INDIANA

DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

Indiana
Broadband

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is increasingly digitizing our economy and society. People, communities, and organizations that are not able to fully participate in this digital economy and society are falling behind and their quality of life is being negatively affected. However, the digital equity landscape is complex. It is critical to understand what this landscape looks like, as well as its related barriers and assets. More importantly, digital equity is a hyperlocal issue for which cookie-cutter approaches will yield limited impact.

In response, the federal government released the State Digital Equity Planning Grant program, part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), that provides funding for all states and territories to draft a digital equity plan, paying particular attention to nine covered populations. **Covered populations** are individuals that may require additional help in overcoming the digital divide due to unique digital equity barriers and needs. Capacity-building funds will then be distributed to states and territories to aid in the implementation of the plan.

This five-year plan will serve as Indiana's first-ever statewide digital equity plan. The five-year plan contains five sections, including the introduction that outlines the purpose and process for the plan's creation. The next section, *The Current State of Digital Equity*, provides context for the plan by briefly reviewing the data gathering and community engagement that informed this plan. The third section showcases the vision, goals, strategies and objectives that make up the heart of the digital equity plan. Then the fourth section, Moving Forward, puts the plan into action by outlining implementation strategies, an anticipated timeline, and evaluation procedures. Finally, the appendix provides additional resource materials.

The Purdue University Center for Regional Development (PCRD), part of the university's Office of Engagement, in partnership with the Indiana Broadband Office (IBO) and the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), led the planning, which included significant community engagement and multi-layered data analysis to untangle the nuances of Indiana's digital equity landscape. The process will be explored further in the following section, *Plan Creation*.

A Closer Look

Covered Populations

1. Individuals who live in covered households*;
2. Aging individuals;
3. Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility;
5. Veterans;
6. Individuals with disabilities;
7. Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who—
    a. Are English learners; and
    b. Have low levels of literacy;
8. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and
9. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

* The term "covered household" means a household, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census.

PLAN CREATION

Plan Contributors

The backbone and driver of this initiative was a newly formed statewide digital equity task force. PCRD, IBO, and OCRA representatives from organizations that work closely with the covered populations (see page 4 for the full list), as well as organizations focused on broader state goals and efforts such as workforce development, education and health. The goal was to engage those with experience and connections to the individuals the plan seeks, as well as bringing in major players to avoid duplication of existing efforts and promote collaboration towards common goals. The list below shows the organizations represented on the task force.

- AARP
- City of Bloomington
- Indiana Association of Regional Councils
- Indiana Broadband Office (2 members)
- Indiana Department of Veteran Affairs
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development
- Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs

- Indiana Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity
- Indiana Philanthropy Alliance
- Indiana Rural Health Association
- Indiana Rural Schools Association
- Indianapolis Public Library
- United Way of Central Indiana
- Indiana Department of Corrections

PCRD met at least 10 times with the task force, usually once a month, starting in November of 2022 through December of 2023 both in-person and virtually. The main role played by the task force was to leverage its multiple networks to promote elements of the plan (e.g., digital assets map, recruit digital ambassadors, regional solutions sessions), provide feedback on data reports and insights, and draft the first version of the plan's vision and goals while incorporating feedback from the public.

Creation Process

PCRD followed closely the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and the templates provided by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) when creating the plan. The PCRD team attended two digital equity trainings organized by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) and the Federal Reserve system. PCRD coordinated extensively with IBO to ensure, as required, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) plan and digital equity plan align.

Given the 12-month digital equity plan deadline, the plan's complexity, and the critical need for community engagement, PCRD designed the plan creation process to consist of four main phases, driven by the Indiana digital equity task force. **Figure 1** below illustrates the phases of this planning process and key elements, with more information on each phase in the following section, *Creation Process*.

Figure 1. *Digital Equity Plan Timeline*

Phase 1
Taskforce Formation
- Recruit key organizations
- Bring digital equity experience
- Cover a wide range of groups
- Include diverse perspectives

Phase 2
Data Gathering & Insights
- Survey Indiana residents
- Key informant interviews
- Analyze secondary data
- Review with taskforce

Phase 3
Data Application & Community Engagement
- Utilize data insights
- Draft vision & goals
- Conduct regional solution sessions
- Determine barriers & gather solutions

Phase 4
Refining & Adopting The Plan
- Analyze regional solution sessions
- Review goals, strategies, & objectives
- Post plan for public comment
- Make changes as needed & submit

The first phase focused on building a successful foundation for the planning process through forming the task force, as highlighted in the previous section. PCRD worked with the IBO and OCRA to identify organizations and state agencies that would bring essential insights to the planning process, such as those that work closely with covered populations and key sectors such as workforce development, education, and healthcare. Taskforce members were expected to bring first-hand experience from their organization about digital equity to keep the plan relevant, particularly for the audience or sector they serve. In addition, we sought task force members with networks that would help the planning process reach a wider audience. Ultimately, the task force provided a foundation that allowed the planning process to include diverse perspectives from beginning to end.

The second phase of the planning process consisted of gathering relevant data and reviewing with the task force. PCRD utilized multiple avenues for primary data gathering, including a survey of Indiana residents and key informant interviews. In addition, PCRD analyzed data from several secondary data sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Lightcast, Google and the Regional Economic Modeling, Inc. Further details on the data gathering process and resulting insights are available in the *Current State of Digital Equity* section.

The third phase of the planning process applied the data insights and began community engagement. The task force used the data gathered so far to draft the plan's vision and goals. Then seven regional solution sessions were conducted to determine barriers and gather solutions to inform the plan's strategies and objectives. More information on the results of the solution sessions are available in the *Current State of Digital Equity* section.

The fourth phase of the planning process was refining and adopting the plan. Once the input from the regional solutions sessions was analyzed, the task force reviewed the updated goals, strategies and objectives. The updated plan was then posted for public comment from January 8 to February 9, 2024 on the Indiana Broadband Office's website. The public comment period was promoted through a variety of channels and shared widely through the task force network and other grassroot organizations. Comments were collected through a dedicated email address and are listed in **Appendix C**.

CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL EQUITY

Indiana's digital equity landscape is a variegated typography that changes county by county. With 6.6% of the state being rural and 78.4% being urban, and 14.9% being micropolitan (small towns), it's important to consider the individual needs of each of these communities and their unique digital equity barriers (and that of their requisite constituencies and covered populations).

Data Gathering and Community Engagement

Drafting the first-ever state digital equity plan warranted a heavy reliance on data, in addition to significant community engagement. This section will go through the data gathering and community engagement conducted to inform this plan. Remember that digital equity can be measured in different ways; therefore, it is essential to consult multiple data sources from secondary data sources like U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey and Lightcast to primary data like first-hand accounts of those experiencing barriers and digital inclusion practitioners. This section is meant to give an overview of the methods and outputs of this effort to provide context for the results discussed in the *Barriers and Data Insights* section.

Survey

In regards to primary data collection, two efforts were completed. One was a survey and another was key informant interviews. For the survey, PCRD partnered with the Indiana University Survey Research Center to design, validate and conduct the survey. The objectives of this survey were to provide contextual information on the state's digital equity landscape, serve as a benchmark for interventions taking place in the future, and document digital equity differences among groups. Approval from Purdue's Institutional Review Board was obtained and a total of 8,000 Indiana household addresses were randomly selected using an address-based sampling frame stratified by study-specific demographics and geographic target characteristics. The survey was designed to oversample covered populations.

A push-to-web phase consisted of a mailed invitation letter with a web link followed by a paper questionnaire to non-respondents. Approximately five weeks later, a four-page survey was mailed with a cover letter to the remaining eligible sample. A $1 dollar bill was included in both phases as an incentive and $15 VISA gift cards were offered to respondents who submitted a web or paper survey. Responses were weighted and calibrated based on respondent distributions on gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, and urban/rural status. A total of 1,225 responses

were captured with an overall response rate of 18.2%. Efforts were made to obtain a representative sample of covered populations (share of responses align with the latest Census distribution). Close to one-fifth of respondents were minorities, 31% were aged 60 or older, 28.7% rural, one-quarter earned less than $35,000, close to 40% had high school or less, 10.5% were veterans, 16.3% spoke a language other than English at home, and 36% had a disability. A more detailed breakdown of responses and results is discussed in the next section.

> " *Key Informant Response*
>
> People need access to their device and their device needs to have access to the Internet. When either of those two things isn't true, the barriers just start to compound quite quickly."

Key Informant Interviews

Parallel to the survey, the task force was asked to identify individuals who have experienced digital inequities for a virtual, up to 45-minute semi-structured interview. Most task force members were also interviewed. The objective of these interviews was to document barriers directly from those affected, as well as those who work with affected covered populations. The semi-structured interview asked about ideal uses of digital technology, barriers encountered, potential solutions, existing resources, and who else could be interviewed. A total of 47 key informant interviews were completed, coded and analyzed. **Table 1** summarizes covered populations discussed in key informant interviews either by participants self-identifying or discussing populations they serve. Note numbers are not mutually exclusive.
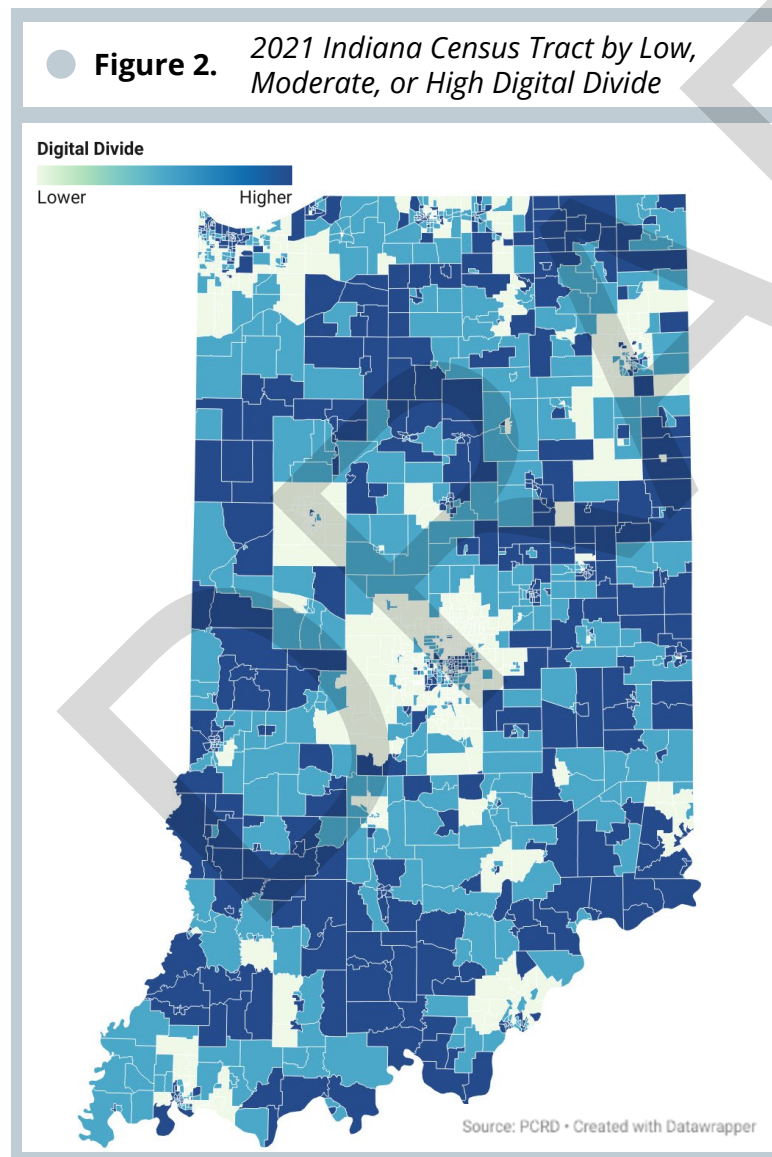
Table 1. *Key Informant Characteristics*

Covered Population	Number of Interviews
Rural Residents	25
Low-Income	27
Aging Individuals	12
Work with incarcerated individuals	8
Veterans	3
Individuals with disabilities	11
Individuals with a language barrier	10
Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority	11

Secondary Data Sources

In regards to the analysis of secondary data sources, multiple reports were completed. These reports were discussed in depth with the task force to jumpstart meaningful conversation around digital equity and inform them as they worked on the vision and overarching goals of the plan. Summaries and snippets from these reports were shared on social media and at the regional solutions sessions to better inform stakeholders on the digital equity landscape in the state.

First, a state of the digital divide in Indiana and a regional digital inclusion profile report were completed that provided insights on digital equity across the state. The innovative metric developed by PCRD was used when analyzing the state of Indiana's digital divide. Census tracts and counties across Indiana were divided into low, moderate, and high— based on their digital divide index (DDI) scores. Low and high geographies were then compared across a host of socioeconomic variables. **Figure 2** shows Indiana tracts divided into low (lighter blue), moderate, and high (darker blue areas) digital divide areas as shown in the *State of Digital Divide in Indiana* report.

Figure 2. *2021 Indiana Census Tract by Low, Moderate, or High Digital Divide*

Digital Divide — Lower / Higher

Source: PCRD • Created with Datawrapper

Results indicate that a higher share of rural, minority, veteran, poor, disabled, limited English proficient households, and senior citizens live in high digital divide areas compared to low digital divide areas. Likewise, a lower labor force participation rate, educational attainment, share of digital economy jobs, and share of occupations requiring high digital skills were present in high digital divide areas compared to low areas across the state. *Read the full report here.*

On the other hand, the regional digital inclusion profile looked at additional variables across six regions defined by OCRA. Total population trends by age group, racial/ethnic breakdown, educational attainment, rurality, poverty, and other variables
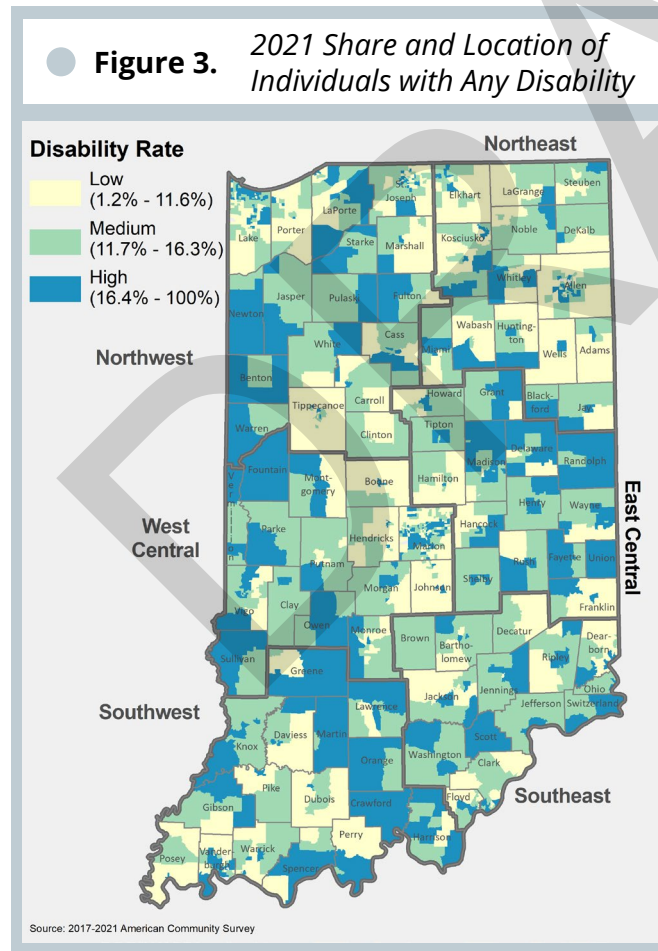
were analyzed (mostly at the Census tract level) for stakeholders to better understand the socioeconomic and demographic context under which digital equity is taking place. Likewise, the geographical distribution of some covered populations were analyzed as well.

