http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx* ✦ **Your local institutions, businesses and service organizations:** These organizations can provide information the programs they offer and the populations they serve
Geography — What is the population density in your locality? Is your locality classified as rural, urban, suburban or tribal? Are there unique geographic challenges in your locality?	✦ **Your residents:** No one knows a community better than those who work and live there. Local meetings, surveys and structured conversations with residents can provide valuable insight into your community's digital inclusion needs and goals
Transportation and Commuting Patterns — What public transportation services operate in your locality? Are they frequently used? What parts of the locality do they serve? Do they provide service to any of your local institutions? What means of transportation do people use to get to work? What is the average travel time to work? To school?	**Additional Notes** Assessing trends in transit and the physical landscape provides insight into the places residents live, work and frequent, and how they get there. This information is important when determining where to provide services. Accessibility is key, particularly for seniors and residents with disabilities. Mapping your local institutions and transportation services can be particularly helpful for visualizing existing resources, and how those resources can be connected and/or used to maximize impact.

What is the state of connectivity in your community?

Considerations	Context and Applications
Availability — Do residents have broadband connectivity at home? What broadband speeds are available to your residents? Do residents have access to public WiFi? If so, where?	**Why is this information important?** Assessing your current broadband landscape is important for understanding the barriers to meaningful technology use and identifying opportunities for improvement. Price, lack of devices or skills, or low awareness of the Internet's benefits may be hindering local broadband adoption.
Location — Where do residents use the Internet? Home? Work? School? A public place? A combination of the above?	**Where can you find this information?** ✦ **Form 477 Broadband Deployment Data:** Provides data on fixed residential broadband services of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload at the census block level: *https://www.fcc.gov/maps/fixed-broadband-deployment-data/*
Subscribers — What percentage of households in your locality has an Internet subscription?	✦ **Form 477 Broadband Subscription Data:** State regulatory commissioners can obtain provider-specific fixed broadband and fixed voice subscribership data at the tract and state level. This information helps identify service providers in your locality and associated subscription rates: *https://www.fcc.gov/general/process-state-regulatory-commissions-obtain-state-specific-fcc-form-477-data*
Providers — Does your locality have access to more than one provider?	
Costs — What are the average costs of service?	✦ **Digital Nation Data Explorer:** Shows percentages of Internet use, device use and online activities at the state level: *https://www.ntia.doc.gov/data/digital-nation-data-explorer#sel=internetUser&disp=map*
Equipment — What devices do residents use to access the Internet? Desktop? Laptop or tablet? Mobile phone?	✦ **Purdue University's Digital Divide Index:** Rates the severity of a community's digital divide based on infrastructure, adoption rates and socioeconomic characteristics: *https://www.pcrd.purdue.edu/signature-programs/digital-divide-index.php* ✦ **Your state's broadband office:** May conduct periodic analyses regarding broadband access and use ✦ **Your residents:** No one knows a community better than those who work and live there. Local meetings, surveys and focus groups with residents can provide valuable insight into your community's needs and goals **Additional Notes** This information is best used in conjunction with the information regarding community characteristics. Layering local demographic and socio-economic data on top of broadband use statistics will provide a more detailed picture of technology use trends in your community.

What is the state of connectivity in your community?, *continued*

Considerations	Context and Applications
Digital Literacy — What is the level of your residents' digital literacy, on a scale of basic (e.g., "just learning terminology") to advanced (e.g., "coding")?	**Why is this information important?** Understanding your residents' relationship with technology will help inform your program's mission and ensure your program is meeting people where they are.
Online Activities — How do residents use the Internet? What are the predominate purposes? To do homework? Search for jobs? Connect with others?	**Where can you find this information?** ✦ **BroadbandUSA's Connecting America's Communities Map:** Allows you to search data pertaining to broadband infrastructure, connected institutions and public computer centers and training programs: *https://www2.ntia.doc.gov/BTOPmap/*
Awareness — Are there efforts to educate your residents on the benefits of broadband? Do these efforts communicate broadband's critical role in economic development, education, healthcare, public safety and other aspects of community life? Have you conducted any outreach to inform residents about the broadband services and digital inclusion programs available in your locality?	✦ **Digital Nation Data Explorer:** Shows percentages of Internet use, device use and online activities at the state level: *https://www.ntia.doc.gov/data/digital-nation-data-explorer#sel=internetUser&disp=map* ✦ **Pew Research Center's Internet & Tech datasets:** Provide data collected from the Center's surveys on technology: *http://www.pewinternet.org/datasets/* ✦ **IMLS's Public Libraries Survey:** Provides information on library services offered to the public: *https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/public-libraries-survey*
Community Access — Do any local institutions provide public or discounted Internet access and/or devices? Where and when are these services available? Who uses these services?	✦ **Local anchor institutions:** May be aware of challenges to broadband access and technology use through their everyday interactions with residents ✦ **Your residents:** No one knows a community better than those who work and live there. Local meetings, surveys and focus groups with residents can provide valuable insight into your community's needs and goals
Training — Do any local institutions offer digital literacy and skills training? If so, how often and when? Who attends? Are there programs that used to exist, but are no longer active? If so, why?	✦ **Your state's broadband office:** May conduct periodic analyses regarding digital literacy and training programs **Additional Notes** Assessing the level of digital literacy among your residents provides insight into current training needs and helps you anticipate future training demands. Evaluating current and past programs will help you identify opportunities to complement current offerings, identify gaps and reduce duplication of effort.

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