



# State of Rhode Island **DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN**

March 26, 2024



**RHODE ISLAND**  
COMMERCE

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FAST & AFFORDABLE INTERNET FOR ALL

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**“No family in our state should worry about choosing between paying a broadband bill and paying rent or buying groceries.”**

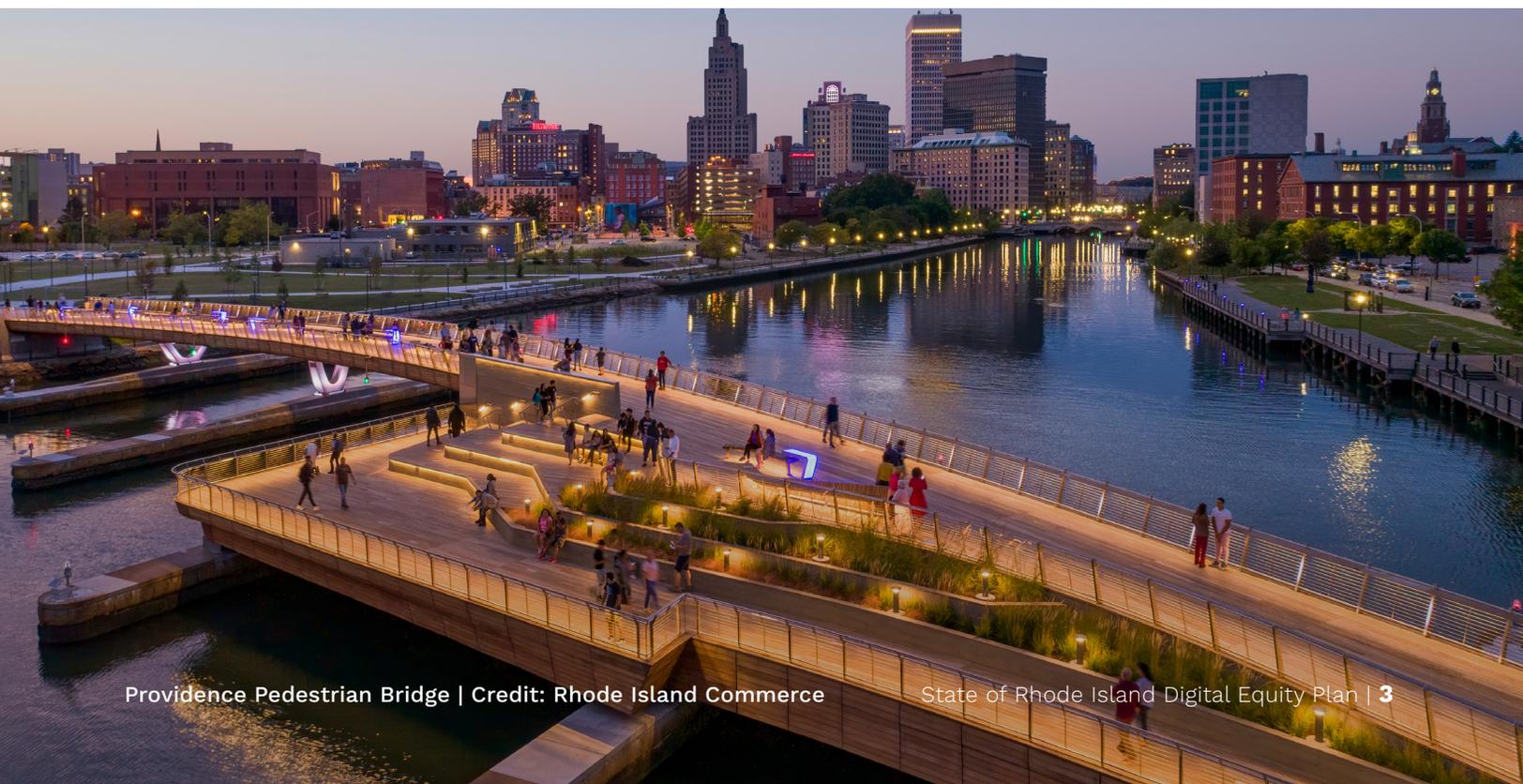
- GOVERNOR DAN MCKEE

**“In order to expand opportunity, we need to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to high-speed, reliable, affordable broadband service.”**

- SENATOR JACK REED

**“The internet isn’t a luxury anymore. It’s a necessity. You can’t apply for a job if you’re not online. You can’t do your homework, you can’t see the doctor, you can’t pay your bills... If you don’t have access to internet at a price you can afford, you’re going to get left behind.”**

- U.S. COMMERCE SECRETARY AND FORMER RHODE ISLAND GOVERNOR GINA RAIMONDO



# An affordable, reliable, high-speed internet connection is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.

It enables economic growth; access to education, employment, and healthcare; access to news and entertainment; and connection to family and friends. It is essential for full societal participation. Yet far too many Rhode Islanders can't afford high-speed service or don't have the digital literacy or devices needed to fully leverage this utility. Broadband networks are essential infrastructure of the 21st century. That infrastructure must be deployed equitably, and, moreover, individuals must have the skills and devices to use it.

Understanding this new normal, Rhode Island is receiving record levels of funding through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)—including the Digital Equity Act (DEA) as well as the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) programs—to support equitable broadband infrastructure deployment and digital equity. These funds are to be invested based on participatory planning; the input of Rhode Islanders is integral to accomplishing our goals for digital equity. As such, the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation's ("Corporation") approved state Digital Equity Plan reflects the invaluable input of hundreds of residents.

And outreach and engagement efforts continued throughout our public comment period, from January 9 to February 8, during which we received 460 comments on our draft plan.

We must ensure that investment in digital equity efforts produces wholistic results—including widespread digital literacy and access to necessary devices as well as affordable, reliable, fast connectivity. We must also ensure that the investment is done effectively, efficiently, and sustainably to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders today and position our state to be competitive into the future. That means thinking wholistically about structures of digital support for communities across the state.

The Corporation updated our draft plan based on feedback we received and submitted it for approval by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). NTIA approved the plan on March 26, 2024.

You can learn more about our digital equity initiatives and all the Corporation's planning and upcoming infrastructure efforts at: <https://commerceri.com/broadband>.

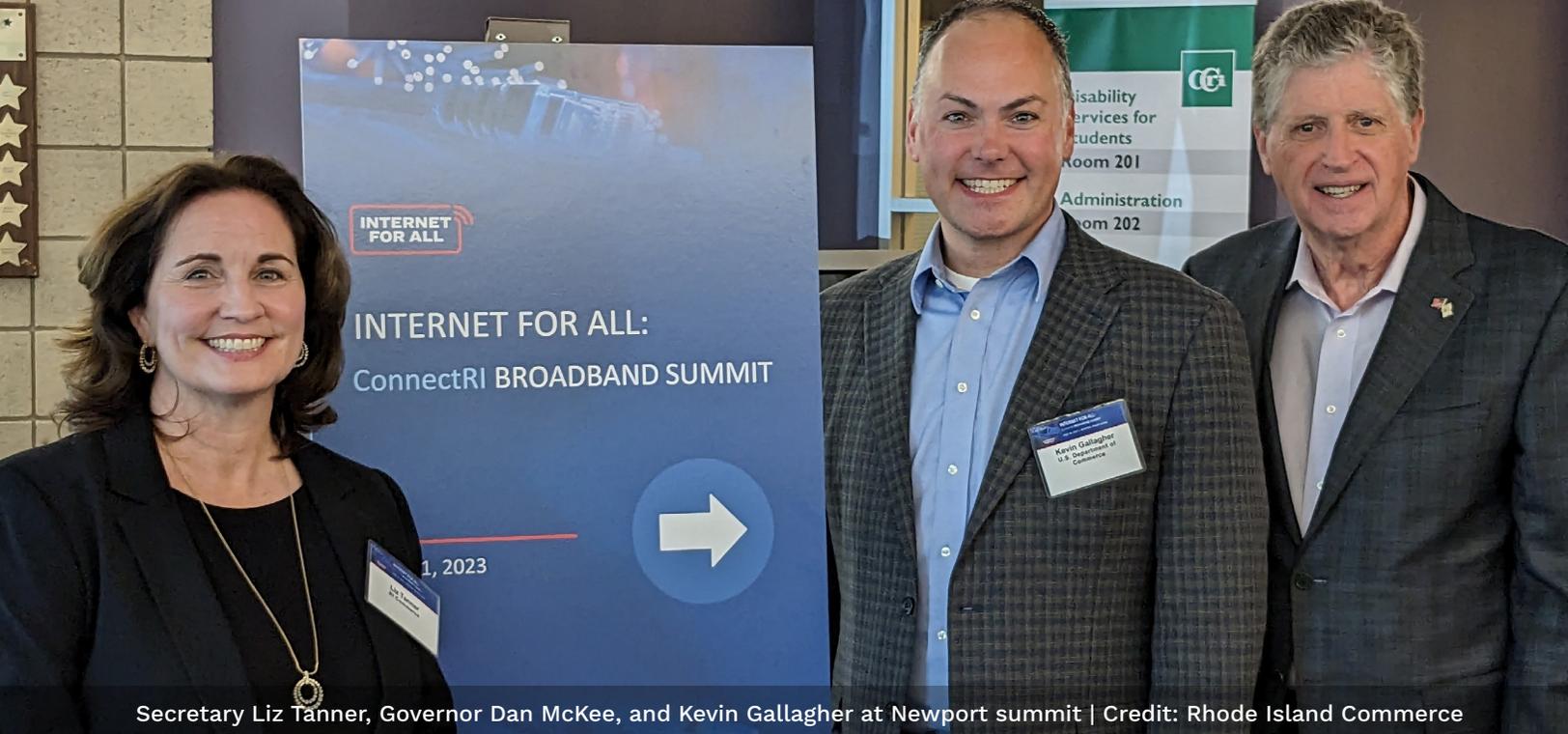
Working toward digital equity together,



**Brian Thorn**

Director of Broadband Strategy  
Rhode Island Commerce Corporation





Secretary Liz Tanner, Governor Dan McKee, and Kevin Gallagher at Newport summit | Credit: Rhode Island Commerce

# 1

## Executive Summary

Rhode Island’s overarching vision and goal for statewide broadband and digital equity is to leverage a best-in-class, resilient, sustainable, and scalable broadband infrastructure to propel the state’s 21st century economic, education, healthcare, civic and social engagement, and quality of life, by ensuring **all Rhode Islanders** have access to affordable, accessible high-speed internet in their homes, at their places of employment, and at public facilities by 2027.

The Corporation recognizes that the issues the BEAD and DEA programs seek to resolve are interconnected, and therefore the success of each program is dependent on the success of the other—broadband infrastructure must be accompanied by digital equity activities, and a core component of digital equity is the deployment of affordable broadband services. The state’s Digital Equity Plan encompasses both components and aligns to Rhode Island’s BEAD Initial Proposal to ensure our statewide broadband and digital equity vision is achieved.