Digital equity variables such as digital distress and the digital divide index were also analyzed. Lastly, digital economy, workforce and economic development variables were also analyzed to better understand the implications and potential of digital equity. **Figure 3** shows the location of individuals with any disabilities in Indiana (taken from the digital inclusion profile report). *Read the full report here.*

Second, to better help digital equity stakeholders prioritize and be strategic about where digital equity interventions may be needed, an *interactive digital equity and covered populations hotspot map* at the Census tract (neighborhoods) level was presented to the task force and eventually released to the general public. This map showcases neighborhoods that are in the highest group based on the state distribution of the share of covered populations as well as digital distress variables. In other words, this map is a visual guide to identify areas more likely to require digital equity interventions keeping in mind their share of covered populations.

Figure 3. *2021 Share and Location of Individuals with Any Disability*

Disability Rate
- Low (1.2% - 11.6%)
- Medium (11.7% - 16.3%)
- High (16.4% - 100%)

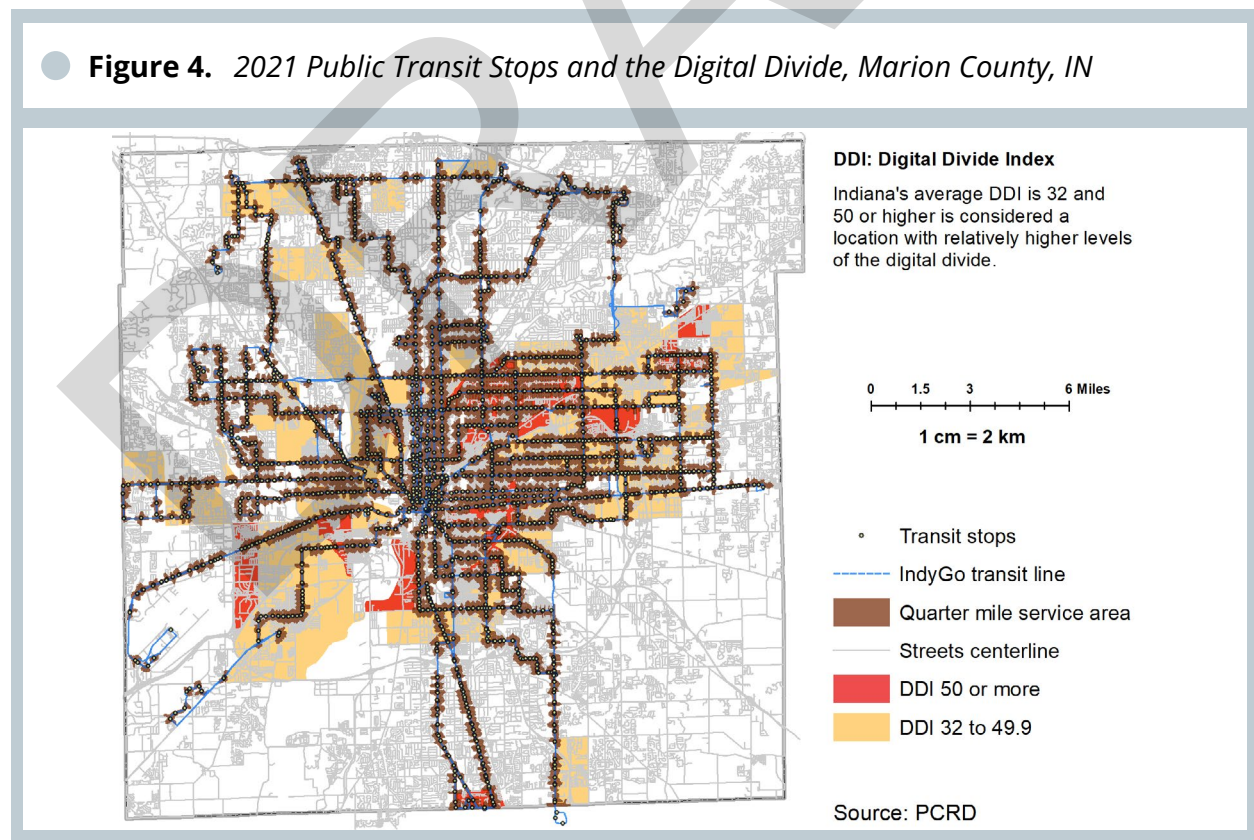Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

Third, a preliminary scenario planning for digital inclusion and equity in Marion County (home to the state capital, Indianapolis) was completed using multiple datasets. The objective of this analysis was to explore spatial mismatches between transportation accessibility, the digital divide, poverty and racial/ethnic minorities by overlaying real-time labor market information (e.g., general and remote/hybrid job postings, living wages), transportation accessibility (e.g., public transit stops and routes), race/ethnicity, poverty and digital divide index spatial data. Preliminary results showed that:

- Remote/hybrid job postings have proportionately increased from 2.5% in 2018 to 12.5% in 2022 in Marion County.

- Proportionally more remote/hybrid options have higher educational requirements than non-remote options.

- Racial/ethnic minorities and poverty are spatially concentrated in Marion County. Transit routes and stops do not cover all these concentrated areas of racial/ethnic minorities and high poverty. Similarly, transit routes and stops do not serve all areas with a high digital divide, as measured by the digital divide index.

This means that single mothers, a higher share of which are minorities and poor, are the least likely to benefit from remote/hybrid jobs paying more than the living wage. They, in turn, may have to rely on traditional jobs, that while paying a living wage, may require transportation. Hence, the barriers for racial/ethnic minorities and poor populations include education, broadband, and transportation accessibility. **Figure 4** shows areas with no public transit service overlap with high digital divide areas in Indianapolis.

Figure 4. *2021 Public Transit Stops and the Digital Divide, Marion County, IN*

DDI: Digital Divide Index

Indiana's average DDI is 32 and 50 or higher is considered a location with relatively higher levels of the digital divide.

0   1.5   3   6 Miles

1 cm = 2 km

- Transit stops
- IndyGo transit line
- Quarter mile service area
- Streets centerline
- DDI 50 or more
- DDI 32 to 49.9

Source: PCRD

Finally, a general equilibrium model was purchased and used to gather insights on the *impact of broadband infrastructure investments* (a significant barrier to digital equity) as well as *remote workers* including its impact on specific socioeconomic groups. These insights were critical to help stakeholders understand the "what if" of digital equity in the state. In other words, the impacts documented by the model would be much larger were digital equity a reality. This analysis also helped showcase that there are existing opportunities in place that can be leveraged or augmented if digital equity were a reality in Indiana.

> **" Key Informant Response**
>
> The need for access to the Internet or devices has moved from something that's incredibly helpful to something that's just absolutely vital."

Multiple secondary data sources were analyzed, including Census data as well as proprietary datasets, resulting in several reports and insights that informed both the task force as well as the solutions sessions participants and general public. Additional innovative metrics developed previously by PCRD were also analyzed (e.g., digital divide index and digital distress). More importantly, these data insights resulted in the state's *digital equity dashboard*, a group of 19 variables that will be monitored to gauge the state's digital equity landscape during the next five years. These include data on school-aged children, seniors, race & ethnicity, digital distress, household income, and the digital economy.

All these reports and data analysis yielded significant insights to inform the task force on the state of digital equity in Indiana. A summary of findings, from both the primary and secondary data, was prepared and shared with the task force and in several statewide public forums.

Asset Inventory

Digital equity in the state does not happen in a vacuum. Consequently, this section provides an overview of an asset inventory completed as part of this planning process. First, a summary of digital asset mapping is discussed followed by a review and integration of existing digital equity plans and resources in the state.

Asset Mapping

The statewide digital equity task force helped instigate the promotion of an interactive digital assets map with the intent for it to be crowdsourced by Indiana residents and organizations. The objective was to gain a sense of where existing digital assets are located across the state.

The Indiana Geographic Information Office provided a map of community anchor institutions (CAIs) such as schools, nonprofits, and other organizations in Indiana. Representatives from these organizations were able to type an address to find that particular CAI and verify its address. If a CAI was not included, users could contact PCRD asking for this CAI to be added to the fabric.

Once the CAI was located, users were asked to complete a short form capturing information on digital assets available at that location such as public Wi-Fi, space for digital literacy workshops, availability of public computers, etc., as well as listing the audiences they mostly work with or target such as the general public, rural populations, veterans, etc.

This crowdsource effort will continue, but as of early October 2023, digital assets information was gathered on 143 CAIs. Close to three-quarters of these CAIs offered public Wi-Fi, close to 60% had meeting space available, and a little more than half had computers available for the public. However, less than 17% had a device loaning program while less than one-quarter had a hotspot loaning program. See the full breakdown of assets at CAIs in **Table 2**.

Table 2. *Breakdown of Assets at Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs)*

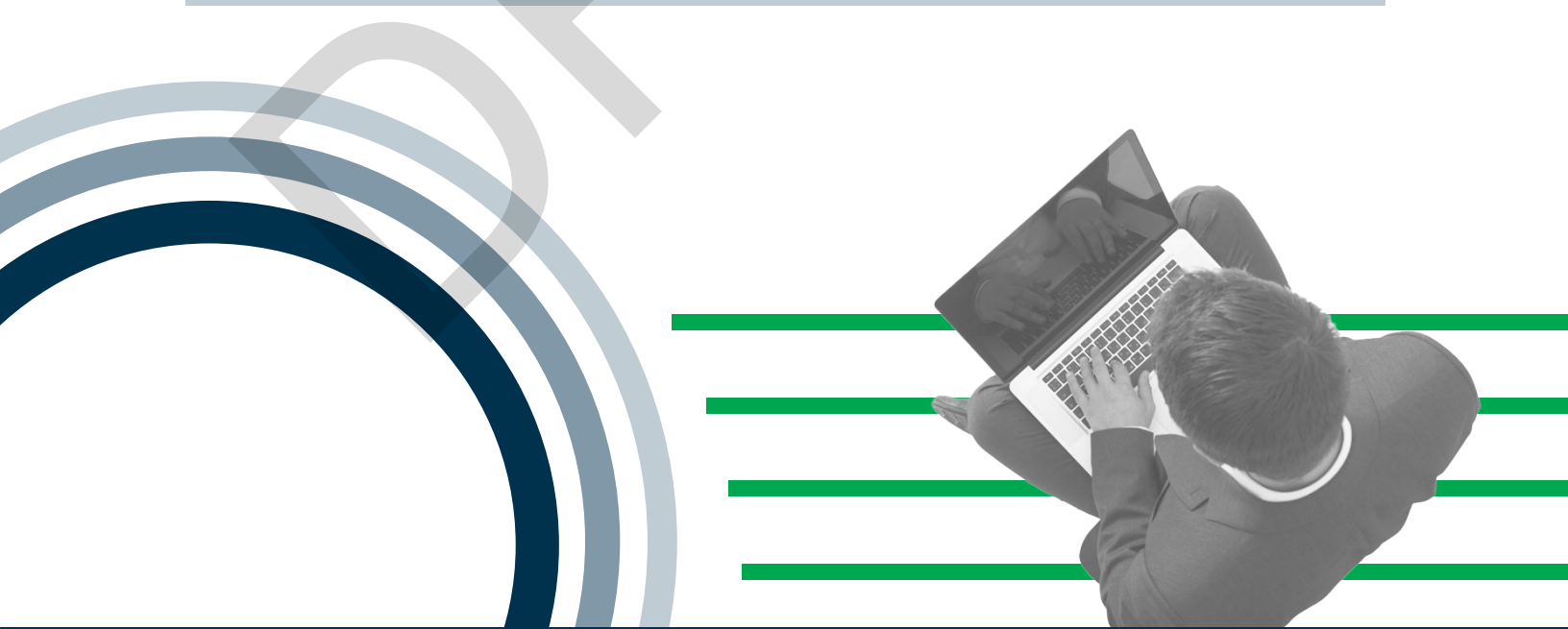| Assets	Total (n=143)	Percent Total
Public Wi-Fi	103	72.0
Computer(s) for Public Use	73	51.0
Hotspot Loaning Program	34	23.8
Device Loaning Program	24	16.8
Digital Skills Training	68	47.6
Meeting Space	85	59.4
Other	32	22.4

Regarding the audiences they primarily work with or target, close to 90% work with the general public, close to two-thirds with aging individuals, and a little more than 60% with disabled individuals. Less than one-fifth work with incarcerated individuals while a little more than 42% work with veterans. **Table 3** shows the breakdown of CAIs for each covered population.

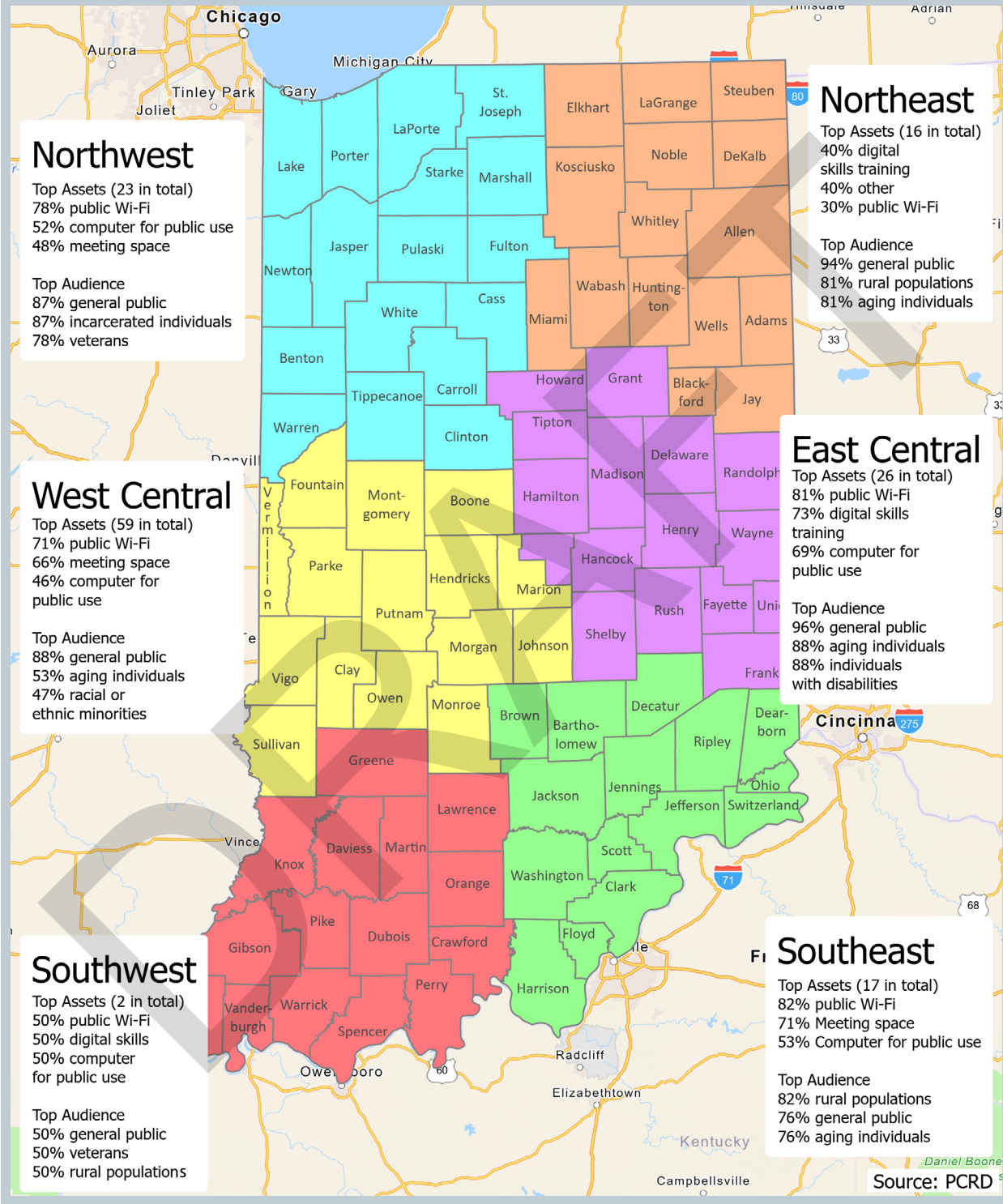**Figure 5** summarizes the digital assets recorded thus far for each region.

● **Table 3.** *Breakdown of Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) for Each Covered Population*		
Covered Population	**Total** (n=143)	**Percent Total**
General public	128	89.5
Rural populations	79	55.2
Aging individuals	93	65.0
Incarcerated individuals	26	18.2
Veterans	60	42.0
Individuals with disabilities	88	61.5
English language learners	76	53.1
Individuals with low levels of literacy	85	59.4
Racial or ethinic minorities	86	60.1
Other	16	11.2

Figure 5. *Summary of Digital Assets Per OCRA Region*

Northwest

Top Assets (23 in total)
78% public Wi-Fi
52% computer for public use
48% meeting space

Top Audience
87% general public
87% incarcerated individuals
78% veterans

Northeast

Top Assets (16 in total)
40% digital
skills training
40% other
30% public Wi-Fi

Top Audience
94% general public
81% rural populations
81% aging individuals

West Central

Top Assets (59 in total)
71% public Wi-Fi
66% meeting space
46% computer for
public use

Top Audience
88% general public
53% aging individuals
47% racial or
ethnic minorities

East Central

Top Assets (26 in total)
81% public Wi-Fi
73% digital skills
training
69% computer for
public use

Top Audience
96% general public
88% aging individuals
88% individuals
with disabilities

Southwest

Top Assets (2 in total)
50% public Wi-Fi
50% digital skills
50% computer
for public use

Top Audience
50% general public
50% veterans
50% rural populations

Southeast

Top Assets (17 in total)
82% public Wi-Fi
71% Meeting space
53% Computer for public use

Top Audience
82% rural populations
76% general public
76% aging individuals

Source: PCRD

Existing Digital Equity Plans

Although this is Indiana's first-ever statewide digital equity plan, Indiana residents have been working collaboratively over the past five years to create community, county, and regional-level plans. Indiana currently has six local digital equity plans targeted at the city, county or regional level. In addition, Indiana has one federally recognized tribe, who do not have a plan at this time. PCRD reviewed these plans with the taskforce during the data gathering phase of the planning process. General digital equity themes, such as access, devices and digital skills were identified across the plans. While all the plans address digital equity issues, they go about it in different ways. Based on these characteristics three categories of plans emerged, equity-focused, economic development-focused and community development-focused. The taskforce took these insights and incorporated them into the the state plan's goals, strategies and objectives.

Equity-Focused Plans

identify populations vulnerable to the digital divide and focus on creating opportunities for all residents.

Topics

Affordable Connectivity Program, targeted audiences, audience-specific resources and programs, etc.

Plans

City of Bloomington Digital Equity Strategic Plan, South Bend Digital Equity Roadmap

Economic Development-Focused Plans

incorporate digital inclusion into economic development strategies.

Topics

Small Business Support, Workforce Digital Skills, Business Connectivity, Digital Agriculture, etc.

Plans

Boone County 5-year Digital Inclusion Plan, Carroll County Digital Inclusion Initiative

Community Development-Focused Plans

incorporate elements of the other two categories with the ultimate aim of addressing digital equity for all facets of the community.

Topics

Community/Regional collaboration, device programs, digital literacy ecosystems, community and economic development

Plans

Rush County Digital Inclusion Plan, Southeastern Indiana Regional Digital Inclusion Plan

Moving forward new digital equity plans are not just expected, but encouraged through objectives such as those under strategy 3.1. Groups developing local or regional digital equity plans will be encouraged to collaborate with the state taskforce and statewide practitioner networks developed by the plan. Ultimately, the state plan should provide avenues to support local or regional digital equity plans by including similar digital equity themes, offering funding opportunities and developing resources for success.

State Plans and Goals

Digital equity does not happen in a vacuum, so as part of the planning process the taskforce gathered plans that overlap with the state digital equity plan. In each of the reviewed plans, the ability of Hoosiers to access digital infrastructure, devices, resources or skills is somehow mentioned. **Table 4** lists each of the plans reviewed, what parts of that plan mention a facet of digital equity, and what goal, strategy or objective of this digital equity plan correlates with that plan.

● **Table 4.** *Other State Plans and Correlations to the Indiana Digital Equity Plan*

Plan Name	Organization	Parts of this Plan Relevant to Digital Equity	Correlation with Indiana's Digital Equity Plan's Goal/ Strategies/Objectives
Indiana's Multi-Sector Plan on Aging	Indiana's Family & Social Services Administration (FSSA) – Division of Aging	Goal 5	Goal 1
Indiana's State Service Plan	Serve Indiana	Priority Area 1	Goal 3
The Indiana State Library's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan	Indiana State Library	Goal 6	Goal 1, 2, and 3

In addition, the taskforce reviewed policies from 6 organizations: Indiana Association of Regional Councils (IARC), Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Indiana Rural Schools Association, Indiana Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs, and the United Way of Central Indiana. See a summary of the analysis for these plans and policies in **Appendix D**.
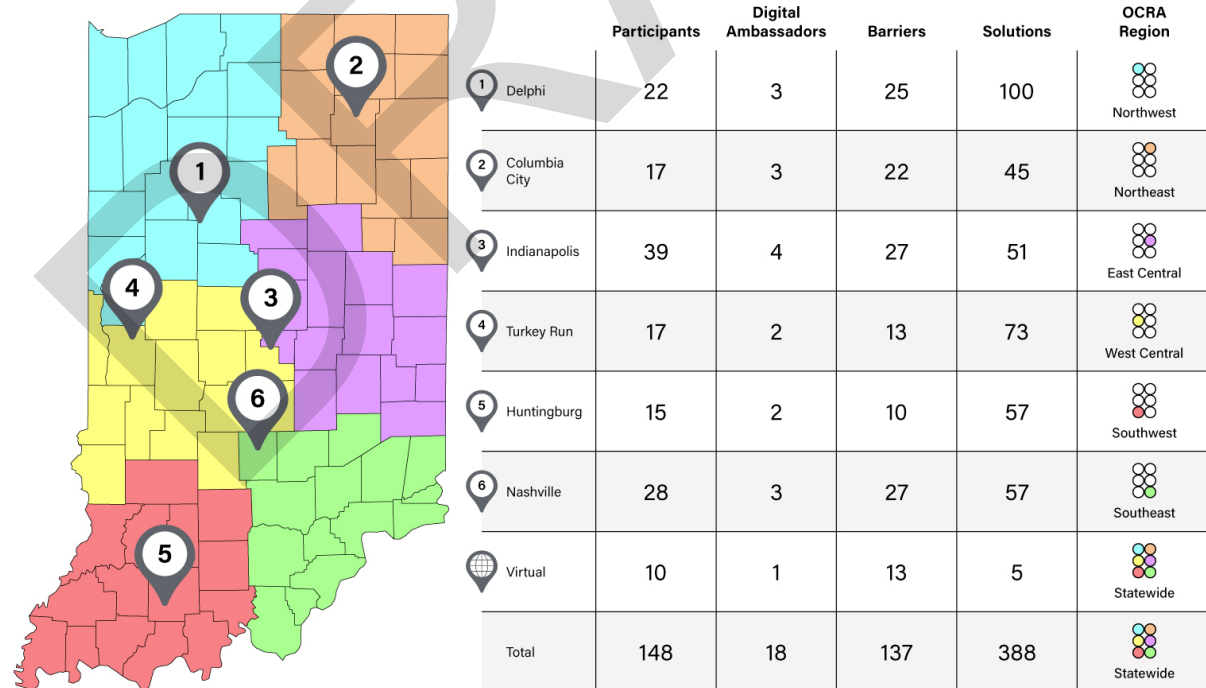
Regional Solutions Sessions

The regional solutions sessions were designed to validate barriers and capture solutions from attendees, including digital ambassadors. This resulted in barriers being validated and numerous solutions being captured and translated into the plan's strategies and objectives. Digital ambassadors representing individuals from several covered populations who have experienced and overcome digital inequities were recruited by task force members. They were recognized at the regional solution sessions and their input was extremely valuable. A total of 148 participants discussed 137 barriers and 388 proposed solutions. **Figure 6** shows the locations of the in-person and virtual meetings across the state.

Solutions Sessions Snapshot

Solution Session for the Northwest Region held in Delphi, Indiana

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● **Figure 6.** *Regional Digital Solutions Sessions Across Indiana*

		Participants	Digital Ambassadors	Barriers	Solutions	OCRA Region
1	Delphi	22	3	25	100	Northwest
2	Columbia City	17	3	22	45	Northeast
3	Indianapolis	39	4	27	51	East Central
4	Turkey Run	17	2	13	73	West Central
5	Huntingburg	15	2	10	57	Southwest
6	Nashville	28	3	27	57	Southeast
	Virtual	10	1	13	5	Statewide
	Total	148	18	137	388	Statewide

Summary of Community Engagement

Community engagement was essential to informing this plan, particularly from covered populations. The planning process included multiple engagement methods, recognizing that people may feel more comfortable engaging in one over another. The formation of the task force kicked off the engagement by bringing in stakeholders representing the covered populations and key state activities. In addition to participating throughout the plan's creation, the task force used their networks to inform the plan and to disperse engagement opportunities. One of these was the key-informant interviews, which started with task force members, who would then refer 4-5 individuals to participate, and those participants would recommend an additional 4-5 participants. The result was a variety of participants, including individuals of covered populations, practitioners who work with one or more covered populations, and other key stakeholders. A similar process was used to promote the regional solution sessions, gather submissions for the asset map, and market the plan during the public comment period.

Data Insights and Barriers

The digital equity landscape in Indiana is a complex one. This section provides an overview of the insights gained from data gathering, including when available, information on covered populations. Remember that digital equity is multi-faceted and can be measured in different ways. While this section is not meant to be comprehensive, it is important to keep in mind that the variables discussed next are but one way to understand this issue. Ultimately, the objective is to outline data insights and identify barriers.

The process of data analysis and community engagement yielded documentation of multiple digital equity barriers in Indiana. The results showed many barriers overlapped across covered populations with overarching issues being similar. To make discussion of the insights and identified barriers easier, the documented barriers were grouped into five buckets. While these buckets will be used to structure the insights discussion, it is important to note that there is significant overlap between the buckets. Unless otherwise specified, these barriers affected most of the covered populations analyzed.

Access

According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 24.7% of households in the state did not have home internet access or relied solely on cellular data to access the internet. When looking at urban versus rural (one of the covered populations), this percentage was 22.7% in urban areas versus 30.2% in rural areas of the state, clearly showcasing digital inequities between urban and rural.

When looking at income and location, a similar pattern emerges regarding home internet access. Roughly 30% of households making less than $35,000 per year did not have home internet access compared to 5% of households making $75,000 or more per year. When comparing urban and rural, 36.8% of rural households making less than $35,000 per year did not have home internet access compared to 28.7% of urban households. Clearly, location and income play a role in Indiana's digital inequities measured by home internet access.

When looking at school-aged kids, according to the ACS, the percentage of children aged 3 years or older enrolled in school without a computer or internet in pre-kindergarten through 4th grade was 7.6% compared to 7.3% in 5th through 8th grade and 6% in 9th through 12th grade. However, the share of these students is higher in rural areas, especially among younger kids, where 13.2% of pre-kindergarten through 4th graders did not have a computer or internet (6.7% in urban areas), 13.7% of 5th through 8th graders (6.7% in urban areas) and 8.3% of 9th through 12th graders (5.7% in urban areas).