## DIGITAL EQUITY AND RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island has five counties and 39 municipalities—representing rural, suburban, and urban communities—

all within 1,214 square miles. The state’s population of 1.1 million is increasingly diverse; in Providence, the state’s capital and most populous city, 66% of residents affiliate as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC).<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island also has an aging population, with **1 in 4 Rhode Islanders** expected to be 65 years or older by 2030.<sup>2</sup> Further, 14% of Rhode Islanders report having a disability. Collectively, 71% of Rhode Islanders belong to at least one of the Digital Equity Act’s eight Covered Populations. Rhode Island’s Digital Equity Plan seeks to a) leverage the state’s small geographic size and density, b) support the state’s population diversity, and c) capitalize on the regionally based and deep community infrastructure to foster an inclusive digital advancement ecosystem.

### Digital Equity Act Covered Populations

<p><b>Individuals in covered households</b> (income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level)</p>	<p><b>Aging individuals</b> (60 and above)</p>	<p><b>Incarcerated individuals</b> (other than those incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility)</p>	<p><b>Veterans</b></p>
<p><b>Individuals with disabilities</b></p>	<p><b>Individuals with a language barrier</b> (including those who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy)</p>	<p><b>Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group</b></p>	<p><b>Individuals who reside in a rural area</b></p>

1 2022 Housing Fact Book: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/databooks/HealthyHousing.pdf>

2 Rhode Island Office of Aging: <https://oha.ri.gov/who-we-are/key-facts>

## STRATEGIES AND APPROACH

The 2023 Rhode Island Broadband and Digital Equity Strategic Plan sets the following principles for thoughtful stakeholder and community engagement:

- Meet communities where they are
- Enable participatory planning
- Cultivate strong implementation partnerships

Based on these principles, the Corporation developed a coordinated broadband and digital equity stakeholder engagement strategy that addresses both DEA and BEAD requirements. The Corporation categorizes stakeholders into four categories: government institutions, community organizations, private sector entities, and the broader public. The Corporation has prioritized engagement with unserved, underserved, and Covered Population residents in its planning process.

In support of this ongoing public feedback, the Corporation has additionally implemented a new Digital Equity Public Survey to further assess the State's baseline for each of the five Measurable Objective categories defined by the NTIA, as well as further understand major barriers to digital equity in the state. The Digital Equity Public Survey closed in February 2024 and its data has been integrated into our needs assessment.

## SUMMARY OF ASSETS

The Corporation has created a Digital Equity Ecosystem Map, which gathers its information through an accompanying [Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey](#). With its limited geographic size, Rhode Island's

statewide assets have significant reach and impact. Rhode Island has a robust network of libraries, workforce development programs, adult education programs, social service and nonprofit organizations, and Health Equity Zones (HEZs) to develop and implement digital equity strategies. State agencies are also deeply interconnected into this work and all these efforts.

## SUMMARY OF NEEDS

The process undertaken to inform this plan, supported by quantitative and qualitative data, revealed the connectivity needs of Rhode Islanders. Specific categories include:

- **Affordability:** Cost is a significant barrier; strategies to improve digital equity must include a pathway of reducing the cost burden on residents.
- **Device Access:** Only 80% of Rhode Island households have a desktop or laptop; Covered Populations are less likely to have a device and much more likely to be reliant on phones as their sole device.<sup>3</sup>
- **Digital skill building and online safety:** Rhode Islanders need the skills and support to utilize technology effectively—as well as to safely and securely improve their quality of life, access economic opportunities, and achieve their goals.
- **Online Accessibility of public resources:** Rhode Islanders need an ease of navigation of government processes and resources online.

This plan incorporates an understanding of these assets and needs and leverages this understanding to inform

<sup>3</sup> ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

the implementation strategy to achieve digital equity throughout the state.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

In anticipation of the federal State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the Corporation is identifying key strategies to address Rhode Island’s digital equity needs. The Corporation has identified strategies and activities that align with State’s vision for equity and prosperity for all State residents (Rhode Island 2030) and the Governor’s Learn365 Initiative, which is targeted toward K-12 students. Our final implementation strategy will be refined based upon the funding award and its requirements.

The Corporation is grateful for the input and participation of organizations and community members during this planning process. This Digital Equity Plan provides a blueprint to address the state’s digital equity gaps and needs. The Corporation looks forward to working with Rhode Islanders to implement this plan and achieve digital equity in the Ocean State.



ACP Enrollment at Cranston Huddle Center | Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

### Strategy 1

**Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities.**

### Strategy 2

**Increase access to affordable, high-quality, large-screen, internet-enabled devices and technical support for those devices that meets residents’ needs.**

### Strategy 3

**Build partnerships and coordinate funding for affordable, high-quality broadband service for Covered Populations.**

### Strategy 4

**Leverage digital equity ecosystem to support Rhode Island’s Ongoing Digital Government Initiatives.**

### Strategy 5

**Plan for long-term sustainability and continuity of services.**

“It’s justice. Give people a chance to have access to everything they need to be able to do **everything** on their own.”

– statewide workshop participant





Funding announcement at Donovan Manor in Newport, RI | Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

## 2

# Introduction and Vision for Digital Equity

The Corporation’s process for developing this plan included the following methods of engagement to share information and receive input:

- **Events and Listening Sessions:** The Corporation has hosted multiple events and listening sessions to provide bidirectional engagement with stakeholders and the broader public on digital equity and broadband planning. Over 40 Listening Sessions have been held in 2023 working with community groups to target Covered Populations and those who serve them. Large events such as a June 2023 Broadband
- **Digital Equity Working Group:** This multistakeholder group continues to provide input and guidance to the Corporation and helps to develop targeted strategies to address digital equity in Rhode Island. The group meets every two weeks to plan events, discuss findings, and to support each other’s work.
- **Surveys:** The Corporation requested input from all Rhode

Summit and statewide workshops were held to inform stakeholders of the state’s broadband and digital equity initiative and spark discussion on digital equity needs, assets, and potential solutions.

Island government agencies, nonprofits, experts, practitioners, funders, researchers, community organizers, and community members with over 1,000 responses across 3 surveys.

- **Public Comment:** To ensure that stakeholders and residents from all groups could provide comments, input, and feedback on the Digital Equity Plan, the Corporation solicited public comments during an open 30-day period from January 9 to February 8, 2024.

More information on this stakeholder engagement process can be found in [Chapter 4](#).

## 2.1 VISION FOR DIGITAL EQUITY

Rhode Island’s overarching vision and goal for statewide broadband and digital equity is to leverage a best-in-class, resilient, sustainable, and scalable broadband infrastructure to propel the state’s 21st century economic, education, healthcare, civic and social engagement, and quality of life, by ensuring **all Rhode Islanders** have access to affordable,

accessible high-speed internet in their homes, at their places of employment, and at public facilities by 2027.

This vision is shared across Rhode Island’s ConnectRI initiative, which the Corporation established to develop and manage the State’s Digital Equity Plan, BEAD program, and investments funded through the Capital Projects Fund (CPF). These programs are complementary, with BEAD and CPF funding being largely leveraged for expanding robust, affordable broadband services, while DEA funding generally covers the social components to ensure digital resources are accessible and inclusive to all. The Corporation will strategically combine and coordinate the use of the State’s Digital Equity Capacity Grant, BEAD allocation, and other funding sources to achieve this vision and its objectives for digital equity. The Corporation recognizes that the issues that the BEAD and DEA programs seek to resolve are interconnected, and therefore the success of either program is dependent on the success of the other—broadband infrastructure must be accompanied by digital equity activities, and digital equity must include affordable broadband deployment.



Rhode Island library partners in Newport, RI | Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

## Digital Equity Act Measurable Objective Categories

- ✓ Broadband availability and affordability
- ✓ Access to devices and technical support
- ✓ Digital literacy
- ✓ Online privacy and cybersecurity
- ✓ Online accessibility and inclusivity of government resources

In this spirit, the Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan establishes a complementary set of goals and strategies for digital inclusion and equity, designed to align with the DEA's Measurable Objectives categories, the elements of digital equity that states are required to document and promote among each Covered Population.

Through this plan, the Corporation is committed to removing barriers to digital equity and empowering Rhode Island's Covered Populations with the digital tools and skills they need.<sup>4</sup>

As the State's Administering Entity for both BEAD and DEA programs, the Corporation will ensure the coordinated deployment of all federal funding sources to achieve these goals and strategies. Rhode Island's Digital Equity Capacity Grant will fund the Implementation Strategy activities outlined in this plan.

<sup>4</sup> The Corporation updated this section to reflect public comment recommendations.

## 2.2 OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Governor McKee's [Rhode Island 2030](#) (RI 2030) charts the state's vision for equity and prosperity for all state residents, with metrics for a healthy and vibrant Rhode Island.<sup>5</sup> In alignment with this broad plan, in July 2022, the Corporation released the draft RI Broadband and Digital Equity Strategic Plan, which explained the state's digital divide. This plan, which was finalized in 2023, builds upon RI 2030 and informs the RI Broadband and Digital Equity Strategic Plan—as well as aligns to the state's BEAD plan. It seeks to leverage the state's small geographic size, population diversity and density, and the regionally based community infrastructure to foster an inclusive digital advancement ecosystem.

<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island 2030: <https://www.ri2030.com/>

## Strategies, Objectives, and State Priorities

STRATEGY	OBJECTIVE	DIGITAL EQUITY ACT MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE CATEGORIES	STATE PRIORITIES
<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities.</p>	<p><b>Objective 1: Digital Skills and Online Safety</b>—ensure all Rhode Island Covered Populations have the skills and support needed to utilize technology effectively and safely to improve their quality of life, access economic opportunities, and achieve their goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Digital Literacy</li> <li>– Online Privacy and Cybersecurity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic and Workforce Development</li> <li>– Education</li> <li>– Health</li> <li>– Civic and Social Engagement</li> <li>– Delivery of Essential Services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> Increase access to affordable, high-quality large-screen internet enabled devices and technical support that meets residents’ needs.</p>	<p><b>Objective 2: Device Access</b>—prioritize Covered Populations to achieve a goal of 95% of Rhode Island residents owning an affordable, high-quality, large-screen, internet-enabled device that meets their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Access to devices and technical support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic and Workforce Development</li> <li>– Education</li> <li>– Health</li> <li>– Civic and Social Engagement</li> <li>– Delivery of Essential Services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b> Build partnerships and coordinate funding for affordable high-quality broadband service for Covered Populations.</p>	<p><b>Objective 3: Broadband</b> —provide universal access to affordable, reliable broadband service adoption gaps in Covered Population communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Broadband availability and affordability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic and Workforce Development</li> <li>– Education</li> <li>– Health</li> <li>– Civic and Social Engagement</li> <li>– Delivery of Essential Services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b> Leverage digital equity ecosystem to support Rhode Island’s Ongoing Digital Government Initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Objective 4: Online Accessibility</b>—ensure essential public resources and services have online accessibility, language access, and usability for Covered Populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Online accessibility and inclusivity of government resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic and Workforce Development</li> <li>– Education</li> <li>– Health</li> <li>– Civic and Social Engagement</li> <li>– Delivery of Essential Services</li> </ul>

**Strategy 5: Plan for long-term sustainability and continuity of services**

(Note: Strategy 5 is designed to underpin all other strategies and support the long-term achievement of all objectives and state priorities.)