By The Numbers

24.7%
of Indiana households do not have internet access

30.2%
of rural Indiana households do not have internet access
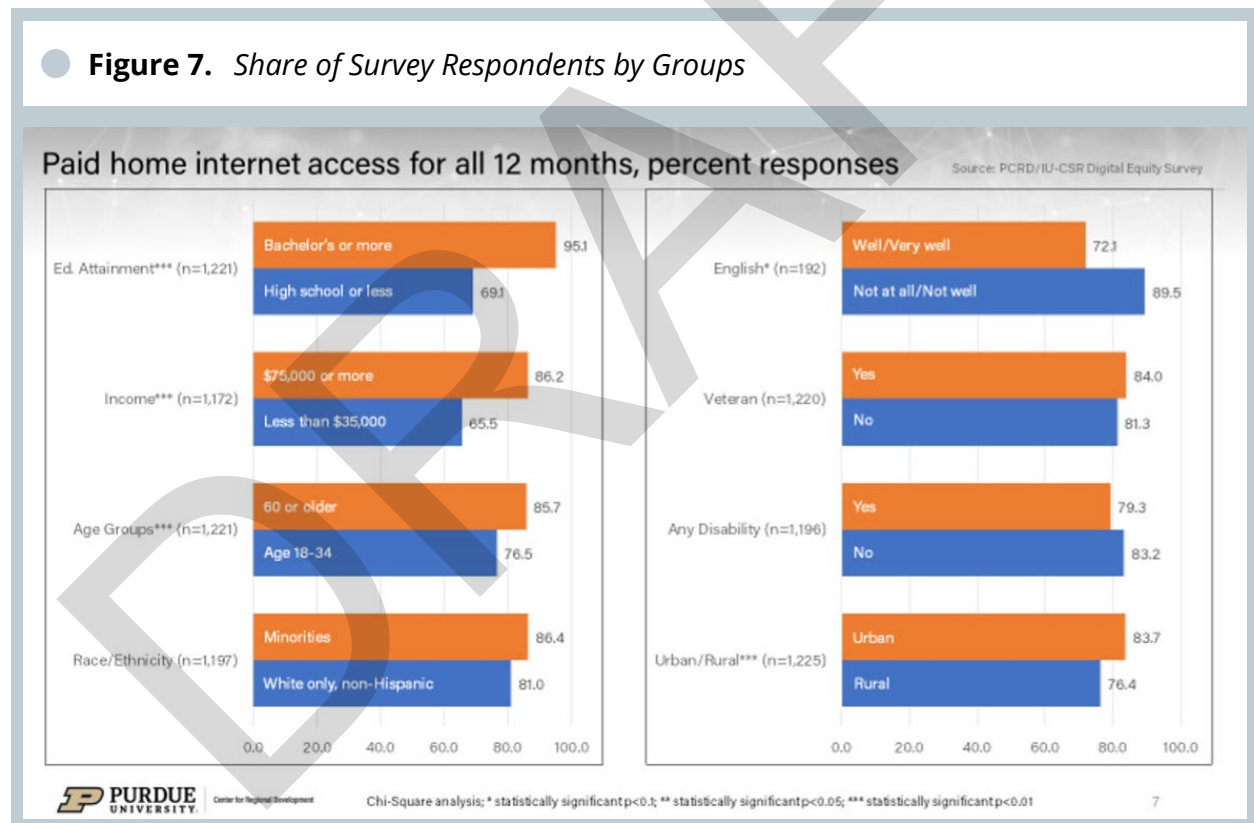
86.4%
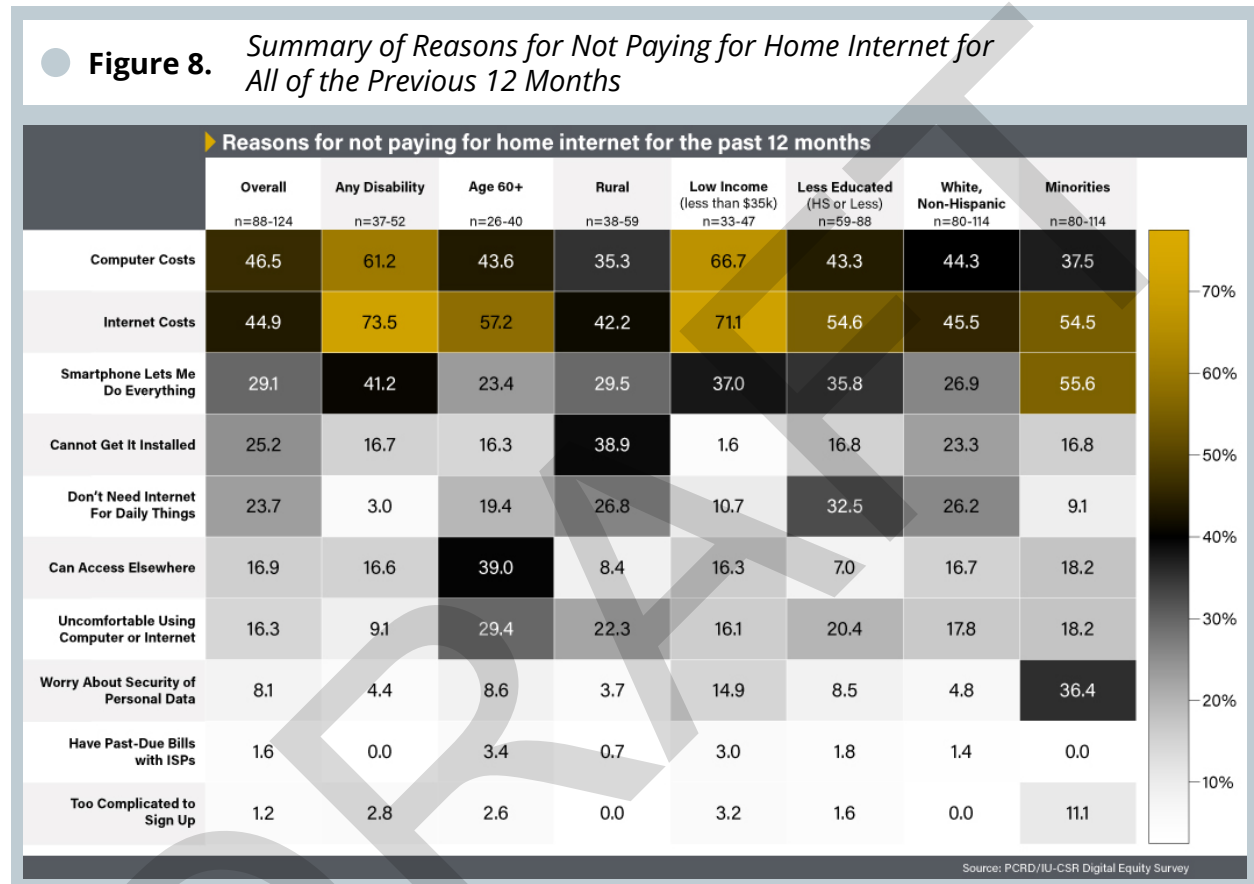of Indiana minorities paid for internet access in the last 12 months

In addition to the Census data, the digital equity survey and key informant interviews also shed light on important data insights. The survey was administered using both paper copies mailed to random addresses, as well as online. A total of 1,225 responses were gathered. Efforts were made to obtain a representative sample of covered populations (share of responses align with the latest Census distribution). To learn more about this survey data, view the blog series on *Indiana's Digital Equity Landscape*. Close to one-fifth of respondents were minorities, 31% were aged 60 or older, 28.7% were rural residents, one-quarter earned less than $35,000, close to 40% had high school or less, 10.5% were veterans, 16.3% spoke a language other than English at home, and 36% had a disability.

Overall, 81.6% paid for home internet for all previous 12 months while 5.9% paid for some months and 12.4% did not pay for home internet; among covered population groups the largest difference was between those with a bachelor's or more (95.1%) and those with high school or less (69.1%); an unexpected finding was that a higher share of minorities (86.4%) paid for home internet compared to whites (81%); as expected, a higher share of urban respondents (83.7%) paid for home internet compared to rural (76.4%). See **Figure 7** for differences between surveyed groups.

Figure 7. *Share of Survey Respondents by Groups*

Paid home internet access for all 12 months, percent responses
Source: PCRD/IU-CSR Digital Equity Survey

Ed. Attainment*** (n=1,221)			English* (n=192)	
Bachelor's or more	95.1		Well/Very well	72.1
High school or less	69.1		Not at all/Not well	89.5
Income*** (n=1,172)			Veteran (n=1,220)	
$75,000 or more	86.2		Yes	84.0
Less than $35,000	65.5		No	81.3
Age Groups*** (n=1,221)			Any Disability (n=1,196)	
60 or older	85.7		Yes	79.3
Age 18-34	76.5		No	83.2
Race/Ethnicity (n=1,197)			Urban/Rural*** (n=1,225)	
Minorities	86.4		Urban	83.7
White only, non-Hispanic	81.0		Rural	76.4

PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Center for Regional Development   Chi-Square analysis; * statistically significant p<0.1; ** statistically significant p<0.05; *** statistically significant p<0.01   7

The main reason overall for not paying for home internet was the cost of computers and internet service. The main reason for those ages 60 or older, disabled, rural, low-income, less-educated, and white was internet cost while the main reason for minorities was that their smartphone lets them do everything. **Figure 8** summarizes the reasons why covered populations did not pay for home internet for all of the previous 12 months. Note that affordability, either of devices or home internet service, were the top reasons regardless of covered populations.

● **Figure 8.** *Summary of Reasons for Not Paying for Home Internet for All of the Previous 12 Months*

▶ **Reasons for not paying for home internet for the past 12 months**

	Overall n=88-124	Any Disability n=37-52	Age 60+ n=26-40	Rural n=38-59	Low Income (less than $35k) n=33-47	Less Educated (HS or Less) n=59-88	White, Non-Hispanic n=80-114	Minorities n=80-114
Computer Costs	46.5	61.2	43.6	35.3	66.7	43.3	44.3	37.5
Internet Costs	44.9	73.5	57.2	42.2	71.1	54.6	45.5	54.5
Smartphone Lets Me Do Everything	29.1	41.2	23.4	29.5	37.0	35.8	26.9	55.6
Cannot Get It Installed	25.2	16.7	16.3	38.9	1.6	16.8	23.3	16.8
Don't Need Internet For Daily Things	23.7	3.0	19.4	26.8	10.7	32.5	26.2	9.1
Can Access Elsewhere	16.9	16.6	39.0	8.4	16.3	7.0	16.7	18.2
Uncomfortable Using Computer or Internet	16.3	9.1	29.4	22.3	16.1	20.4	17.8	18.2
Worry About Security of Personal Data	8.1	4.4	8.6	3.7	14.9	8.5	4.8	36.4
Have Past-Due Bills with ISPs	1.6	0.0	3.4	0.7	3.0	1.8	1.4	0.0
Too Complicated to Sign Up	1.2	2.8	2.6	0.0	3.2	1.6	0.0	11.1

Source: PCRD/IU-CSR Digital Equity Survey

Devices

When it comes to devices, the share of households in Indiana without devices or relying solely on mobile devices was close to one-quarter. Again, when looking at urban and rural areas of the state, differences emerge though not as large as with home internet access. Roughly one-quarter of urban households did not have computing devices or relied solely on mobile devices compared to close to 28% in rural areas.

Another factor to be considered when looking at digital inequities is the age group. According to the 2017-2021 ACS, not having a computer is more of an issue among the senior population (age 65 or older) compared to children (under 18) in Indiana. About 16% of seniors did not have a computer versus 3.2% of children. Regarding computers but no internet, the difference was lower at 7.5% seniors compared to 5% children. When looking

at urban and rural areas, differences exist but are lower: close to one-fifth (18%) of seniors in rural areas did not have a computer compared to 16% in urban areas.

Regarding race and ethnicity, some differences also became apparent. For example, the percentage of white residents with a computer but no internet was 5.5% compared to 8.3% of black and 6.9% of Hispanics. Regarding having a computer, the percentage of white residents was 5.5% versus 8.2% of black and 4.6% Hispanics. Interesting trends are seen when, again, looking at urban versus rural areas. Close to 9% of white residents in rural areas did not have a computer compared to 4.6% in urban areas; regarding black residents, the percentage was 3.5% in rural versus 8.5% in urban; and for Hispanics, the percentages were 2.7% in rural versus 5% in urban areas.

In addition to the Census data, the digital equity survey and key informant interviews also revealed important data insights. A little more than one-third of survey respondents did not own a tablet, 43.5% did not own a desktop, and close to one-quarter did not own a laptop; 9.1% of respondents were smartphone-only of which the majority were less educated, lower income, younger, white, and urban.

By The Numbers

28%
of rural Indiana relies solely on mobile devices or has no computing device

18%
of seniors in rural areas do not have a computer

43.5%
of survey respondents do not own a home desktop computer

Use

In addition to the Census data, the digital equity survey and key informant interviews also detailed personal accounts of needs expressed and barriers encountered that helped PCRD and the task force better understand digital inequities.. Overall, 92.1% of survey respondents used the internet daily over the previous year; of those that did not use the internet daily, the main reasons were not having a desktop or laptop followed by home internet costing too much. In addition, close to one-third were not interested in doing things online and did not feel comfortable using the internet.

The majority of respondents said internet use increased their ability to find up-to-date information on local events, entertainment options, opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family, ability to do day-to-day tasks more quickly, and access and use healthcare services. A little more than one-third reported an increase in their anxiety and 28.8% an increase in negative perceptions towards other people or groups.

The top online tasks for which respondents felt very and extremely confident was accessing online banking (82.3%) followed by finding educational content and information (73.5%). The share of respondents feeling very and extremely confident accessing and applying for government services was the lowest with 63.7% followed by creating a resume with 67.5%.

Overall, close to two-thirds of respondents said they search online or rely on family when needing help with devices and/or internet; however, ages 60 or older, rural, lower income, and less educated rely on family more followed by searching online.

By The Numbers

92.1%
of respondents used internet daily in the past year

82.3%
of respondents used internet for banking tasks

25.5%
of jobs require a high skill level of digital literacy

In addition to socioeconomic variables, analyses were completed on workforce and economic variables that are also affected by digital inequities. The hope is that as digital inequities are addressed, these variables will also improve in an inclusive way. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, about 1.9% of jobs in the state were related to 44 industries that are fully part of the digital economy (does not include warehousing and retailing related to e-commerce). The share of digital economy jobs in urban counties was 2.1% versus 1.1% in rural counties. In addition, the share of jobs requiring low digital skills, as well as high, was close to one-quarter for each. However, the share requiring high digital skills in urban counties was 25.5% compared to less than one-fifth in rural counties of the state. Looking at those working from home, 7% of workers aged 16 or older worked from home. This share was higher in urban counties at 7.6% and lower in rural counties at 3.9% (shares include farmers).

32.9%

of respondents are not interested in doing things online daily

31%

of respondents feel uncomfortable using the internet daily

Mindset and Trust

Mindset and trust emerged as an issue across several data sources. In the survey, mindset can be attributed to why many respondents are not using the internet daily. **Figure 9** shows the reasons for not using the internet daily overall and for each covered population. The first two reasons have to do with access, but then 32.9% of respondents reported they were not interested in doing things online. No matter the reason for not being interested, the root cause here comes down to mindset. In addition, 31% of respondents reported feeling uncomfortable using the internet. While this may be a gap in digital skills, it could also be an issue with trust, as is reflected in feedback from the solution sessions and key informant interviews.