## Rhode Island’s Digital Equity Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Corporation developed the Digital Equity Objectives and KPIs below to measure success towards achieving its vision of digital equity in the state. These objectives are designed to align with the DEA’s five Measurable Objectives categories.

The baseline measures are from Rhode Island’s Digital Equity Public Survey, the NTIA Internet Use Survey (2021),

American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates, and Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) National Broadband Map (NBM); more information on baseline measures can be found in [Chapter 3](#).

The Corporation plans to track KPIs through a combination of programmatic reporting from partners and monitoring indicators in other data sources such as ACS and NBM.

### Objective 1: Digital Skills and Online Safety—ensure all Rhode Island Covered Populations have the skills and support needed to utilize technology effectively and safely to improve their quality of life, access economic opportunities, and achieve their goals.

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#### Baseline<sup>6</sup>

- 59% of surveyed residents are completely confident with searching and applying for jobs online.
- 48% of surveyed residents are completely confident with going online for health care or telehealth services.
- 44% of surveyed residents are completely confident with searching and applying for benefits or resources online.
- 22% of Rhode Island’s internet users have experienced an online security breach, identity theft, or similar crime.<sup>7</sup>
- 63% of surveyed residents have the tools or resources to stay safe online.
- Multiple Covered Populations have lower rates of confidence with online activities. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

#### KPIs

- Number of highest need Covered Population residents trained in digital skills programs for foundational skills.<sup>8</sup>
- Number of programs providing training on digital skills related to state priorities such as health, education, and workforce development.
- Number of training programs for online privacy and cybersecurity.

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<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise specified, source for all baseline measures for Objective 1: Digital Equity Public Survey. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

<sup>7</sup> NTIA Internet Use Survey 2021. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

<sup>8</sup> Highest-need Covered Populations for digital skills are identified through the Digital Equity Public Survey.

**Objective 2: Device Access**—prioritize Covered Populations to achieve a goal of 95% of Rhode Island residents owning an affordable, high-quality, large-screen, internet-enabled device that meets their needs.<sup>9</sup>

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**Baseline<sup>10</sup>**

- 92% of Rhode Island households have a computing device, yet only 80% of Rhode Island households have a desktop or laptop.
- 11% of residents have a smartphone as their only computing device.
- Multiple Covered Populations have significantly lower rates of home computer access. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.
- 41% of Adult Education learners lack a sufficient device for distance learning.<sup>11</sup>

**KPIs**

- Number of Covered Population-serving programs that provide devices and device technical support.
- % of Covered Population residents who own a large-screen, internet-enabled device.



Educators and community partners in Rhode Island and Broadband Summit event | Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

<sup>9</sup> 95% represents a goal of near-universal device ownership and the closing of device gaps among Covered Populations, while acknowledging that some households may still not opt to own a large-screen device despite the removal of barriers, such as affordability and accessibility.

<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise specified, source for all baseline measures for Objective 2: ACS 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

<sup>11</sup> RI Department of Education (RIDE)’s survey of Adult Education students. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

### **Objective 3: Broadband—provide universal access to affordable, reliable broadband service and close broadband adoption gaps in Covered Population communities.**

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#### **Baseline**

- 2,309 unserved and 586 underserved locations in Rhode Island as defined by the FCC’s NBM data.<sup>12</sup>
- 78% of residents subscribe to broadband.<sup>13</sup>
- 15% of surveyed residents reported that broadband is affordable.<sup>14</sup>
- Multiple Covered Populations have significantly lower home broadband subscription rates. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.
- 46% of eligible residents are enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).<sup>15</sup>

#### **KPIs**

- Number of unserved and underserved locations connected to broadband (through BEAD).
- Number of Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) connected to gigabit internet (through BEAD).<sup>16</sup>
- Number of public and affordable housing properties and correctional facilities connected to broadband.
- % of eligible residents enrolling in ACP or other affordable broadband benefit.
- Number of ISPs providing low-cost service plans.

### **Objective 4: Online Accessibility—ensure essential public resources and services have online accessibility, language access, and usability for Covered Populations.**

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#### **Baseline**

- 39% of Rhode Island internet users access government services online.<sup>17</sup>
- 41% of surveyed residents reported that online government services are very accessible.<sup>18</sup>

#### **KPIs**

- Number of user-testing groups held with Covered Populations.
- Usability ratings for online public services among Covered Populations.
- % of state government websites meeting the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standard.

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12 The Corporation plans to revise this baseline measure through a BEAD pre-challenge reclassification process and a follow-on challenge process. Please see Chapter 3.2 for more information.

13 ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

14 RI Internet Connectivity Survey. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

15 Education Superhighway Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment Dashboard: <https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/no-home-left-offline/acp-data/>

16 CAIs include schools (including higher educational institutions), libraries, health care facilities, public safety entities, public housing (including any public housing agency, Housing and Urban Development-assisted housing organization, or Tribal housing organization), community support organizations, and institutions such as government buildings, homeless shelters, cultural organizations, and community centers, among others.

17 NTIA Internet Use Survey 2021. See Chapter 3.2 for more information.

18 Digital Equity Public Survey

## Rhode Island's Digital Equity Strategies

To achieve these objectives, the Corporation will lead the implementation of five strategies:

### Strategy 1

**Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state's priorities.**

### Strategy 2

**Increase access to affordable, high-quality large-screen internet enabled devices and technical support that meets residents' needs.**

### Strategy 3

**Build partnerships and coordinate funding for affordable, high-quality broadband service for Covered Populations.**

### Strategy 4

**Leverage digital equity ecosystem to support Rhode Island's Ongoing Digital Government Initiatives.**

### Strategy 5

**Plan for long-term sustainability and continuity of services.**

More details on these strategies can be found in [Chapter 5](#).

## 2.3 STATE PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

### 2.3.1 Economic and Workforce Development Outcomes

Digital skills, and the widespread availability, affordability, and adoption of broadband and related digital technologies, are critical elements of equitable and inclusive economic development for all Rhode Island Covered Populations and residents. Throughout the digital equity planning process, stakeholders representing Covered Populations identified improved connectivity and digital skills as keys to getting better jobs and economic opportunities.

**“Careers, not just a job. If we want to train folks for a career, we need to include all of these other pieces. The digital literacy skills are critical for taking that next step. It’s very challenging to make any movement from entry level jobs without the skills.”**

- Statewide workshop participant

### Assessment of Impact of Digital Equity Objectives

- **Objective 1 (Digital Skills and Online Safety)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the digital skills needed for online job search and applications, small business opportunities, and family-sustaining jobs.
- **Objective 2 (Device Access)** and **Objective 3 (Broadband)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the devices and broadband connections needed for online job training, online job search and applications, and remote work and small business opportunities.
- **Objective 4 (Online Accessibility)** will help ensure that the state’s job search, job training, unemployment assistance, career coaching, and small business assistance services are accessible online to Covered Populations.



### 2.3.2 Educational Outcomes

Reaching our Digital Equity Objectives will have a major impact on the state's educational outcomes by improving access to digital tools, services, and online and hybrid educational opportunities for all Rhode Island Covered Populations and residents. Digital literacy and advanced digital skills are important elements to educating students for the economy and workforce of the future. Advancing digital equity can make education more accessible, help students find and apply for college and financial aid, make career and technical education for veterans and the formerly incarcerated more attainable, give immigrants in adult education programs more tools to learn English and job skills, and make mentoring available virtually. It can also support the state's implementation of [Learn365RI](#), a program that seeks to expand the out-of-school programming available to school children in the state, through the integration of technology, online educational resources, and digital skill-building.

**“All students would have access to the same resources from all the same places: home, school, community organizations.”**

- Statewide workshop participant

### Assessment of Impact of Digital Equity Objectives

- **Objective 1 (Digital Skills and Online Safety)** will help ensure that K-12, postsecondary, and Adult Education Covered Population students have the digital skills needed to advance in their education and safely participate in online educational platforms and tutoring or mentoring services.
- **Objective 2 (Device Access) and Objective 3 (Broadband)** will help ensure that K-12, postsecondary, and Adult Education Covered Population students have the devices and broadband connections needed for completing their homework, finding and applying for colleges and financial aid, and participating in online or hybrid classes.
- **Objective 4 (Online Accessibility)** will help ensure that public websites to find and enroll in school and educational programs are accessible to K-12, postsecondary, and Adult Education Covered Population students and their families.

### 2.3.3 Health Outcomes

Reaching our Digital Equity Objectives will have a major impact on the state's health outcomes by improving access to telehealth (including behavioral health), reducing disparities in social determinants of health (including food security), and improving the findability of healthcare and health resources online for all Rhode Island Covered Populations and residents. Additional impacts of telehealth may be reducing bias from healthcare providers (based on the patient's physical appearance) and increasing the presence of providers in communities with provider shortages. For homebound individuals, especially aging individuals and those with disabilities, it has the potential to improve mental health by reducing social isolation. Digital equity will improve access to care and prescriptions for those without reliable transportation. Improved digital skills and awareness of online privacy, safety, and cybersecurity can promote healthy technology use among children and youth, also improving mental health.

#### Assessment of Impact of Digital Equity Objectives

- **Objective 1 (Digital Skills and Online Safety)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the digital skills needed to participate in telehealth, access online health information and resources, and safely use technology to reduce social isolation and improve mental health.
- **Objective 2 (Device Access) and Objective 3 (Broadband)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the devices and broadband connections needed to participate in telehealth and access online health information and resources.
- **Objective 4 (Online Accessibility)** will help ensure that online healthcare and health resources are accessible to Covered Populations.

**“Telehealth will allow people to utilize their primary care provider more.”**

- Statewide workshop participant

### 2.3.4 Civic and Social Engagement

Reaching our Digital Equity Objectives can help the state achieve greater civic and social engagement goals for all Rhode Island Covered Populations and residents by improving communications and providing opportunities for online engagement in government and public meetings, and help residents feel more connected to their state and local officials. It can also increase overall participation in civic activities and increase awareness of community programs and resources, especially for those who have language or mobility barriers, such as individuals with a disability, rural residents, aging individuals, and low-income households. Improvements in digital skills and awareness of online safety can improve civic discourse and protect against the impacts of misinformation online.

**“People could register to vote online to increase voter engagement.”**

- Statewide workshop participant

### Assessment of Impact of Digital Equity Objectives

- **Objective 1 (Digital Skills and Online Safety)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the digital skills needed to safely participate in public processes and community programs online.
- **Objective 2 (Device Access)** and **Objective 3 (Broadband)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the devices and broadband connections needed to participate in online public and community meetings.
- **Objective 4 (Online Accessibility)** will help ensure that online resources related to civic and social engagement, such as websites for voter information and registration, are accessible to Covered Populations.



Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

### 2.3.5 Delivery of Essential Services

Reaching our Digital Equity Objectives can help the state achieve RI 2030 goals and actions for the delivery of essential services, such as housing, childcare, infrastructure and transportation, and government benefits for all Rhode Island Covered Populations and residents.

“One of my former students called me a week ago. She had an accident, and she wanted to apply for (temporary disability), but **she didn't have a computer.** She also didn't have transportation. If she had a computer or tablet, she could apply online for all these programs.”

- Statewide workshop participant

### Assessment of Impact of Digital Equity Objectives

- **Objective 1 (Digital Skills and Online Safety), Objective 2 (Device Access) and Objective 3 (Broadband)** will help ensure that Covered Populations have the digital skills, devices, and broadband connections needed to access or receive essential services online, such as finding and enrolling in affordable housing, childcare, public transportation, and government benefits.
- **Objective 4 (Online Accessibility)** will help ensure that the state's websites on these essential services are accessible to Covered Populations.



Dominica Manor | Credit: Lina Bravo, PPL

### 2.3.6 Integration of Municipal, Regional, and Tribal Digital Equity Plans

The Corporation is not aware of any current formal Municipal or Regional Digital Equity Plans in Rhode Island. Throughout this planning process, it has engaged and collaborated with municipalities statewide to ensure local digital equity barriers, assets, and priorities are reflected in the Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan.

The Corporation is also not aware of any current Tribal Digital Equity Plans. The Narragansett Indian Tribe has received a federal Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program grant for a Broadband Use and Adoption project, which proposes to “increase broadband services and access for Tribal members who reside on ancestral lands in Washington County,” and aims to

“provide distance learning capabilities and strengthen digital literacy, improve broadband speeds and affordability of services for community members, and generate workforce development and job creation.”<sup>19</sup> Through a Dear Tribal Leader Letter, the Corporation has invited the Narragansett Indian Tribe to a formal consultation on how leaders from the state and the Tribe can enhance collaboration in both broadband and digital equity initiatives for the Tribe. Following the public comment period of Rhode Island’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Initial Proposal, the Corporation is in contact with a representative of the Tribe to help coordinate this consultation.

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<sup>19</sup> Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program: <https://www.internetforall.gov/funding-ipients/narragansett-indian-tribe>

# Community Stories

Throughout the planning process, it was important for the ConnectRI team to engage with existing networks and ecosystems already doing great work at the intersection of state priorities and digital equity. An example is the inspiring and energizing day we had at the Central Providence Health Equity Zones Collaborative meeting! We shared resources, highlights and challenges from 2023, and our goals for 2024. While we all represent different groups, health equity is our goal.

**Digital equity IS health equity.** Digital equity means access to affordable high-speed internet and devices for everyone. It also means being able to have telehealth appointments when you can't get to the doctor. It means being able to access the bus schedule in real time. It means getting training/being able to apply for a new job. It means the ability to apply for social services. It means an end to social isolation. It means autonomy.



Credit: One Neighborhood Builders

Representatives from Building Futures | Apprenticeship RI, ONE Neighborhood Builders, Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, Clínica Esperanza/Hope Clinic, Women & Infants Hospital, Providence Preservation Society, THE RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION, CODAC Behavioral Healthcare (CODAC Inc.), DIRT PALACE PUBLIC PROJECTS, and Farm Fresh Rhode Island.



Cumberland Public Library | Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

# 3

## Current State of Digital Equity: Barriers and Assets

Rhode Island has a population of over one million; 71% of residents are members of one or more of the eight Covered Populations.<sup>20</sup> This chapter outlines the existing assets that can be expanded and enhanced to achieve digital equity for the state's Covered Populations and **all Rhode Islanders**.

<sup>20</sup> Census Bureau's Digital Equity Act Population Viewer: <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c507> US Ce 2b42

Table 1: Covered Populations in Rhode Island (Sorted by Population)<sup>21</sup>

	Population	%
<b>Total Population</b>	1,059,361	
<b>Total Covered Population</b>	750,500	70.8%
<b>Racial or ethnic minority</b>	309,333	29.2%
<b>Aged 60 or over</b>	264,840	25.0%
<b>With a language barrier</b>	216,110	20.4%
<b>In covered households</b>	179,032	16.9%
<b>With a Disability</b>	146,192	13.8%
<b>Rural</b>	119,708	11.3%
<b>Veteran</b>	49,790	4.7%
<b>Incarcerated</b>	2,119	0.2%



November 2023 Statewide workshop at the William Hall Library, Cranston, RI. | Credit: Kate Felder, RICC

21 Census Bureau’s Digital Equity Act Population Viewer: <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c507> US Ce 2b42

### 3.1 ASSET INVENTORY

The Corporation's Digital Equity Ecosystem Map identifies potential CAIs; the Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey<sup>22</sup> collects detailed information from organizations on their services and targeted populations, which is compiled on the map. In combination with stakeholder research and engagement, the following digital equity asset themes have emerged:

- **Organization types:** The primary organizational types are libraries, municipalities, schools, community-based organizations; housing authorities and state government agencies also represent significant assets.
  - **Libraries:** There are 48 public library systems statewide, with coordination and support provided by the Office of Library & Information Services (OLIS) and Ocean State Libraries (OSL), in addition to school and specialized libraries.
  - **Postsecondary Education:** Three public higher education institutions, Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and University of Rhode Island (URI), offer workforce development programs that could be partners for digital equity initiatives.
  - **Government Agencies:** The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) funds a network of providers to implement Adult Education, General Educational Development (GED), and Workforce Development programs. The Department of
- **Housing:** Housing organizations include public housing authorities, community development corporations (e.g., ONE Neighborhood Builders), and statewide organizations, including RI Housing and RI HUD.
- **Nonprofits and Community Based Organizations:** Rhode Island has a robust network of local organizations and chapters of national nonprofits that offer social services, advocacy, and connectivity to residents, with a focus on Covered Populations.
- **Digital equity programs and services offered:** The Asset Mapping Survey identifies 163 organizations providing computer and device access, including eight (8) library systems, seven (7) community-based organizations (CBOs), five (5) municipalities, and local nonprofits and schools. Thirty (30) organizations—most frequently libraries, CBOs, schools, and municipalities—offer digital skills training. Twenty-one (21) organizations support broadband access and adoption. Housing

<sup>22</sup> To date, 116 organizations have completed the Digital Equity Mapping Survey. The Corporation will continue to collect survey responses with on-going Ecosystem map updates.

**Is your organization listed?**

If not, please fill complete our [Digital Equity Asset Mapping survey](#).

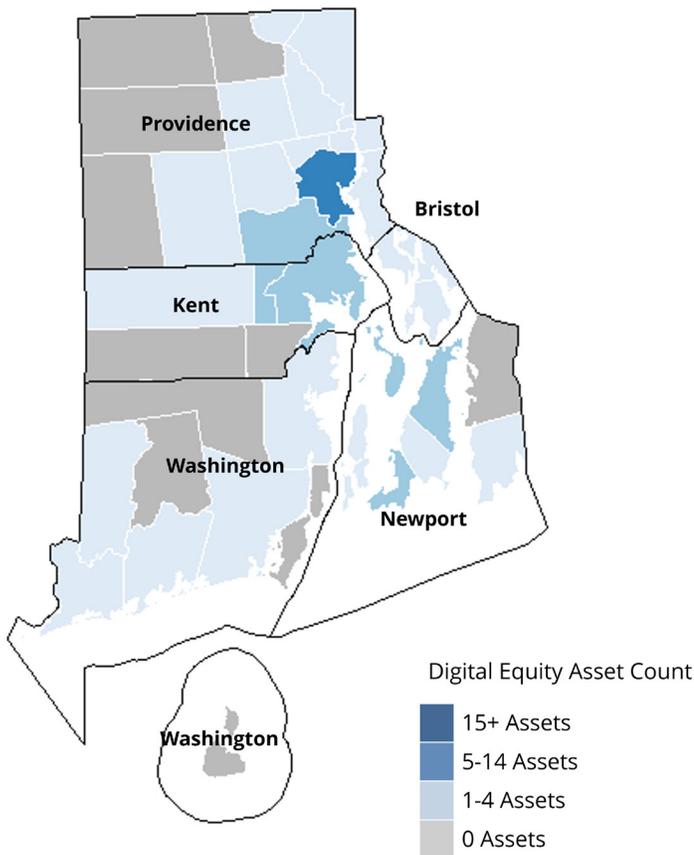
authorities and ISPs also connect residents to internet service.

- **Covered Populations served:** To date, Rhode Island’s digital equity efforts have most successfully reached covered households, aging individuals, individuals with a language barrier, and members of racial and ethnic minorities; veterans, individuals with disabilities, and incarcerated individuals are the least directly served.
- **Geographies served:** Rhode Island has five (5) counties; most existing digital equity efforts are provided by local public

library branches and municipal governments. Providence, Newport, and Bristol Counties have the most identified assets; Kent County has the fewest identified assets.

Rhode Island has a network of faith-based and community-based organizations, afterschool programs, philanthropy, healthcare systems, labor organizations, and private universities that could be engaged in digital equity. The representative organizations included in this section are non-exhaustive examples of the state’s key assets. The Corporation will continue to outreach to and engage more organizations for inclusion in this Asset Inventory.

**Map 1: Local Assets Identified on the Digital Equity Asset Map**



Source: Rhode Island Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey

### SUMMARY OF RHODE ISLAND’S DIGITAL EQUITY ECOSYSTEM MAP

- **Assets Represented**
  - Libraries
  - Postsecondary Education
  - Government Agencies
  - Housing organizations
  - Nonprofits and Community-Based Organizations
  - Municipalities
- **Services offered**
  - 163 organizations providing computer and device access
  - 31 organizations offering digital skills training
  - 22 organizations supporting broadband access and adoption

## EXAMPLES OF STATEWIDE ASSETS

With its limited geographic size, Rhode Island's statewide assets have significant reach and impact. Rhode Island has a robust network of libraries, workforce development programs, adult education programs, social service agencies, and Health Equity Zones (HEZs) to develop and implement digital equity strategies. Through its participatory planning process, the following statewide assets have been identified:

### Adult Education at Community College Rhode Island (CCRI)

CCRI offers adult education (e.g., GED and ESL) and workforce training programs for high demand careers in health, technology, and computer/digital manufacturing. Device access is offered to students.

### Ocean State Higher Education Economic Development and Administrative Network (OSHEAN)

OSHEAN delivers connectivity, networking, and cloud solutions to Community Anchor Institutions and the communities they serve. OSHEAN has an extensive member network consisting of healthcare organizations, colleges and universities, K-12 schools, libraries, government agencies, and other community organizations, and acts as a key strategic technology partner by facilitating member collaboration and providing technology solutions and services in support of its members' missions.