⬤ **Figure 9.** *Summary of Reasons for Not Using the Internet Daily*

Reasons for not using internet daily

	Overall n=55-77	Veterans n=5-6	Any Disability n=17-23	Age 60+ n=17-26	Rural n=17-28	Low Income (less than $35k) n=28-39	Less Educated (HS or Less) n=44-58	White, Non-Hispanic n=48-61	Minorities n=4-10
Don't have desktop/laptop	55.4	77.5	11.9	55.5	48.4	56.3	65.4	62.0	17.7
Home internet costs too much	42.0	10.6	71.6	36.3	46.5	46.6	49.8	43.2	60.9
Not interested in doing things online	32.9	5.1	12.9	41.9	59.4	19.1	42.4	33.6	23.6
Uncomfortable using the internet	31.0	3.9	6.4	38.8	56.5	16.5	40.4	34.7	17.2
Devices are too expensive	29.7	10.8	38.9	33.7	30.6	28.4	38.1	32.2	26.9
Security concerns	29.3	2.0	12.3	39.8	34.9	26.4	37.8	34.7	17.4
Ran out of smartphone data too quickly	10.0	0.0	4.2	0.6	2.1	18.0	12.6	6.8	27.6
Asked for help, but did not get it	9.6	2.1	0.0	0.6	0.6	20.6	12.8	12.5	0.0
Devices are not reliable	8.7	70.8	5.4	3.1	3.4	15.8	11.4	8.5	9.7
Can't get good internet access at home	7.6	4.2	0.8	4.3	9.3	10.6	7.9	9.3	0.0
Don't know where to get help	3.9	2.0	4.9	8.5	3.2	8.1	5.0	3.3	10.4
Hard to get to places with internet access	3.1	2.0	7.4	3.6	0.8	5.1	2.7	1.0	14.2
Places with internet have hours that don't work for me	1.5	2.0	0.0	3.4	3.4	1.3	0.6	0.0	0.0

Source: PCRD/IU-SRC Digital Equity Survey

Context

The final bucket that emerged from the data is that people's context matters, and barriers often compound upon one another. During the solution sessions, while discussing skilling up existing workers, one participant mentioned the importance of funding childcare during digital skills classes. Having classes outside working hours could prevent some people from attending as they would need to set up childcare. So we need to be aware of people's existing context and how barriers can build on one another.

This pattern showed up repeatedly in the key informant interviews. One interviewee talked about the complications with unhoused populations or those in temporary situations:

"We have a lot of unhoused populations, a lot of people who are in temporary accommodations and they just aren't able to make a commitment to a more permanent solution. They're in transitional housing or temporary housing, so that could be things like a domestic violence shelter or maybe they're in the process of transitioning to a permanent address. They, of course, have options like hot spots. But if you're unhoused or in those unstable situations, there's a fear that resources like technology might be stolen, lost or damaged. So they tend to want to hold back until they feel like they have that kind of point of stability in their life. And then they're willing to make a decision. They also tend to see a lot of decision overload. Because of that instability, making a commitment like, 'I'm going to use $100 to buy a device' or, 'I'm going to make a commitment to this service' without someone like a digital navigator or someone to help guide them through that process. It can be very overwhelming because it's so many decisions all at once."

Another interviewee talked about how the barriers compound for some justice-involved individuals:

"Lots of people that come out of the prison system are unemployed or underemployed...They don't have credit to get an AT&T-type contract, and we're in rural Indiana, so we have very few options like Boost [Mobile] and Cricket [Wireless] but that's it. There's not a whole lot of non-contract places around out there, too."

These are just a few examples, and these situations may not be unique to these populations. But they illustrate the importance of being aware of the context in which our target audiences live in in order to support auxiliary services.

■ Barriers

Identifying the barriers to digital equity in Indiana required a heavy reliance on data, in addition to significant community engagement. The resulting barriers fall into five buckets and the previous section reviewed the insights related to these five buckets. In summary, the five buckets of barriers can be defined as follows:

Access	An important barrier documented was lack of internet access, mostly in rural areas of the state. Secondary data, survey responses, key informant interviews, and regional solutions sessions confirmed that lack of affordable access to internet service is an issue, particularly in rural areas. Lack of competition and options was also mentioned as an issue.
Devices	Survey respondents and key informant interviews confirmed that the No. 1 barrier to digital equity in the state is affordability of devices (e.g., laptop, desktop). A close second reason was the cost of internet service. For those ages 60 or older, disabled, rural, low-income, less-educated, and white, the primary reason for not paying for a home internet subscription was the cost of the service.
Use	Paid home internet subscriptions across groups varied with the educational attainment category having the largest difference. Minorities said their smartphone lets them do everything online and thus a home subscription is not needed. Regarding internet use, security concerns, lack of internet, not feeling comfortable, and low literacy were barriers for not using the internet more frequently, as was the lack of a laptop/desktop. Personal life situations such as transportation, income, and rurality affected individual digital equity as well.
Mindset and Trust	Some key informants, as well as roundtable discussions during the regional solutions sessions, identified that lack of trust on the internet contribute to digital inequity. In addition, not understanding how the internet can personally benefit individuals was also documented, hinting at a mindset and cultural issue. Lastly, lack of awareness on resources and community support were also issues for folks to subscribe to home internet and/or use the technology more frequently.
Context	Barriers can compound and create additional hurdles people need to overcome to leverage digital technologies. It's important to be aware of the context in which digital equity services are provided and support auxiliary services that reduce these barriers.

This section has highlighted how extremely nuanced digital equity is within the state. This data laid the foundation for the goals and strategies drafted by the taskforce. Then, this data also drove the conversation at the digital equity solution sessions that determined the objectives. All of this is presented in the next section of the plan.

THE DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

The vision for Indiana's digital equity plan is based on the data gathered and analyzed through community engagement in multiple industry clusters throughout the state. The vision is as follows:

> *Indiana residents trust and use innovative connectivity for improved quality of life, resulting in inclusive and resilient communities that ensure opportunities for all.*

Of course, this vision is not attainable without a clear and measurable outline of the goals, strategies, and objectives needed.

Goals

Goal 1

Provide Indiana residents with universal connectivity that is affordable, accessible, reliable, equitable and available in public and private spaces to ensure maximum adoption.

Strategy 1.1: Assess and educate interested parties in a community to help provide full coverage of the state with high-speed internet access.

Objective 1.1.1: Develop a program to inventory assets in the community critical for full connectivity (e.g., grain silos, towers) and identify partnerships for creating equitable access.

Objective 1.1.2: Develop a toolkit for municipal and county governments to streamline broadband deployment (e.g., Broadband Ready certification) with a strong emphasis on equity.

Objective 1.1.3: Collaborate with trusted community partners to develop and market accessible home internet subsidy programs, specifically targeting areas with an above-average share of covered populations.

Objective 1.1.4: Ensure community anchor institutions—especially in areas with an above-average share of covered populations—have access to ultra-fast and reliable connectivity that meets their needs.

Objective 1.1.5: Collect best practices for operating public Wi-Fi access points and publish as part of the Indiana Digital Asset Map available through community anchor institutions with special recognition of public access sites that are safe and secure.

Objective 1.1.6: Pursue and promote programs that result in data on Indiana's connectivity landscape empowering leaders to make data-driven decisions on broadband infrastructure investments.

Objective 1.1.7: Launch and/or support existing hotspot lending programs. Collect best practices for hotspot lending programs and publish as part of the Indiana Digital Asset Map and facilitate a network of practitioners for program growth and improvement.

Objective 1.1.8: Support innovative ways to provide connectivity to specific audiences such as:

- Students outside of schools for class work
- Adult learners to access supplemental education and training
- Post-release justice-involved individuals to advance economic prosperity

Objective 1.1.9: Establish an awards program to recognize organizations that work to create equitable access.

Strategy 1.2: Strengthen existing incentives and/or develop new programs for Internet Service Providers (ISP).

Objective 1.2.1: Provide incentives to ISPs that complement existing programs aimed at upgrading existing networks and reaching cost-prohibitive and unserved areas.

Objective 1.2.2: Expand eligibility of state programs to ensure affordable connectivity access that meets the needs of the consumer.

Objective 1.2.3: Waive state fees for broadband highway easement access, especially those in areas with an above-average share of covered populations.

Objective 1.2.4: Streamline pole attachments and make-ready regulations, especially those in areas with an above-average share of covered populations.

Objective 1.2.5: Facilitate collaboration between interested parties and ISPs to help Hoosiers take full advantage of ISP assistance programs.

Objective 1.2.6: Develop and deploy resources for starting an ISP and/or supporting small ISPs.

Objective 1.2.7: Work with BEAD and other funding programs to establish reporting and evaluation expectations to increase accountability and transparency.

Objective 1.2.8: Incentivize community reinvestment for ISPs by prioritizing funding for ISPs that report investments in service areas with an above-average share of covered populations.

Objective 1.2.9: Facilitate opportunities for ISPs and interested parties to discuss community needs and strategize solutions.

Strategy 1.3: Create and equip informed consumers to increase demand and encourage adoption.

Objective 1.3.1: Cultivate broadband-informed consumers through supporting partnerships that educate and build awareness about broadband.

Objective 1.3.2: Incorporate a database of available broadband into the Indiana Digital Asset map to inform availability for current and future residents.

Objective 1.3.3: Develop a system for consumers to report concerns regarding home internet service to create accountability and transparency.

Objective 1.3.4: Encourage and support partnerships and programs providing technical assistance with home internet set-up.

Goal 2

Ensure all Indiana residents have access to affordable devices needed to live, work, and thrive along with the education to utilize that technology safely and successfully.

Strategy 2.1: Expand availability of quality and reliable devices in the community relying on local device-related assets to educate and repurpose.

Objective 2.1.1: Launch and/or support existing device loan or giveaway programs, prioritizing programs that already serve covered populations and provide continual tech support. Include peripheral devices (such as printers and assistive devices, microphones, etc.) necessary for full participation in the digital economy.

Objective 2.1.2: Collect and publish best practices for operating device giveaway or device loan programs and facilitate a network of practitioners to share experiences and innovations.

Objective 2.1.3: Find ways to sustain and subsidize device giveaway programs and/or offset the costs of device recycling/refurbishing programs.

Objective 2.1.4: Build capacity to support one-to-one devices in schools and beyond (e.g., churches).

Objective 2.1.5: Establish community "tech hub" designation and/or facilities to provide devices, technical support, and space for digital literacy workshops. Prioritize tech hubs serving covered populations and filling specific needs within those communities. Collect and publish best practices through creating a community of practice to share experiences.

Objective 2.1.6: Develop device refurbishing skills through programs where participants can refurbish and keep a computer.

Objective 2.1.7: Incentivize businesses, organizations, and individuals to donate retired devices to refurbishing programs.

Objective 2.1.8: Create and market a directory of computer labs/tech hubs, device lending programs, and device giveaway programs in the state of Indiana.

Objective 2.1.9: Ensure assistive technology is readily available and affordable, making these devices (for the disabled community and other covered populations) available via lending programs.

Strategy 2.2: Develop educational and trusted technical assistance programs to maximize device adoption and use.

Objective 2.2.1: Encourage, fund, and support partnerships that educate the public how to safely use devices.

Objective 2.2.2: In collaboration with lending programs, schools and libraries, develop digital literacy programs that supply devices upon successful completion and are invested in maintaining and updating them.

Objective 2.2.3: Engage with schools for the deaf and blind to connect individuals in those communities to help them access non-standard devices. Build capacity in schools to access assistive technology and leverage resources to keep them affordable.

Objective 2.2.4: Support educational resources and programs that equip consumers to make educated device purchases and build awareness about the importance of quality device ownership.

Objective 2.2.5: Leverage existing tech hubs/computer labs for digital skills classes and support existing educational programs.

Goal 3

Build digitally resilient and equitable communities by supporting new and existing ecosystems for local prosperity.

Strategy 3.1: Expand digital equity-focused capacity at the local level.

Objective 3.1.1: Fund and support local digital equity coalitions responsible for making digital equity a priority in the community and for coordinating related efforts.

Objective 3.1.2: Invest in storytelling to secure community buy-in and increase awareness of what a fully connected community can achieve.

Objective 3.1.3: Invest in and recognize partners conducting innovative digital equity programs.

Objective 3.1.4: Facilitate opportunities for coalitions across the state to exchange best practices and resources to ensure statewide progress towards digital equity.

Objective 3.1.5: Expand funding sources through engaging community partners that generate savings/benefits from widespread device use.

Objective 3.1.6: Develop a digital equity bootcamp for local leaders and provide recognition for those who complete the program.

Objective 3.1.7: Support and fund coalitions or other organizations in creating local or regional digital equity plans that support the statewide plan and address local barriers for covered populations.

Objective 3.1.8: Partner with organizations that work with covered populations to fund initiatives or elevate voices to ensure that community solutions are meeting their unique needs.

Strategy 3.2: Ensure digital equity goals contribute to the community's quality of life.

Objective 3.2.1: Create a recommended whitelist of appropriate college and employment websites–and other community resources–for use in device lending/giveaway programs.

Objective 3.2.2: Develop guidelines and provide technical assistance to ensure government and civic online services and information are accessible to all.

Objective 3.2.3: Recognize Indiana-based websites/web services going above and beyond to be accessible to all.

Objective 3.2.4: Encourage and support programs connecting residents with local digital services, such as telehealth, online banking, or government/civic services, to cultivate prosperous online communities.

Objective 3.2.5: Collaborate with partners to explore programs and policies protecting children in the digital age.

Objective 3.2.6: Develop digital equity recommendations for incorporation and consideration in local Continuity of Operations (CoOp) plans and encourage coalition involvement in CoOp development.

Objective 3.2.7: Support programs that leverage telehealth to address healthcare deserts and meet the unique needs of covered populations.

Objective 3.2.8: Encourage, support and fund programs and resources according to best practices for digital civic engagement between local residents and leaders.

Strategy 3.3: Integrate digital equity into economic development strategies.

Objective 3.3.1: Educate leaders on the implications of artificial intelligence.

Objective 3.3.2: Leverage existing and future broadband infrastructure for workforce attraction.

Objective 3.3.3: Develop and support Digital Agriculture programs and resources that allow Indiana farmers to stay competitive.

Objective 3.3.4: Invest in skilling up the workforce by identifying workers that would benefit from re-skilling, identifying companies willing to shift their culture to support the integration of digital skills through adult education programs.

Objective 3.3.5: Collaborate with local employers to incentivize digital skill programs by hosting on-site learning opportunities and investing in the offline training of their workers.

Objective 3.3.6: Provide incentives to employers who provide remote work opportunities and incentivize employees who work remotely to attract new residents.

Objective 3.3.7: Collaborate with local employers to develop and support high school classes that teach employable digital skills.

Objective 3.3.8: Incentivize employers to provide home internet access or home devices to their workforce.

Objective 3.3.9: Support and fund programs/resources that provide the assistance necessary to include the Amish community in the digital economy.

Objective 3.3.10: Develop a toolkit for LEDOs/ Economic Development Corporations on strategies to and benefits of incorporating digital equity into economic development plans.

Objective 3.3.11: Invest in a revolving loan fund that owners of home businesses, micro businesses, and start-up entrepreneurs can benefit from to scale up their digital capacity.

Objective 3.3.12: Support and fund the development and delivery of programs and resources that build digital skills among small businesses and cultivate unique digital communities for Indiana towns/cities/counties.

Strategy 3.4: Equip residents to participate in the digital world safely and prosperously.

Objective 3.4.1: Support and fund digital skills programs for parenting in the digital age, as well as a digital citizenship training program for adults to build their online social interaction skills.

Objective 3.4.2: Support and fund digital skills programs on online safety and privacy, specifically for covered populations.

Objective 3.4.3: Provide Digital Citizenship Training for adults and build skills to socialize virtually and increase media literacy.

Objective 3.4.4: Continue to develop trainings around emerging technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI), and relevant safety and ethical concerns.

Objective 3.4.5: Support and fund digital skills classes to maximize the benefit of online activities in daily life (such as completing paperwork online, shopping, banking, locating information).

Objective 3.4.6: Address the learning curve for justice-involved individuals as they come out of incarceration.

Objective 3.4.7: Collaborate with and support programs and resources that offset the hidden costs of digital skills training by providing wrap-around services and incentives.

Objective 3.4.8: Sustainably fund, hire, and deploy digital navigators or other similar human capital in the community to personally assist with overcoming obstacles to digital inclusion. Prioritize building on existing programs, particularly ones that have trusted relationships with individuals from covered populations.

Objective 3.4.9: Support integrating digital skills in adult education programs.

Objective 3.4.10: Collect and publish best practices for conducting digital skills training; recognize programs that excel in such training; and provide opportunities to learn and grow from one another statewide.

Strategy 3.5: Build a central location for digital equity resources and programs.

Objective 3.5.1: Develop an online repository of the information and resources to support this plan's objectives including the Indiana Digital Asset Map.

Objective 3.5.2: Market the repository and distribute the materials to community resource centers and libraries so they are equipped with digital equity resources.

Objective 3.5.3: Publish digital equity metrics and plan evaluation summaries as part of the repository.

MOVING FORWARD

Implementation

The Indiana Broadband Office (IBO) will be the key facilitator when implementing this plan, conducting stakeholder engagement, as well as responsible for monitoring measurable objectives. After this initial planning phase, the IBO will use the guidelines established in the forthcoming Digital Equity Capacity Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity to guide implementation. During this time, the IBO will continue to engage stakeholders in a number of ways, as well as evaluate progress on the plan's objectives and the state's overall progress on digital equity. The following sections outline the intended activities for implementation, stakeholder engagement, and evaluation.

Implementation Strategies

It is important to note that the implementation of this plan will be significantly influenced by the funding guidelines for the Digital Equity Capacity grant. IBO, PCRD, and the state Digital Equity taskforce have sought to make a comprehensive plan. While the intentions at this time are to address all the plan objectives through creating or supporting programs and resources through partnering organizations and tailoring to unique covered-population needs, the priorities and methods to conduct this work will be greatly driven by the forthcoming funding guidelines. Upon receiving the guidelines, the IBO will adjust this implementation and begin moving forward with addressing digital equity in Indiana. Given these limitations, the plan currently presents the following Implementation strategies.

> *Implementation Strategy 1: Develop, support, and coordinate state, regional, and local digital equity coalitions*

To ensure this plan is effective, efficient, and sustainable, a key component that will also incorporate critical community partners, is the creation of digital equity coalitions. These coalitions will serve as the mechanism through which digital equity will be customized, partners will be engaged, priorities will be identified, and resources will be leveraged. These coalitions will also diversify digital equity's stakeholders and partners from "traditional" ones to include additional key community groups and partners also working on other community issues (e.g. health, housing, economic development).

IBO and other partners will work to transform the existing digital equity task force into a statewide digital equity coalition. This statewide coalition will broaden the type and number of digital equity stakeholders and in turn, will support and augment regional and/or county-level digital equity coalitions. These coalitions will be critical to not only implement the plan but also ensure sustainability and community buy-in and connect researchers and practitioners.

Given the importance of addressing this issue as well as the complex barriers and digital equity landscape in general, these coalitions may include but not be limited to libraries, educators, schools, faith-based groups, local workforce development offices, economic development entities, chambers of commerce, community foundations, Indiana recovery network, community health workers, healthcare providers, American Legion chapters, Purdue Extension, and others.

Implementation Strategy 2: Collaborate with existing organizations to achieve objectives

The IBO will work with organizations in Indiana who have a history of successfully working with covered populations or addressing digital equity to carry out the plan objectives. This includes supporting existing programs or resources, as well as the creation of new programs or resources. Through the planning process, the IBO has already worked with the state digital equity taskforce and PCRD to identify existing digital equity programs and or resources. Building on existing assets and relationships will not only stretch the funding, but be essential to successful intervention. While the funding guidelines will determine the exact nature of the collaboration between IBO and partner organizations, collaboration will be key to plan success.

Implementation Strategy 3: Coordinate with BEAD implementation and other state digital equity or broadband initiatives

From the start of this plan there has been coordination with the BEAD plan, particularly with objectives in Goal 1. Moving forward, IBO intends to continue the coordination between the two plans as IBO works to implement the plans concurrently.

In addition, Indiana has a history of broadband and digital equity-related initiatives. For example, the state of Indiana has two large broadband programs as well as multiple city, county, and regional digital equity plans in place (read more in the asset inventory section). It will be important to coordinate between these initiatives and the implementation of this plan to avoid duplication and increase the impact of the invested funds.

Implementation Strategy 4: Develop necessary programmatic infrastructure for evaluation

IBO will continue to establish the infrastructure needed to ensure this plan has the intended impact and is sustainable. First, IBO will develop a sound project and impact evaluation strategy and ensure that any projects that are implemented as part of this plan include project and impact evaluation requirements. Appendix B outlines examples of the kind of metrics the IBO will seek to collect for each objective. These metrics may change based on the project and what is reasonable or available to collect. The next step is developing a collection system that is compatible with the funding guidelines.

Second, IBO will develop a *digital equity dashboard* for evaluation and accountability purposes. This dashboard will rely primarily on secondary data and will be updated at least annually. This dashboard will complement project-specific metrics, as mentioned above. This dashboard will complement the other online resources outlined in the plan under Goal 3, Strategy 5 and is contingent on the digital equity capacity grant funding and applicable guidelines.

> *Implementation Strategy 5: Continue to document Digital Equity needs and update the plan*

Digital Equity is a constantly evolving issue due to the nature of technology. Already, IBO has worked to cultivate relationships with practitioners in Indiana, from internet service providers to non-profit organizations. These relationships will be important for gaining insight into the evolving digital equity context in Indiana that will inform plan priority activities and necessary plan updates. To gain these insights, the IBO will continue to build a network within Indiana as well host stakeholder engagement events as allowed by the forthcoming digital equity capacity grant funding guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has been pivotal in the creation of this plan and it will continue to be for the implementation of this plan. As outlined in the previous section, stakeholder engagement will serve multiple purposes including forming digital equity coalitions, partnering to achieve plan objectives, and informing and updating the plan. To accomplish this, several of the stakeholder engagement strategies conducted during the planning process will continue. The survey conducted at the start of the planning process will be repeated. In addition, the Digital Equity State-wide task force will be continued and transformed into a coalition. These activities will be complemented by new engagement activities, including those expressed in the plan such as the development of practitioner networks and collaboration opportunities. Additional community engagement events will be held as allowed by the forthcoming digital equity capacity grant funding guidelines. Regardless of the engagement method, IBO will seek to include the voices of covered populations.

■ Evaluation

To ensure Indiana's digital equity plan works toward the state vision and has a positive impact on digital equity, evaluation is key. A comprehensive evaluation strategy will be developed by IBO that will have two overlapping layers: one layer will focus on project specific evaluation and the other layer will focus on impact evaluation.

Evaluation will be done through multiple methods. Secondary data related to overarching themes and barriers will be tracked and analyzed to gain insight into the plan's overall impact. Further primary data collection will supplement the gaps in secondary data. In addition, granular objective-specific tracking will be done on a project-by-project basis. This two-prong approach allows for tracking and reporting on plan-funded interventions and how they impact the overall digital equity landscape.

Through the previously outlined data gathering PCRD conducted, many digital equity metrics were identified through secondary and primary data sources. These provide a baseline for the current digital equity context in Indiana. By repeating the data gathering in five years, we can track overall progress in Indiana on digital equity. A survey similar to the one conducted to document digital equity differences between multiple groups will be deployed, including covered populations. This survey will be repeated in 2025 or 2026 to see if these differences indeed were reduced once the plan is implemented in 2024 and 2025.

In addition to the individual survey data, a preliminary list of 19 secondary data variables have been identified to help local digital equity coalitions prioritize strategies and objectives as well as measure impact. A *digital equity dashboard* will showcase any movement in these variables over time at the county, regional, state and national levels. Please refer to section 2.b of this plan for an overview of the state's current digital equity landscape as measured by these variables and the survey results.

In order to impact the digital equity landscape in Indiana, this plan outlines interventions through the objectives. To track progress and impact, any funded initiatives tied to the objectives will be expected to report metrics. These metrics in turn should affect both the second individual survey, as well as the macro digital equity Census variables. Examples of potential metrics for each objective are outlined in the table in **Appendix B**.

Finally, in addition to tracking progress on digital equity in Indiana, plan evaluation should indicate any needs for updating or modifying the plan. While the metrics collected for each of the measurable objectives can serve as one indication, there are specific activities in the objectives that can also highlight the need. Many objectives call for the formation of practitioner networks, digital equity coalitions or other communities of practice. Through engaging with these groups, emerging digital equity issues can be identified and brought to the task force to determine if and what modifications to the plan need to be made.

Plan Activities	2024			2025				2026				2027				2028			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Tailor processes to NOFO	■																		
Collaboration with Digital Equity Partners		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Creation of Digital Equity Collaitions		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■										
Digital Equity Data Gathering for Impact Evaluation			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Digital Equity Dashboard Annual Update				■				■				■				■			
Repeat Survey																		■	■

APPENDIX

Appendix A - Glossary of Terms

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 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 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.

Digital Literacy*: the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information.

Aging Individual*: The term "aging individual" means an individual who is 60 years of age or older.

Community Anchor Institution*: The term "community anchor institution" means a public school, a public or multi-family housing authority, a library, a medical or healthcare provider, a community college or other institution of higher education, a State library agency, and any other nonprofit or governmental community support organization.

Covered Household*: The term "covered household" means a household, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census.

Covered Populations*: The term "covered populations" means:

1. Individuals who live in covered households;
2. Aging individuals;
3. Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility;
4. Veterans;
5. Individuals with disabilities;
6. Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who—
   a. Are English learners; and
   b. Have low levels of literacy;
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and
8. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

Disability*: The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual—

1. A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;

2. A record of such an impairment; or

3. Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Rural Area*: The term "rural area" means any area other than –

1. A city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants;

2. Any urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and

3. In the case of a grant or direct loan, a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants.

Veteran*: The term "veteran" means a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA): Presented with bipartisan support, this piece of legislation was signed into law by President Biden November 15, 2021 that included the Digital Equity Act of 2021 and established the funding for the development of this and other state plans, in addition to the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program and other programs focused on broadband deployment.

Digital Divide: The gap between individuals or communities who do not have and those who have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.

Digital Equity Coalition: Groups of community representatives dedicated to addressing digital equity within their community.

OCRA region: Strategic groupings of counties by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) for placing community liaisons and other assistance. Learn more about the six regions on the OCRA website here: https://www.in.gov/ocra/

Indiana Geographic Information Office (GIO): The Geographic Information System (GIS) community is governed by Indiana state statute that assigns responsibilities and duties to the Indiana Geographic Information Office (GIO). Learn more about these responsibilities here: https://www.in.gov/gis/indiana-gis-law/

The Purdue University Center for Regional Development (PCRD): Part of Purdue University's Office of Engagement, this center's mission is to be a leader in innovative and adaptive partnerships empowering regions to find solutions for equitable, sustainable, and resilient development. The Purdue Center for Regional Development will collaborate with people to listen, identify, and enhance assets unique to their story resulting in prosperity and quality of life. Learn more at https://pcrd.purdue.edu/

Indiana Broadband Office (IBO): A state office whose mission is to assist residents in need of affordable and reliable broadband connectivity. This mission of reaching Hoosiers where they live, work and play is accomplished by communicating with stakeholders, providing resources to a diverse audience and leveraging established relationships with elected officials, associations and providers. Learn more at: https://www.in.gov/indianabroadband/

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA): A state office that works with local, state and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to aid communities in shaping and achieving their vision for community and economic development. Learn more at: https://www.in.gov/ocra/

*This plan uses these definitions as stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program

▋ Appendix B - Example Metrics

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
1.1.1	• Number of participating localities • Number of participating organizations • Number of assets inventoried	• Number of inventoried assets mobilized • Number of households impacted by mobilized assets • Number of Households impacted by mobilized assets in areas with above average covered populations • Number of Community Anchor Institutions impacted by mobilized assets • Number of Community Anchor Institutions that serve mostly covered populations impacted by mobilized assets.
1.1.2	• Number of experts engaged in resource creation • Number of tools/resources in the toolkit	• Number of municipal/county governments implementing toolkit • Number of municipal/county governments implementing the toolkit with an above average share of covered populations
1.1.3	• Number of participating partners utilizing the toolkit • Number of programs included • Number of provider resources leveraged	• Number of individuals enrolled • Number of individuals from covered populations enrolled • Number of digital navigators providing assistance • Hours of digital navigators invested • Reach of marketing pieces