### Rhode Island College (RIC)

The RIC Workforce Development Hub is an economic, educational, and health-centered engine for Central Falls and Blackstone Valley, bringing vital skills and training to its community, including ESL classes. Other services include Broadband Access and Affordability and Device Access.

### Rhode Island Community Action Association

RICAA is a network of community action agencies (CAAs) serving all 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island. The member agencies have various missions and goals to end poverty, by continuously aiming to provide resources, support, services and programs to Rhode Island residents in need.

### Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)<sup>23</sup>

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is committed to preparing every Rhode Island student for success in college, careers, and life. The agency's mission extends to adult Rhode Islanders who need to develop their foundational skills. RIDE funds a statewide network of providers to deliver high-quality adult education and literacy services - including GED, workforce training, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), as well as digital skills instruction to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have the skills needed to fully participate and thrive in the workforce, their children's education, and the larger community.

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<sup>23</sup> The Corporation added additional organizations that were suggested by a public comment

### **Rhode Island Department of Health - Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Initiative**

Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)'s HEZs provide place-based, collaborative, and community-led solutions to address social determinants of health. Fifteen (15) HEZs have been formed throughout the state. HEZ efforts have improved childhood health, increased access to healthy foods and food security, reduced loneliness, and supported chronic disease self-management.

### **Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS)**

DHS works with community partners throughout Rhode Island to deliver critical benefits, supports, and services to more than 300,000 families, adults, children, older adults, individuals with disabilities, and veterans every year. Its **RI Works** program provides financial and employment assistance for eligible parents and families.

### **Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training (DLT)**

RIDLTL provides a range of workforce development, employment services, educational opportunities, and income support to Rhode Islanders. DLT's programs and initiatives coordinate efforts between employers, training providers, and community-based organizations to upskill, support, and place workers, including DLT Career Centers, Real Jobs RI, Registered Apprenticeship, Back to Work RI and the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

### **Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA)**

RIEMA runs a cybersecurity program based upon the **National Institute of Standards and Technology's** Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity in partnership with federal, state and local governmental agencies, the Rhode Island National Guard, law enforcement, academia, the business community and other critical infrastructure stakeholders.



Statewide digital equity workshop at Cranston Hall Library | Credit: HR&A Advisors

### **Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns**

RI League of Cities and Towns represents each of Rhode Island's thirty-nine (39) municipalities by providing legislative advocacy on shared municipal interests, timely information and research, regular trainings and workshops, and opportunities for local officials to collaborate with peers from across the state. Broadband availability and affordability are goals for this non-partisan advocacy and membership organization.

### **Rhode Island Libraries**

Rhode Island's forty-eight (48) public library systems are supported by the **Office of Library & Information Services (OLIS)** and **Ocean State Libraries** network. Many public library systems have existing digital equity programs, including broadband access, device access, digital skills classes and technical support for devices.

### **United Way of Rhode Island**

United Way of Rhode Island funds organizations statewide to address the root causes of racial inequities faced by Rhode Island's BIPOC communities. United Way's 211 system serves as a critical referral service to community resources for Rhode Islanders, including job training, veteran's services, services for aging individuals and those with disabilities, and victims' services (including cybercrime and cyber bullying).

## **EXAMPLES OF ASSETS SERVING MULTIPLE COVERED POPULATIONS**

Most assets in the Digital Equity Asset Map serve multiple Covered Populations. Only sixteen (16) organizations limited themselves to one Covered Population.

### **Blackstone Valley Community Action Program**

BVCAP provides workforce and education programs, access to social services, and basic necessities to residents. Device access, digital skills and technical support are also provided.

- Aging Individuals
- Covered Households
- Individuals with Language Barriers
- Individuals who are Members of Racial or Ethnic Minorities

### **Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island**

Dorcas offers adult education, language learning, job training, citizenship and immigration services, refugee resettlement, translation and interpreting, and other services to those seeking to overcome educational, cultural, economic, and language barriers. Provides broadband access and device access.

- Aging Individuals
- Covered Households
- Individuals with Language Barriers
- Individuals who are Members of Racial or Ethnic Minorities

## EnrollRI

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) launched EnrollRI, an online information and registration system, to provide all families with easy access to high-quality education programs.

## Family Services of RI

Family Services of RI provides services for families and children across the state, including a “Hope” division that focuses on educational and family success. Offers digital skills training and technical support.

- Covered Households
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Individuals with Language Barriers
- Individuals who are Members of Racial or Ethnic Minorities
- Rural Residents

## Genesis Center

Genesis Center offers education, job training and support services to people of diverse cultures so that they may achieve economic independence and participate fully in society. Provides a wide range of digital inclusion services, including digital skills and technical support, device access, and broadband access. Provides tools such as hotspots and computers for those who are not eligible for ACP.

- Aging Individuals
- Covered Households
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Individuals with Language Barriers
- Individuals who are Members of Racial or Ethnic Minorities
- Rural Residents
- Veterans



### 3.1.1 Broadband Adoption and Affordability Assets

Partially funded through a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ACP Outreach Grant, the Corporation established a statewide outreach infrastructure to expand broadband adoption and affordability, which has helped increase ACP enrollment from 30% to 46% between February 2023 and December 2023. This effort involved partnering with local governments, public libraries, housing authorities, and the United Way of Rhode Island (including the Mobile 211 bus) to host ACP awareness and enrollment events. Additional outreach was conducted in English and Spanish by adult education providers, RIDE, and the state's HEZs, reaching underserved individuals including those eligible for free and reduced school lunch and heating assistance.

The Digital Equity Ecosystem Map includes twenty-two (22) assets which provide broadband adoption services among their offerings. Below are examples of assets focusing on broadband adoption and affordability.

#### EXAMPLES

##### Mobile Beacon

Mobile Beacon, a RI-based national company, works with nonprofits, schools, and CAIs to provide unlimited mobile service for as low as \$10 per month.

##### Newport Housing Authority (NHA)

NHA is expanding broadband access at all federally funded properties and offering provision of devices and digital skills trainings through partnerships with other entities. NHA received a \$980k CDBG grant to provide broadband to Newport Housing Authority properties (approx. 600 units). See Success Story on [page 34](#).

##### One Neighborhood Builders: ONE|NB Connects

ONE|NB built a free community Wi-Fi network currently covering two-thirds of all neighborhood residents in Olneyville, a Providence neighborhood with the lowest proportion of home internet service and among the highest rates of poverty.

##### Providence Housing Authority (PHA)

PHA established internet service in housing developments for residents to use in community rooms/spaces. PHA provides digital literacy education with devices for participants to use and keep.

##### Providence Public Library (PPL)

PPL provides Digital Navigation Services, technology classes, and tech-related workforce training, offering assistance for developing digital skills, in a culturally diverse, multilingual learning community. Includes classes, workshops, and one-on-one help. Special programs include Rhode Coders, a class on the fundamentals of web development coding, and Data Navigators, a class on data analysis and visualization. According to public comments, PPL's services predominantly reach low-income, older adults, particularly English language learners who are people of color. Of the 400+ users of PPL's one-on-one Digital Navigation services last year, 67% were non-Native English speakers, 66% non-white, 55% older than 54 years old, and 51% low-income.

# Community Stories

Part of my story is where I was coming from. I'm a Newport Housing Authority resident, but before that, I was homeless and working on my sobriety. My life was changed significantly by getting sober. From there, I wanted to create a wellness center, but during the pandemic, I was looking around the neighborhood and seeing the kids next door and thinking about how they're going to keep up. Everyone was talking about the digital divide, and **I knew we needed to do something.**

We got in touch with the OSHEAN Network, another nonprofit, and chatted with them about what we could have over here. We also got in touch with Rhode Island Commerce, and they really understood the digital divide and the **need for equity.** They gave us advice and told us to write down what we wanted. We put together a plan with Rhonda Mitchell, Executive Director of Newport Housing Authority, to get broadband done for the entire housing authority, not just one section. My brother drew up the grant application, and we ended up getting money for it. Governor McKee came down here in January and announced a \$980,000 grant.

Now, **over 85% of our community is connected.** It happened quickly. We're seeing a push for medical services and education and just staying connected to family, the ability to get on Zoom calls easily, making a difference. The biggest thing is how much money people are saving, and that goes for me too. We're no longer left with choices like "Am I going to have something different to eat tonight?" in order to afford the bill.



I have a lot of people calling me and saying, "Thank you. This is really helping me out." It's awesome. In that sense, you're becoming part of the bigger community now. You're not part of the divide anymore. Now I have an iPad, and it's like now I get to speak the same language as everyone else. It's just these little things that can change people's outlook on where they live, who they are, what they can become. Who knows? It's limitless.

– Tommy Sheehan,  
president of the Hi-Lo Neighborhood Association  
and resident of Newport Housing Authority

### 3.1.2 Existing Digital Equity Plans

Funded through the National Governor's Association, Skills for Rhode Island's Future published 'Recommendations for Digitally Equitable Rhode Island.' Health Equity Zones have created community-based strategic plans that include elements of digital equity; however, these are not specifically digital equity plans. There are no formal municipal or regional digital equity plans.

#### EXAMPLES

##### Connect Greater Newport Broadband Report

Connect Greater Newport, the economic development division of the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, published an analysis in January 2022 of broadband availability in Rhode Island. The analysis was conducted by Mission Broadband, Inc. and Reid Consulting Group LLC., with the following findings:

1. 42% of the populated square miles of RI remain unserved or underserved
2. small and medium sized businesses face broadband capacity constraints, which have adverse impact on their businesses
3. the lack of in-home internet is correlated with low household income levels
4. RI has available middle-mile fiber resources that can be leveraged to close last mile gaps.

##### Community Broadband for Aquidneck Island

Building upon the 2015 Tilson Report and 2022 Connect Greater Newport analysis, the Aquidneck Island Broadband Consortium is developing a business plan for a community-based broadband network that identifies the most realistic and cost-effective approach to providing high quality, affordable broadband throughout the community.

##### Warren Broadband Analysis

The Town of Warren partnered with HCH Enterprises to conduct an analysis of broadband availability. The findings show:

1. 63% of respondents lacked available, adequate broadband at 100/20 Mbps speeds.
2. Underserved populations place a higher priority on telehealth visits and experience increased latency, impacting virtual learning and remote work.

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#### **Tribal Plans and Programs**

As discussed in [Chapter 2.3.6](#), the Narragansett Indian Tribe received a [Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program grant](#) for its Broadband Use and Adoption project, which will increase broadband services and access for Tribal members who reside on ancestral lands in Washington County, Rhode Island.

### 3.1.3 Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population

Most organizations who responded to the Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey serve more than one Covered Population. The sample of organizations highlighted below were selected based on their Covered Population-specific programs or services and relevance to digital equity. Please refer to Appendices A and B for the full list of organizations who have responded to the Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey or were engaged through meetings and events thus far. The Corporation will continue to update the Asset Inventory throughout the public comment period and during plan implementation. If your organization is not listed, please complete the [Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey](#).

#### **Aging Individuals**

Examples of these organizations include:

##### **AARP Rhode Island**

AARP provides volunteer-led online programming to improve health and wellness, including online yoga, tai-chi, gardening, and caregiving classes. Hosts trainings to help aging individuals learn to use new vehicle computer technology. AARP's Skills Builder for Work digital platform helps older workers gain in-demand skills in today's job market.

##### **AHEPA Senior Living**

AHEPA is a senior living apartment facility in Newport that provides broadband service to the building, and device and printer access in the main community room.

##### **Cyber Seniors (URI)**

Cyber Seniors connects senior community members with young adult mentors who deliver tech-training and support, skills certifications, device training, and custom webinars.

##### **Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)**

OATS from AARP's program "Senior Planet" offers online classes to older adults in Rhode Island and hosts a National Tech Hotline which is monitored by Senior Planet trainers. Senior Planet also has a licensing program that equips local organizations across the country with the tools and curriculum to help older adults access technology and use it to enhance their lives.

##### **Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging (RIOHA)**

RIOHA partners with various organizations throughout Rhode Island to connect aging Rhode Islanders with information and resources. RIOHA is home to DigiAGE, which aims to bridge the digital divide for older adults, including device access, internet connectivity, training programs, and online content.

## **Covered Households**

Examples of these organizations include:

### **Crossroads Rhode Island**

Crossroads provides housing, education, training, and social services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Device and printer access are offered.

### **East Bay Community Action Program (CAP) / Warren Health Equity Zone**

All **Community Action Programs** work with covered households. For example, East Bay CAP is a place-based collaborative created to reduce and eliminate health disparities and barriers to wellness; they provide device access, digital skills and technical support, and telehealth services and support.

### **Foster Forward**

Foster Forward provides computer access and wi-fi to youth who have aged out of foster care.

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## **Incarcerated Individuals**

Examples of these organizations include:

### **Formerly Incarcerated Union of Rhode Island**

FIURI is a network of formerly incarcerated individuals and their families who share information on workforce development, civic, advocacy, and social opportunities.

### **Open Doors**

Provides wraparound services for formerly incarcerated individuals, including employment, transportation, addiction recovery, and housing applications.

### **Reentry Campus Program**

Reentry Campus Program (RCP) helps currently and formerly incarcerated individuals receive post-secondary education on their way to becoming self-sufficient and successful.

The program helps those behind the walls, transitioning out and after release with their educational goals as well as offering critical wrap-around services, continuous support, encouragement, and resources specific to their individual needs.

### **Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC)**

RIDOC's Educational Services unit provides a variety of classes, including Adult Basic Education, GED, Job Readiness, and Vocational Training. Facilities have computer labs for students to enhance their computer skills.

### **Turning Around Ministries**

Turning Around Ministries (TAM) is a nonprofit faith-based organization targeting formerly incarcerated persons in Newport County. TAM offers referrals to social services, mentoring, emergency housing, education, and job preparation.

## **Individuals with disabilities**

Examples of these organizations include:

### **Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL)**

OSCIL provides a full range of independent living services and resources for individuals with disabilities and seniors. Includes an Assistive Technology program to help individuals acquire assistive devices along with training on how to use them. Also includes a Smart Home Technology Program to help modify the homes of individuals with disabilities using smart technology to improve independent living.

### **Providence Public Library**

PPL offers assistive technology (including assistive listening devices and assistive technology on computers) and assistive services (assistance with downloading audiobooks or e-books).

### **RI Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)**

ORS's mission is to empower individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and integration into society. Its programs include the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL), Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP), and The Rhode Island Disability Determination Services (RI DSS).

ATEL provides landline/home telephones and wireless devices to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, have a speech disability, or have neuromuscular damage or disease that hinders them from using a standard telephone. ATEL also provides training to clients on how to use tablets and smartphones. ATEL is also an ATAP Partner, which also include East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC), Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and TechACCESS of RI. ATAP is designed as a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.

### **TechACCESS of Rhode Island**

TechACCESS offers assistive technology, training, and evaluation services to individuals with disabilities.

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## **Individuals with a language barrier**

These individuals include English Language Learners, Immigrants or Refugees, and Individuals with Low Literacy. Examples of these organizations include:

### **Institute for Labor Studies & Research (ILSR)**

ILSR provides education and training to enable Rhode Islanders to have a stronger voice in the workplace, to participate more effectively in Rhode Island's evolving job market, and to create a more just and equitable society.

ILSR leads the Workplace Adult Literacy Project that provides English as a Second Language (ESL) education, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and technology training at their place of employment.

### **Newport Community School: Aquidneck Island Adult Learning Center**

AIALC offers adult education, including literacy and numeracy instruction, workplace literacy, computer literacy, and English Language Acquisition. The Center also offers a Learning Lab where students and community members can receive assistance with online job and college applications, resume development and other technology-based needs.

### **Progreso Latino**

Progreso Latino serves Rhode Island's Latino and immigrant communities through adult education, early childhood education, senior services, workforce development, and other social service programs, including a bilingual digital literacy program through its Bridge to Careers program.

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## **Veterans**

Examples of these organizations include:

### **Providence Vet Center**

PVC provides individual and group counseling services, mental health care, whole health care, referrals, and telehealth services to veterans.

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)**

VFW-RI provides resources and programs to veterans and their families to ensure connectedness with fellow veterans and the community.

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## **Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group**

Examples of these organizations include:

### **Amos House**

Amos House's programs include food, social services, job training and employment, and health services. Among Covered Populations, Amos House serves individuals who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups, individuals with language barriers, covered households, aging individuals, and the formerly incarcerated. Its digital equity services include computer/device access and digital skills support.

### **Blackstone Valley Community Action Program**

BVCAP serves families in Pawtucket, Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln, and select programs in Woonsocket, and has a staff that reflects the ethnic diversity of their community and understanding of their clients' culture and language.

## **Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE)**

DARE consists of campaign organizers for low-income and communities of color through base building, direct action organizing, leadership development, and movement building. The Tenant and Homeowners Association (THA), a current campaign, partners with nonprofit attorneys to design and advocate for housing policies impacting low-income and communities of color at the municipal and state level.

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## **Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area**

According to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) classification, eighteen (18) of Rhode Island's thirty-nine (39) municipalities are rural.<sup>24</sup> Several rural organizations have created and implemented digital equity initiatives. Examples of these organizations include:

### **American Connection Corps**

American Connection Corps connects AmeriCorps members working on broadband adoption and digital navigation to rural areas across the country and can potentially serve as a resource for Rhode Island's rural communities.<sup>25</sup>

### **Rural Libraries**

Libraries are located in every rural municipality. These rural libraries provide vital digital equity resources for their communities, including public computers, Wi-Fi, and technology assistance. The **Brownell Library** in Little Compton, for example, offers a Tech Help program for drop-in assistance and lends out hotspots.

### **Scituate School Department**

Scituate School Department prepares students to be responsible and productive users of technology through technology-rich learning environments, technology investments, and training to support students' educational needs.

### **Town of Hopkinton**

Town of Hopkinton is partnering with OSHEAN to bring gigabit-speed internet to all rural and non-town-owned streets and to provide gigabit-speed internet in the new Community Learning Center, which will offer public access to a computer lab, printer/copy/scan functionality, and provide various training programs for job placement, education, and health services.

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<sup>24</sup> Defining Rural Rhode Island: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/definitions/2022Rural-definition.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> The Corporation added this asset to reflect a public comment.

## 3.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To assess the digital equity needs and barriers of Rhode Island residents, the Corporation collected and analyzed a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from a diverse range of sources. These include:

- **American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates**, providing detailed data on broadband subscriptions and device access for Rhode Islanders, including most Covered Populations.<sup>26</sup>
- **FCC National Broadband Map (NBM)**, for preliminary locations in Rhode Island that are unserved or underserved by broadband.
- **NTIA Internet Use Survey**, for data on types of internet use among Rhode Islanders.
- **The Corporation’s Rhode Island Internet Connectivity Survey**, administered in 2023 to collect data on internet access, service speeds and satisfaction, and affordability.
- **Community conversations** held by Corporation staff with Covered Population members and organizations serving Covered Populations to assess digital equity needs and interests. These conversations occurred at ACP outreach events and Digital Inclusion Week activities.
- **The Corporation’s statewide digital equity workshops**, with fifty-five (55) participants from across the state’s digital equity ecosystem.
- **Focus group, interview, and survey data collected by Skills for Rhode Island’s Future (SkillsRI)**, a statewide workforce development nonprofit organization, for their report on digital equity conducted in partnership with the Corporation, the Governor’s Office, and other State leaders. This includes thirteen (13) focus groups with community members and digital skills providers; twenty-seven (27) interviews with key stakeholders such as libraries, employers, and government agencies; a Community Survey with 278 respondents; and an Employer Survey with sixty-five (65) respondents.
- **Survey data** of RI Department of Education (RIDE)’s Adult Education students, with 2,153 respondents.

The Corporation additionally conducted a comprehensive **Statewide Digital Equity Public Survey** to identify the state’s baseline for each of the DEA’s five Measurable Objective categories both statewide and for each Covered Population.

**“Where I live, there is no competition...so I pay a lot more for that because there is no marketplace incentive. Before I could get companies to compete and now I have only one provider.”**

– Digital Learning Instructors Focus Group participant

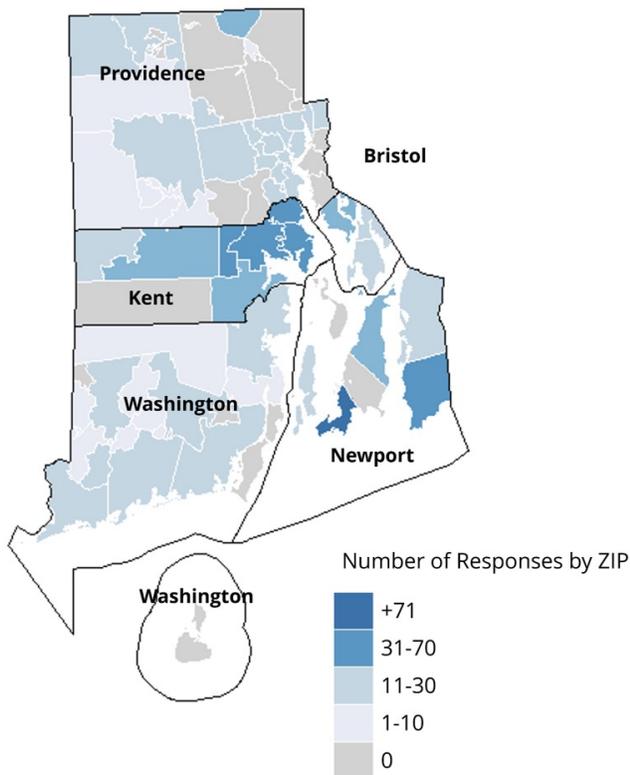
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<sup>26</sup> ACS does not offer data on individuals who are incarcerated. For individuals facing language barriers, the ACS offers data on those who are limited English proficient, but not on individuals who have low literacy. ACS statistics for rural residents were calculated using RIDOH’s definition of rural municipalities.