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
1.1.4	• Number of community anchor institutions (CAI) identified • Number of CAI identified in areas with above average of covered populations	• Average connection speeds of all identified sites • Number of sites with new connection or increased speeds • Average connection speeds of sites in areas with above average covered populations • Average number of monthly users
1.1.5	• Number of resources assembled • Number of CAI's using the resources • Number of CAIs on the Indiana Digital Asset Map	• Number of CAIs recognized • Number of CAI's recognized that serve one or more covered population • Number of CAI's that report making changes to their network to increase safety and/or security
1.1.6	• Number of data programs/resources started or supported • Amount of data collected	• Number of local leaders or organizations using the data • Decisions impacted by data from these programs
1.1.7	• Number of hotspot lending programs supported or launched • Number of hotspot lending programs included on the Indiana Digital Asset Map • Number of resources collected • Number of individuals accessing the best practices • Number of practitioners participating in network activities	• Number of people using the launched or supported hotspot lending programs • Share of people using the launched or supported hotspot lending programs that are part of one or more covered populations
1.1.8	• Number of connectivity programs supported	• Number of students connected • Number of adult learners connected • Number of post-release justice-involved individuals connected
1.1.9	• Identified requirements/parameters for the awards program	• Number of nominated organizations • Number of organizations recognized • Impact from recognized organizations
1.2.1	• Number of Incentive programs developed • Areas that adopted the incentive programs • Population living in areas implementing incentive program(s) • Covered populations living in areas implementing incentive program(s)	• Network upgrades • Number of unserved Households reached • Number of unserved Households of covered population reached
1.2.2	• Number of programs with expanded eligibility	• Number of consumers participating in one or more programs since eligibility was expanded

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
1.2.3	• Amount of fees waived	• Number of unserved Households reached • Number of unserved Households of covered population reached • Network upgrades
1.2.4	• Number of regulations streamlined/impacted	• Number of unserved Households reached • Number of unserved Households of covered population reached • Network upgrades
1.2.5	• Number of collaborations • Number of organizations/interested groups involved • Number ISPs involved	• Number of households enrolled in assistance programs • Number of households informed of assistance programs • Number of covered population households enrolled in assistance programs • Number of covered population households informed of assistance programs
1.2.6	• Number of resources created • Number of resources deployed • Number of organizations creating or deploying the resources	• Number of ISPs/potential ISPs using the resources • Number of ISPs created • Number of ISPs sustained
1.2.7	• Number of reporting/evaluation tools created • Number of funding programs collaborated with	• Reach of published evaluation results
1.2.8	• Incentive programs developed • Funding resources created	• Number of Communities leveraging incentive programs • Amount of funding reinvested through prioritized ISPs • Network expansions • Number of unserved Households reached • Number of unserved Households of covered population reached
1.2.9	• Number of facilitated opportunities • Number of ISPs engaged in the facilitated opportunities • Number of organizations/individuals engaged in facilitated opportunities	• Number of strategies developed through facilitated opportunities • Number of strategies from the facilitated opportunities implemented

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
1.3.1	• Number of resources or programs developed • Number of educational opportunities conducted • Reach of educational materials • Number of individuals participating in educational opportunities • Number of partners using the resources or programs	• Knowledge gain reported by participating consumers
1.3.2	• Available broadband captured in the Indiana Digital Asset map	• Number of users accessing the Indiana Digital Asset map • Number of organizations promoting the Indiana Digital Asset map
1.3.3	• Development of reporting (systems) • Reach of promotion of reporting systems	• Number of individuals using the reporting system • Number of concerns reported • Number of covered population using the reporting system • Number of concerns addressed
1.3.4	• Number of partnerships developed or supported	• Number of households assisted with home internet set-up
2.1.1	• Number of device loan or giveaway programs launched or supported • Number of device loan or giveaway programs that offer peripheral devices • Number of device loan or giveaway programs that provide continual tech support	• Number of households provided supplied with a device • Number of households of covered populations supplied with a device • Number of peripheral devices supplied
2.1.2	• Number of resources collected • Number of resources published • Number of practitioners participating in network activities	• Number of users accessing published best practices • Number of practitioners reporting changes to programs based on best practice resources or network participation • Number of resources contributed to the best practices from the practitioner network
2.1.3	• Strategies identified for sustaining or subsidizing device give away programs • Strategies identified for offsetting cost of device recycling/refurbishing programs • Number of subsidized/sustainable device giveaway programs • Number of device recycling/refurbishing programs	• Number of devices given away through sustained/subsidized device giveaway programs • Number of households, organizations or businesses donating used devices • Number of devices recycled/refurbished • Proximity of device giveaway programs to covered populations • Distribution of device recycling/refurbishing programs around the state

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
2.1.4	• Capacity built • Number of one-to-one device programs supported • Number of one-to-one programs supported outside of schools • Number of one-to-one programs supported in areas with above average covered populations	• Number of one-to-one programs serving above average shares of covered populations • Number of individuals with devices through one-to-one programs • Number of individuals with a device through one-to-one programs who are a part of one or more covered populations
2.1.5	• Number of designated community tech hubs • Number of community tech hubs created • Number of pre-existing or new community tech hubs located in areas with an above average share of covered populations • Number of community tech hubs providing technical assistance • Number of community tech hubs providing digital literacy workshops • Number of best practice resources collected • Number of best practice resources published • Number of practitioners participating in network activities	• Number of devices provided through community tech hubs • Hours of technical support proved by workers or volunteers at community tech hubs • Number of individuals using community tech hubs on a weekly or month biases • Number of individuals using devices at community tech hubs • Number of individuals attending digital literacy workshops at community tech hubs • Knowledge gain reported by attendees of digital literacy workshops at community tech hubs • Number of users accessing best practice resources • Number of practitioners reporting changes to programs or practices based on best practice resources • Number of resources contributed to the best practices by practitioner network participants
2.1.6	• Number of device refurbishing skills programs developed or supported • Number of device refurbishing skills programs delivered	• Number of participants completing device refurbishing skills programs • Number of devices refurbished through device refurbishing skills programs • Number of devices kept by participants of device refurbishing skills programs
2.1.7	• Number of incentive programs developed • Number of incentive programs adopted	• Number of businesses, organizations or individuals donating devices • Number of devices refurbished • Number of refurbished devices distributed to areas with above average share of covered populations.

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
2.1.8	• Number of computer labs or tech hubs in the directory • Number of device lending/giveaway programs in the directory	• Number of monthly users of the directory • Number of monthly users looking at computer labs/tech hubs in the directory • Number of monthly users looking at device lending/giveaway programs in the directory
2.1.9	• Number of device lending programs offering assistive technology	• Number of individuals using assistive technology through lending programs
2.2.1	• Number of programs supported or funded	• Number of individuals participating in educational programs • Number of individuals reached through educational campaigns
2.2.2	• Number of digital literacy programs developed	• Number of participants who completed the digital literacy program • Knowledge gain reported by participants
2.2.3	• Number of schools engaged or supported • Capacity built	• Number of students accessing the assistive technology they ended • Number of students receiving the resources they need
2.2.4	• Number of educational resources or programs supported	• Number of individuals reached • Number of participants in educational programs • Number of users accessing resources • Knowledge gain reported by program participants
2.2.5	• Number of tech hubs or computer labs hosting digital skills classes • Number of programs conducted	• Number of individuals participating in classes/programs • Knowledge gain reported by program participants
3.1.1	• Number of digital equity (or similar) coalitions formed • Percent of state (by area or population) served by a digital equity coalition	• Number of digital equity coalitions or coalition members actively participating in state digital equity coalition networking/events • Number of programs implemented by digital equity coalitions
3.1.2	• Number of stories gathered • Number of individuals, organizations, or businesses interviewed	• Number of storytelling campaigns launched • Number of individuals reached through storytelling campaigns

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes

3.1.3	• Development of a recognition program(s) including:
	  ° Number of areas of recognition
	  ° Criteria developed for awardees
		• Number of individuals and/or organizations engaged in the recognition program(s)
		• Number of individuals and/or organizations recognized
		• Number of individuals impacted by recognized partners
		• Impact stories collected from recognized partners

3.1.4	• Number of digital equity coalitions or similar groups engaged in the state-wide network • Number of individuals involved in digital equity coalitions engaged in the state-wide network • Percent of state (by area or population) served by digital equity coalitions engaged in the state-wide network • Number of best practice and/or resources sharing events hosted for the statewide network of digital equity coalitions • Number of resources and/or best practices published in an online repository for network use	• Number of resources accumulated through the state-wide network of digital equity coalitions • Number of digital equity coalitions reporting using the resources gathered • Number of website visitors to the online repository of resources and/or best practices • Number of first-time users accessing the online repository of resources and/or best practices • Number of returning users accessing the online repository of resources and/or best practices • Average time spent by users spent on the online repository of resources and/or best practices.
3.1.5	• Number of educational events or consultations on digital equity conducted with community partners • Number of community partners contacted about digital equity • Number of digital equity awareness and/or educational campaigns conducted • Reach of digital equity awareness and/or educational campaigns conducted • Engagement for digital equity awareness and/or educational campaigns conducted	• Number of Community Partners offering grants or other funding opportunities for digital equity efforts • Total dollars invested in digital equity initiatives by community partners • Number of digital equity coalitions receiving funding from community partners • Number of community partners providing funding to digital equity coalitions • Total dollars leveraged by digital equity coalitions from community partners • Number of programs implemented through funding from community partners • Number of resources developed through funding from community partners • Number of individuals participating in programs and using resources implemented through funding from community partners

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.1.6	• Number of educational materials developed • Names of Recognition/rewards provided and their criteria	• Number of local leaders participating in educational opportunities • Number of locations (city, county, region, etc) with leaders participating in educational opportunities
3.1.7	• Number of hours of technical assistance provided to digital equity coalitions on creating digital equity plans • Number of resources and/or programs developed to support digital equity coalitions in creating digital equity plans • Number of digital equity plans that connect to or support the state wide digital equity plan	• Number of digital equity plans developed by digital equity coalitions • Percent of state (by population or area) covered by a local or regional digital equity plan • Number of initiatives implemented from local/regional digital equity plans • Number of joint initiatives implemented to fulfill local/regional digital equity plans and the state-wide digital equity plan • Number of collaborations pursued between state-wide and local/regional digital equity coalitions.
3.1.8	• Number of organizations serving covered populations identified • Number of initiatives funded • Number of dollars used to fund digital equity initiatives for covered populations delivered by or in collaboration with partner organizations	• Number of covered-population individuals participating in programs provided by partner organizations through provided funding • Number of cover-population individuals using resources developed by partner organizations through provided funding • Unique digital equity needs being addressed by partner organizations through provided funding • Adjustments to the Digital equity plan or implementations based on feedback from covered population provided through partner organizations
3.2.1	• Number of college websites published in the online repository as part of the recommended whitelist • Number of employment websites published in the online repository as part of the recommended whitelist • Number of community resource websites published in the online repository as part of the recommended whitelist	• Number of institutions using the recommended whitelist on devices in their device give away or loan program • Number of website visitors viewing the recommended whitelist • Number of returning website visitors viewing the recommended whitelist

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.2.2	• Number of needs identified • Number of guidelines developed • Number of guidelines developed to increase accessibility for specific covered populations • Number of resources developed • Number of technical assistance programs developed • Number of technical assistance hours invested • Number of government or civic organizations utilizing the guidelines • Number of government or civic organizations utilizing using the technical assistance	• Number of government or civic service websites that meet the established guidelines • Number of government or civic service websites that exceed the established guidelines • Increase in website visitors to participating government or civic service websites • Increase in time users spend on participating government or civic service websites

3.2.3	• Development of a recognition program(s) including:
	  ° Number of areas of recognition
	  ° Criteria developed for awardees
	• Number of Indiana-based websites or web services nominated
	• Number of Indiana-based websites or web services recognized
	• Number of Awareness campaigns about the recognition program and/or recipients implemented
	• Reach of awareness campaign
	• Engagement with the awareness campaign
		• Number of Indiana residents served by recognized Indiana-base websites or web services
		• Number of Indiana residents who identify as one or more covered populations served by recognized Indiana-base websites or web services

3.2.4	• Number of awareness campaigns implemented • Number of programs connecting community residents with local digital services conducted • Number of resources connecting community residents with local digital services launched • Number of local digital services participating in awareness campaigns • Number of local digital services participating in programs connecting community residents with local digital services • Number of local digital services participating in resources connecting community residents with local digital services	• Number of community residents connected with digital services • Number of community residents reporting an increase in use of local digital services • Number of local digital services reporting an increase in users • Number of community residents reporting positive benefits from using local digital services

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.2.5	• Identify partners actively working to protect children in the digital age • Number of meetings or consultations conducted with partners	• Number of programs identified • Number of policies identified • Number of programs implemented • Number of policies implemented • Number of children impacted
3.2.6	• Number of digital equity recommendations developed • Number of disaster education, response or recovery experts consulted • Number of digital equity experts consulted • Number of digital equity recommendations published • Number of resources or programs developed to help integrate digital equity recommendations into continuity of operations plans	• Number of local continuity of operations plans incorporating digital equity recommendations • Percent of the state (by area or population) covered by a local continuity of operations plan that includes digital equity recommendations • Number of disasters that leveraged a continuity of operations plan that incorporated digital equity recommendations • Number of individuals impacted by one or more disasters whose community leveraged a continuity of operations plan that incorporated digital equity recommendations • Number of individuals who identify as one or more covered populations impacted by one or more disasters whose community leveraged a continuity of operations plan that incorporated digital equity recommendations • Number of individuals using programs or resources to understand and integrate digital equity recommendations into continuity of operations plans • Number of areas with above average share of covered populations with a continuity of operations plan that integrates digital equity recommendations
3.2.7	• Number of healthcare deserts identified • Number of programs funded • Amount of funding invested in programs • Number of organizations partnered with • Number of telehealth providers partnered with	• Number of individuals participating in the program • Number of program participants reporting savings from telehealth use • Number of program participants who report an increase in healthcare services or quality • Number of program participants who identify as one or more covered populations

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.2.8	• Number of programs developed to increase digital civic engagement • Number of resources developed to improve or increase digital civic engagement • Number of technical assistance hours invested in improving or increasing digital civic engagement • Number of digital civic engagement best practices collected and published/shared	• Number of local leaders participating in programs to increase digital civic engagement • Number of individuals participating in programs to increase digital civic engagement • Number of local leaders utilizing resources to increase digital civic engagement • Number of individuals utilizing resources to increase digital civic engagement
3.3.1	• Number of educational materials developed • Number of educational programs conducted	• Number of leaders participating in educational programs • Number of leaders reporting a knowledge gain from the educational programming • Number of counties or cities with a leader that has participated in the educational programing • Number of policies or programs resulting from education provided
3.3.2	• Number of resources developed to help local officials leverage broadband infrastructure for workforce attraction	• Number of local leaders using the resources • Number of counties/cities using the resources
3.3.3	• Number digital ag programs developed • Number of digital ag resources developed • Number of digital ag experts consulted	• Number of farmers participating in digital ag programs • Number of local leaders participation in digital ag programs • Number of farmers reporting adopting digital ag practices because of programing or resources • Profit increases reported by farmers who adopted digital ag practices • Crop yield increases reported by farmers who adopted digital ag practices
3.3.4	• Number of reskilling programs developed • Number of workers targeted • Number of companies that participate in workforce reskilling programs • Number of adult education programs integrating digital skills	• Number of workers completing reskilling programs • Number of workers employed in new jobs following reskilling program completion • Number of graduates of adult education programs reporting an increase in digital skills