**Table 2: Digital Equity Public Survey Responses by Covered Populations**  
**Complete Responses**

Aging individuals (60 and above)	277
Veterans	45
Individuals with disabilities	174
Individuals with limited English proficiency <sup>27</sup>	31
Racial or ethnic minority groups	223
Tribal communities	13
Individuals residing in rural areas	96
Individuals in households below 150% poverty	85
<b>Total Covered Population Responses</b>	<b>603</b>
<b>Total Complete Responses</b>	<b>744</b>

**Map 2: Digital Equity Public Survey Responses by Zip Code**



<sup>27</sup> In this analysis, individuals with limited English proficiency were identified as respondents who completed the survey in Spanish and those who were referred by organizations serving immigrants, refugees, and individuals with language barriers. The Corporation acknowledges that there may be a larger group of individuals with limited English proficiency who completed the survey, including those who were assisted by CAI staff.

### 3.2.1 Statewide Needs Assessment

#### Broadband Availability and Affordability

According to FCC’s NBM data, Rhode Island has high broadband availability compared with other states. Rhode Island has 2,309 unserved and 586 underserved locations. However, as noted in Rhode Island’s BEAD Initial Proposal, the Corporation plans to revise this list through a pre-challenge reclassification process and then follow-on challenge process, which will complement the FCC’s broadband data, and ensure the most accurate maps possible for Rhode Island.

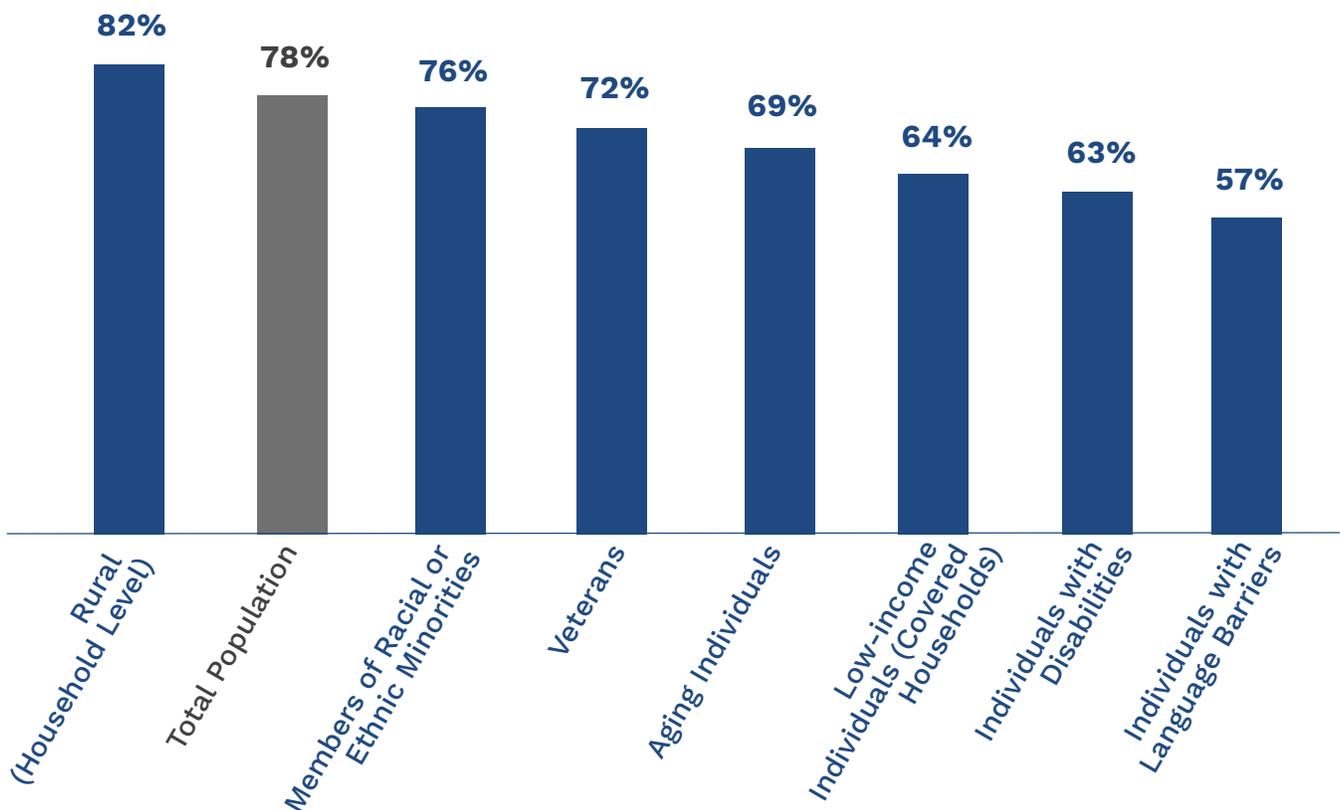
There are broadband adoption disparities between Covered Populations and the statewide population. According to the ACS, seventy-eight percent

(78%) of Rhode Islanders subscribe to broadband internet such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL, yet Covered Populations have significantly lower broadband subscription rates, including individuals with language barriers (57%), individuals with disabilities (63%), and covered households (64%).

Certain municipalities in Providence County (Providence and East Providence) and Newport County (Portsmouth) have the lowest broadband subscription rates, with fewer than 33% of households subscribed to broadband in several Census Block Groups.

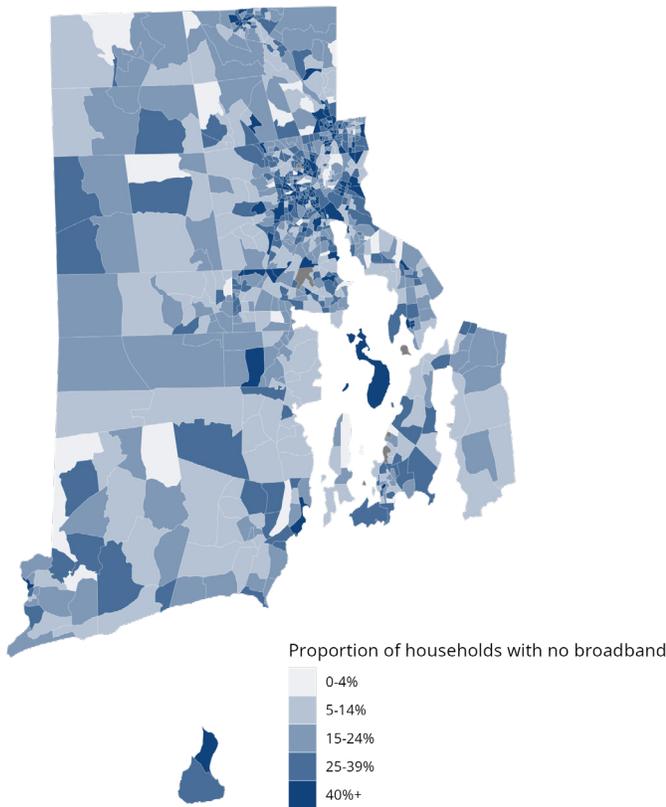
Affordability was the most frequently cited challenge to broadband access by survey and focus group participants; additional challenges included speed, service reliability, and overall satisfaction with internet service.

Figure 1: Broadband Subscription Rates Among Covered Populations



Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

### Map 3: Broadband Subscription Rates by Census Block Group



Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

Among RI Internet Connectivity Survey respondents:

- **Affordability:** 15% said their service was affordable.
- **Service satisfaction:** 53% of respondents are not satisfied with their current service.
- **Service speeds:** 43% of respondents either did not have, or did not know if they are subscribed to, speeds that promise 100/20 Mbps service. Among these respondents, 68% would like access to service at those speeds.
- **Speed tests:** Of the 52 respondents who completed a speed test, 42% had results at

underserved speeds (less than 100/20 Mbps) and an additional 13% had results at unserved (less than 25/3 Mbps).

Among SkillsRI Community Survey respondents, nearly 40% reported that internet connectivity in their area is too unreliable or too slow; approximately 10% indicated no service availability in their area.

Participants in the statewide workshop discussions cited the burden of internet costs for individuals with fixed incomes and/or benefit reliance. Additional feedback included the limited ISP options leading to lower quality services at higher prices and the lack of service cost transparency, including an inability to ascertain a final price prior to subscription and/or unanticipated price changes without prior notice. Participants also expressed concern for the time-limited ACP funding, which, if program funding expires, would result in an increase in the amount of Rhode Islanders who will struggle to afford internet service. Most notably, participants stated that the opportunity costs and long-term adverse economic impact from limited digital access for individuals, families, local communities, and the state would far exceed the costs to implement digital equity initiatives.

# Only 15%

RI Internet Connectivity Survey respondents said their service was affordable.

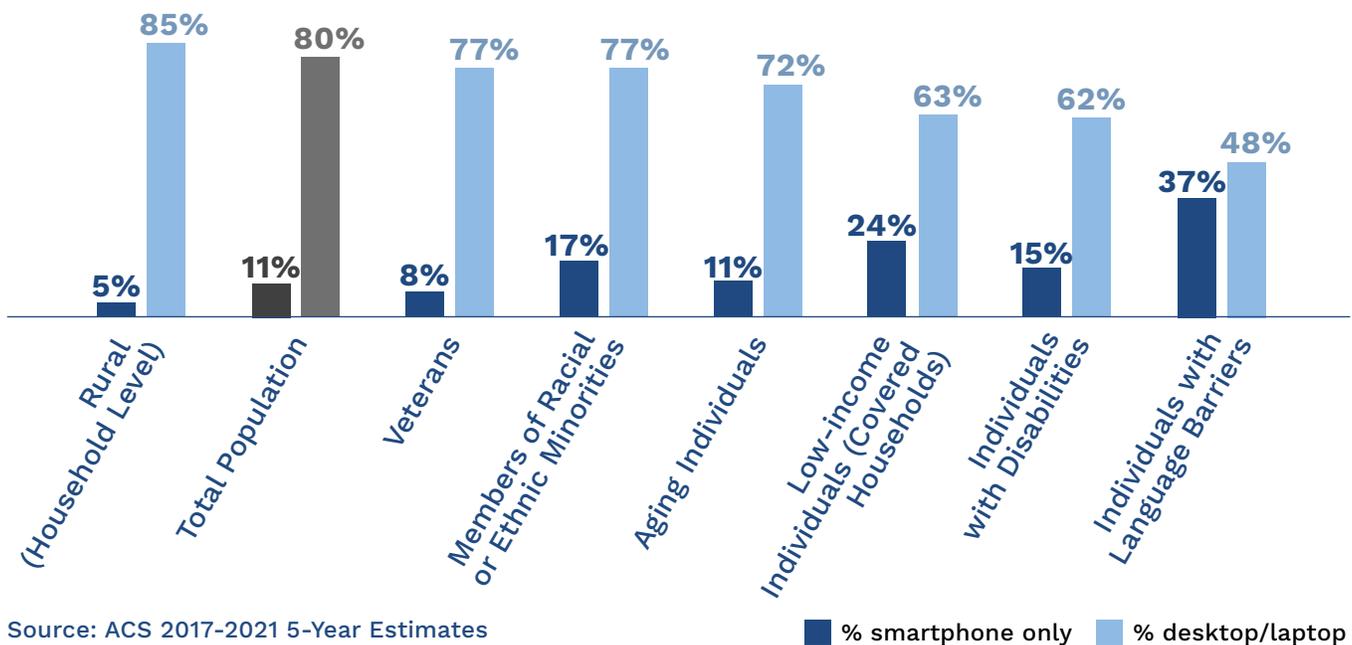
Furthermore, 409 public comments expressed strong concern for ACP funding terminating, of which 47% were submitted in Spanish. Of the many uses mentioned in the comments, using the internet through ACP provides participants with access to education, jobs, medical needs, and supporting aging individuals. According to the Covered Populations indicated in the comments, ACP no longer being available can affect aging individuals, Individuals with limited English proficiency or other language barriers, racial or ethnic minorities, individuals in households below 150% of the federal poverty line, individuals with disabilities, individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated and individuals primarily residing in a rural area.<sup>28</sup> There was a public comment that expressed concerns about the potential loss of ACP occurring at the same time as COVID increases in SNAP benefits are being reduced, causing financial hardships for many families.