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.3.5	• Number of digital skills programs incentivized • Number of employers contributing incentives • Number of digital skills programs located in areas with an above average share of covered populations • Number of employers providing incentives for digital skills programs who are located in areas with an above average share of covered populations • Number of offline trainings offered	• Number of workers who completed digital skills programs • Number of on-site learning opportunities hosted • Number of offline trainings completed • Number of employers reporting an increase in productivity following digital skills programming • Number of workers reporting raises or other benefits as a result of completing digital skills programming
3.3.6	• Number of incentive programs developed • Number of cities or counties adopting incentive programs	• Number of employers who develop remote work programs • Number of new workers employed by incentivized employers • Number of new residents in cities or counties employed in remote work
3.3.7	• Number of high school classes developed • Number of high school classes receiving support from local employers • Number of employers involved in the development or support of high school classes	• Number of students showing a knowledge gain from the classes • Number of students demonstrating proficiency in employable digital skills • Number of students who secure jobs with local employers following course completion
3.3.8	• Number of incentive programs developed • Number of cities or counties adopting the incentive program • Number of employers utilizing the incentive program	• Number of employees receiving home internet benefits from participating employers • Number of employees with an employer-provided device at home from participating employers • Number of participants who report the employer-provided device as the only device in the household • Number of participants who report not having had home internet before the benefit from participating employers.
3.3.9	• Number of partners identified as already working with amish populations • Number of contacts established within amish populations • Number of programs developed • Number of resources developed	• Number of individuals participating in the developed programs • Number of individuals using the developed resources • Number of individuals who received the resources
3.3.10	• Number of resources developed for the toolkit • Number of experts consulted • Number of hours of technical assistance provided to help implement the toolkit	• Number of LEDOs/Economic Development Corporations using the toolkit • Percent of counties using the toolkit • Number of economic development plans impacted by the toolkit

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.3.11	• Number of dollars invested in the revolving loan fund • Number of businesses who apply to use the revolving loan fund • Number of businesses who received funds from the revolving loan fund	• Percent increase in sales reported by businesses who received loans • Number of jobs created following the use of loan funds
3.3.12	• Number of programs developed • Number of programs funded • Number of businesses who participated in programs • Number of towns/cities/counties that participated in programs • Number of individuals who participated in programs	• Number of small businesses that report an increase in digital skills • Number of businesses that report an increase in sales following digital skills classes • Number of businesses that report an increase in operational efficiency following digital skills classes • Number of Indiana towns/cities/counties with a strong online presence • Number of residents participating in Indiana digital communities
3.4.1	• Number of digital parenting programs developed • Number of digital parenting programs funded • Number of digital parenting trainings conducted • Number of digital citizenship programs developed • Number of digital citizenship programs funded • Number of digital citizenship trainings conducted	• Number of parents who participated in digital parenting programs • Number of parents who completed digital parenting programs • Number of parents who report feeling more confident when it comes to parenting decisions related to digital technology • Number of individuals who participated in digital citizenship programs • Number of individuals who completed digital citizenship programs • Number of individuals who report a knowledge gain following participation in a digital citizenship program • Number of individuals who report changing their online behavior following participation in a digital citizenship program
3.4.2	• Number of programs developed • Number of programs funded • Number of experts consulted during program development • Number of individuals participating in programs • Number of individuals who complete one or more programs	• Number of program participants reporting an increase in knowledge • Number of program participants reporting feeling more confident in their ability to remain safe online • Number of program participants reporting feeling more confident in their ability to protect their privacy while online

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.4.3	• Number of trainings developed • Number of trainings conducted • Number of adults participating in trainings • Number of partners conducting training opportunities	• Number of training participants reporting an increase in their media literacy • Number of training participants reporting an increase in online socialization • Number of training participants who report feeling more connected to family, friends, or their community after applying what they learned in the training
3.4.4	• Number of topics identified • Number of trainings developed • Number of trainings funded • Number of experts consulted in training or resource development	• Number of individuals participating in trainings • Number of individuals who report a knowledge gain following trainings • Number of local leaders participating in trainings • Number of covered populations participating in trainings • Number of covered populations served by local leaders who participate in trainings
3.4.5	• Number of digital skills classes developed • Number of digital skills classes funded • Number of digital skills classes conducted • Number of digital skills classes conducted in areas with an above average share of covered populations	• Number of individuals who completed at least one digital skills class • Number of returning class participants • Number of individuals who completed at least one digital skills class who identify as one or more covered populations • Number of returning class participants who identify as one or more covered populations • Number of individuals reporting an increase in the number of online activities they conduct following class completion • Number of individuals reporting an increase in frequency of use of online activities following class completion
3.4.6	• Number of programs developed • Number of resources developed	• Number of justice-involved individuals participating in programs • Number of justice-involved individuals using resources

Objective	Outputs	Outcomes
3.4.7	• Number of programs developed • Number of resources developed • Number of programs funded • Number of resources funded • Number of digital skills trainings utilizing the wrap-around programs or resources	• Number of individuals completing the training who report they would have been unable to participate without the wrap-around services • Number of trainings with wrap-around services conducted in areas with an above average share of covered populations.
3.4.8	• Number of digital navigators or similar personnel deployed • Percent of the state (by area or population) served by a digital navigator or similar personnel • Percent of areas with an above average share of covered populations serviced by a digital navigator or similar personnel	• Number of hours of technical assistance provided by digital navigators or similar personnel • Number of programs conducted by digital navigators or similar personnel
3.4.9	• Develop resources for integrating digital skills in adult education programs • Provide funding to adult education programs to integrate digital skills	• Number of adult education programs using the developed resources • Number of adult education programs with integrated digital skills offered in areas with an above average share of covered populations • Number of individuals graduating from adult education programs who have integrated digital skills
3.4.10	• Number of best practices published in the online repository • Number of partner organizations contributing best practices • Number of recognition programs developed • Number of professional development opportunities offered	• Number of organizations recognized • Number of organizations nominated • Number of organizations participating in networking opportunities • Number of individuals participating in professional development opportunities • Number of individuals accessing the best practices
3.5.1	• Number of resources published on the online repository	• Number of website users • Number of returning website users • Number of assets featured on the digital asset map
3.5.2	• Number of marketing campaigns implemented • Number of community resource centers or libraries distributing the digital equity resources	• Reach of the marketing campaign • Engagement with the marketing campaign • Number of resources distributed by community resource centers and libraries
3.5.3	• Number of metrics published • Number of evaluation summaries published	• Number of page views of metrics • Number of page views of evaluation summaries

◼ Appendix D - Plan & Policy Summaries

The following summaries reflect the thoughts of the Indiana digital equity task force's thoughts on how these existing plans and policies will interact with the state-wide digital equity plan, particularly for sectors relevant to the covered populations.

Indiana's Family & Social Services Administration (FSSA) – Division of Aging

Indiana's Multi-Sector Plan on Aging (launched in 2019 and extended through 2024) outlines five goals under its mission to foster networks that provide information, access, and long-term care options that enhance choice, autonomy, and quality of life for Hoosiers. Services are coordinated and funded through Indiana's network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and include the state-funded Community and Home Options to Institutional Care for the Elderly and Disabled (CHOICE) program and administration of two Medicaid waiver programs providing Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for older adults and individuals of all ages with physical impairments.

Goal 5 of the FSSA's Multi-Sector Plan focuses on instituting policies and evidence-based programs to positively impact social determinants of health. This proposed Digital Equity Plan for the state of Indiana specifically addresses internet access, which is increasingly recognized as a "super determinant" of health. Internet access plays a role in health care outcomes and influences more traditionally recognized social determinants of health, such as education, employment, and healthcare access. Both digital access and digital adoption were considered in terms of how they relate to this covered population, referred to as "aging individuals".

Indiana Association of Regional Councils (IARC)

IARC supports regional development efforts that prioritize and categorize local community and economic development needs and projects based on urgency, feasibility and determined regional priority. As part of their regional purview, IARC has been involved in many of the digital inclusion and broadband planning efforts conducted at the county and community levels across the state of Indiana. Their voice as part of the Digital Equity Task Force helps ensure the plan's compliance with regional planning needs and interests.

One of the IARC regions that hosted a Digital Fellow recently received $5M in BEAD funding and is poised to obtain another $10M in the near future. They have focused on connecting their schools with the broadband network in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD)

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) is responsible for providing leadership, direction, and guidance to workforce partners to ensure programs offered through the workforce system are implemented and administered in alignment with state and federal guidelines and meet the business needs of Indiana employers.

As part of this oversight, the DWD provides the vision for Indiana's local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) to serve as strategic leaders and conveners of local workforce development system stakeholders. The local WDB partners with employers and the workforce development system to develop policies and investments that support public workforce system strategies. These strategies support regional economies, the development of effective approaches, local and regional sector partnerships, career pathways, and high-quality and customer-centered service delivery. WDBs are specifically considered and referred to under Strategy 3.4 of this proposed Digital Equity Plan.

The DWD is also responsible for administering federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding in the state of Indiana to benefit adult education programs. In January 2024, the DWD will release a Request for Proposal (RFP) to interested Hoosier adult education providers for a competition grant that will span six (6) years from 2024-2030. While the RFP is not a strategic document, it does set the stage for how adult education providers address the digital literacy needs of Indiana's adult learners. The new grant competition sets out several objectives that align to those under Strategy 3.5 of this proposed Digital Equity Plan.

Indiana's State Service Plan (Serve Indiana)

Serve Indiana's State Service Plan (launched in 2019 and extended through 2024) created three priorities to advance service and volunteerism in Indiana: 1) strengthen Indiana AmeriCorps programs, 2) increase employer-based volunteer programs in Indiana, and 3) increase awareness of Serve Indiana in the broader community. As part of its first priority, Serve Indiana worked with the PCRD to fund a Digital Fellows Program, placing AmeriCorps volunteers in six of the IARC regions where they served (September 2021 to August 2023) as liaisons to build digital capacity at the county and community levels in these regions. The Digital Fellow program helped regions strategize the areas in which they needed to build added capacity. For some regions, this involved ensuring their community schools were connected. In another region, this meant supporting schools as they formed after school robotics programs. Two regions sought to enact their Digital Inclusion plans with the help of their Fellows; while another two sought to bolster the cybersecurity of their municipal governments, local institutions and key industries.

Indiana Rural Schools Association (excerpt from their policy)

The Indiana Small and Rural Schools believes all entities receiving any tax dollars for a digital build should share their fiber maps with the state. This will prevent taxpayer-supported fiber from being built on top of existing tax-supported fiber. The Indiana Small and Rural Schools also asks that taxpayer-supported broadband investments fund multiple ISP plans, including private and public partnerships that will serve the last mile in underserved areas.

Indiana Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity (policy & analysis)

When Governor Eric J. Holcomb shared his thoughts on how true equality and equity lead to opportunities for all, he committed that the state of Indiana would lead by example and take concrete steps to shape the change necessary to remove barriers to access and opportunity for all Hoosiers. One of those priorities was to create a public disparity data dashboard, providing Hoosiers the occasion to track the state's progress with closing equity gaps. Since that address, Indiana's Management Performance Hub, in partnership with the Office of the Chief Equity, Inclusion, & Opportunity Officer and various agencies across state government, created the state's Equity Data Portal. This dashboard encompasses a high-level view of equity related to health, public safety, social services, education and workforce.

The above-mentioned group of partners is also working to update the Equity Data Portal with even more metrics than are currently displayed. A very real possibility is that a dashboard could be created that visualizes digital equity using survey/partner/outcome data gathered by the Digital Equity Plan. While the state's work, propelled by these partners, is informed by many resources (in addition to the data presented in the portal), the ultimate goal is that people will use this portal as a gateway to open up conversations regarding Indiana's opportunities to provide the tools necessary for all Hoosiers to experience their best quality of life. Having reliable internet access (including access to this portal) is a critical component of that.

Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs

The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) mission is to support, serve, and advocate for the Indiana Veteran Community. IDVA's work encompasses three main areas for Indiana Veterans, including: 1) veteran long-term care at the Indiana Veterans Home in West Lafayette, Ind., 2) the Indiana Veterans Cemetery in Madison, Ind., and 3) management of federal and state veterans' benefits.

Two of the three IDVA goals align directly with the digital access and equity priorities described in this plan. Specifically, IDVA has a goal to "increase awareness of Indiana veteran programs and benefits." Digital equity across the state will help IDVA achieve this goal. Secondly, IDVA has the goal to "improve and enhance customer satisfaction." Digital equity will provide Indiana veterans with better access to services overall, and it will allow IDVA to provide tools, information and resources when and where Hoosier veterans need them most.

United Way of Central Indiana

United Way of Central Indiana works alongside the human services nonprofit sector to design, support and grow systems that accelerate financial stability and upward mobility for individuals and families living in or near poverty and striving for a better future. Today and in the future, access to reliable high-speed internet is required to meet a household's basic needs, support the early care and learning for young children, and to find the economic empowerment that comes with a strong education and good job. United Way's digital equity agenda is committed to four areas of 1) expanding access, 2) providing high quality devices, 3) increasing digital literacy, and 4) offering navigation skills and advocacy for continued systems-level solutions. The organization is committed to helping build a community where every household benefits from being connected online and any barriers that prevent our neighbors from safely engaging in online spaces are removed.

Indiana State Library

The Indiana State Library's mission encompasses "…leading and supporting the library community…" and defines one of their responsibilities as "strengthening services of all types of publicly and privately supported special, school, academic, and public libraries." The Indiana State Library's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan has relevant digital equity strategies associated with Goal 6: "Provide the support needed to help Indiana public libraries extend and provide 21st Century library services." The concept of a 21st century library aligns itself well with concepts from the state digital equity plan such as - digital resilience, equitable access to devices and connectivity, developing digital skills, digital accessibility, and community resource ecosystems. Two of the objectives from Goal 6 of the State Library's Strategic Plan are the most closely aligned. The first is about digital access: Provide up-to-date, reliable access to information to meet the needs of all Indiana residents by utilizing effective technology, telecommunications, and resources. The second more broadly encompasses the concept of digital equity: Provide training and resources to public libraries across the state that are specific to help bridge the digital equity gap.