## Availability and Affordability of Devices

Eighty percent (80%) of Rhode Islanders have a desktop or laptop computer at home, with significantly lower home desktop or laptop computer rates among Covered Populations, including limited English proficient households (48%), individuals with disabilities (62%) and covered households (63%). Eleven percent (11%) have a smartphone as their only home computing device, a percentage that significantly increases among Covered Populations with one-third of limited English proficient households and nearly one-quarter of covered households identifying a smartphone as their only device.

Providence, East Providence, and Pawtucket have the highest proportion of households having smartphones as their only home computing device. In the ten Census block groups with the highest smartphone-only rates, 45% have smartphones as their only home computing devices.

Figure 2: Device Access Among Covered Populations



Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

28 The Corporation updated text in 3.2.1 as a response to 409 comments regarding ACP funding terminating and concerns around ACP funding ending with other programs ending at the same time.

SkillsRI held focus groups with digital skill instructors whose students represent multiple Covered Populations. In these focus groups, instructors reported that the lack of reliable devices is a barrier to online class participation, and that smartphones inhibit quality class participation. According to RIDE's survey of Adult Education students, 41% of its students, were without a device suitable for distance learning.

**“Those that are joining [online classes] with smartphones – it’s a poor substitute. I can tell who is joining with a smartphone, they don’t participate as much as those with computers.”**

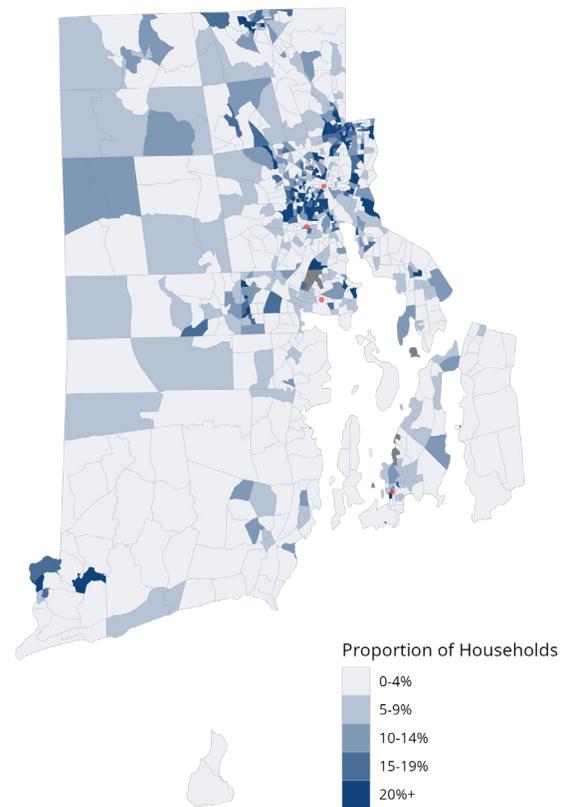
– Digital Learning Instructors Focus Group participant

Statewide workshop participants and other stakeholders cited the cost of devices as a major barrier and identified aging individuals, individuals with disabilities, and covered households as the most impacted. They also cited the need for device distribution to align with digital literacy training and that allocated devices offer the accessibility features needed by differently abled individuals.

**“If they do the computer training here, but they can’t take it home to practice, they’re not going to have that skill.”**

– Community-Based Organization Interviewee

**Map 4: Households with Smartphones as Their Only Computing Device by Census Block Group**



Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

**“Government gives out refurbished Androids which are a waste when people have accessibility issues.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

The majority (55%) of Digital Equity Public Survey respondents would only be able to pay up to \$250 for a laptop or desktop computer. 28% of respondents reported not having or knowing someone in their household or community who can help them if they have trouble with computers or internet.

## Digital Literacy

According to the Digital Equity Public Survey, respondents were least likely to be “completely confident” with the following activities:

- Participating in health care or telehealth services (48%)
- Participating in your local community through online activities (48%)
- Searching and/or applying for benefits or resources (44%)

Most covered population respondents (especially aging individuals, individuals in covered households, individuals with language barriers, and individuals with disabilities) had significantly lower rates of confidence with online activities.

As Rhode Island seeks to advance state priorities in employment, education, and health, improving confidence for all digital skills will help ensure access to activities that support individual and community well-being.

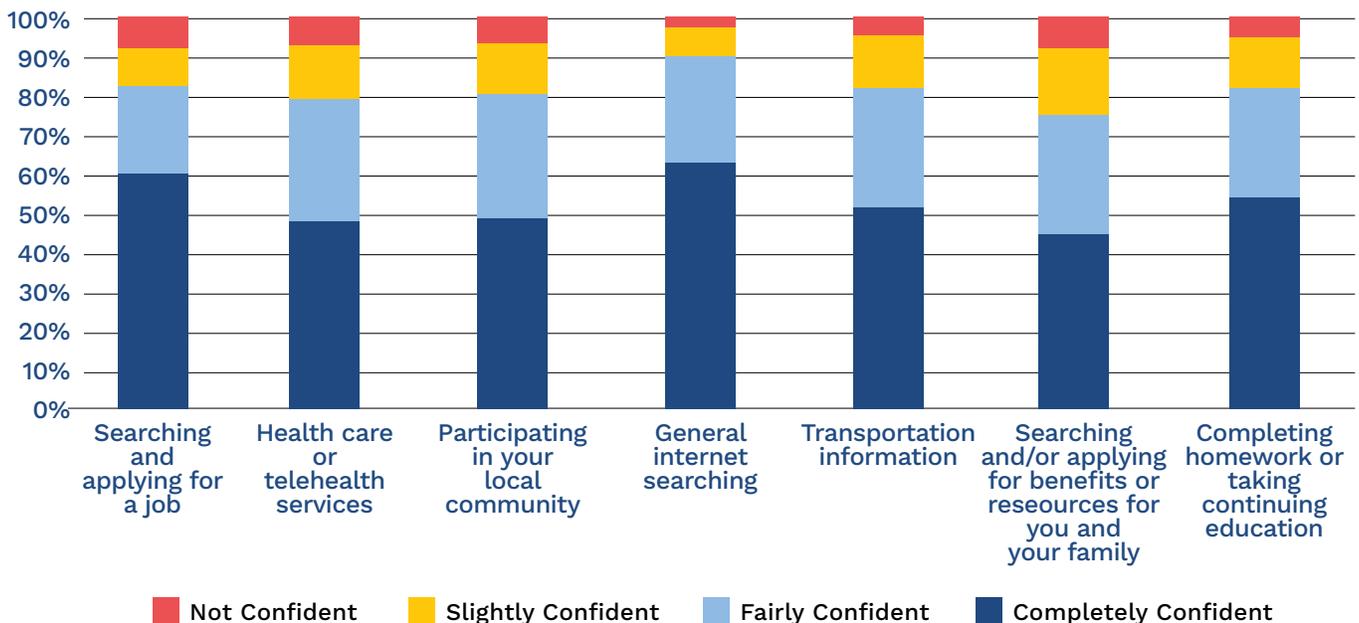
“Signing up for Medicare or SNAP. It’s **frustrating to use**, especially for the senior population. We end up having to take the computer from them to do it for them. It doesn’t help them learn.”

– Statewide workshop participant

“We also see that with first generation and seniors. We also serve younger people who are digital natives, they are very savvy with smartphones, but everything is shorthand. **They don’t know how to do formal emails, job applications, attaching documents.** They think they know how to do everything, but they have gaps.”

– Statewide workshop participant

Figure 3: How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?



Source: Digital Equity Public Survey

According to a [recent study](#) conducted by the National Skills Coalition and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, **90% of all job postings in Rhode Island likely require digital skills and 48% definitely require a level of digital technology knowledge. Further, jobs requiring digital skills increase hourly wages by 23%.**

SkillsRI Employer Survey respondents reinforced these findings sharing that the digital talent gap has been widening, with the greatest divide among low-income individuals and families, aging individuals, immigrant families and individuals with language barriers, children from the urban core, and formerly incarcerated individuals. Statewide workshop participants noted significant digital literacy gaps in “foundational” digital skills, which are now prerequisites for employment

(e.g.,, online job applications, professional email etiquette, etc.), including among young adults, who are often assumed to be “digital natives.” As with other demographics, a lack of digital skills may impact their long-term economic stability.

Across SkillsRI focus groups, several community members mentioned being aware of classes and services at their local libraries or other community anchors to learn digital skills, but childcare and transportation can be barriers to participation. Existing digital literacy training programs experience staffing shortages, limited multi-skill level and multi-language classes, and insufficient long-term funding options. Individualized instruction was also identified as a necessity for digital skills training.

**“We need to develop and sustain robust programming. The key word is ‘robust.’ When the funding ends, the program ends, and we have to start from zero every time.”**

– Digital Equity Working Group member

**“There needs to be trainings to get people from the Basics to Advanced.”**

– Digital Equity Working Group member

## Online Privacy and Cybersecurity

Many Rhode Islanders have personal experience with or major concerns about online privacy, safety, and cybersecurity. In 2022, over 1,100 Rhode Islanders made a report to the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3).<sup>29</sup> These Rhode Islanders experienced a combined total monetary loss of \$21.8 million, or an average of \$19,500 per victim. Additionally, according to the NTIA Internet Use Survey, 22% of Rhode Island’s internet users have experienced an online security breach, identity theft, or a similar crime, indicating that many incidents go unreported. Identity theft (49%) and credit card or banking fraud (35%) are the most concerning privacy or cybersecurity risks for Rhode Islanders.

Online privacy and security were concerns for both SkillsRI Community Survey and Employer Survey respondents.

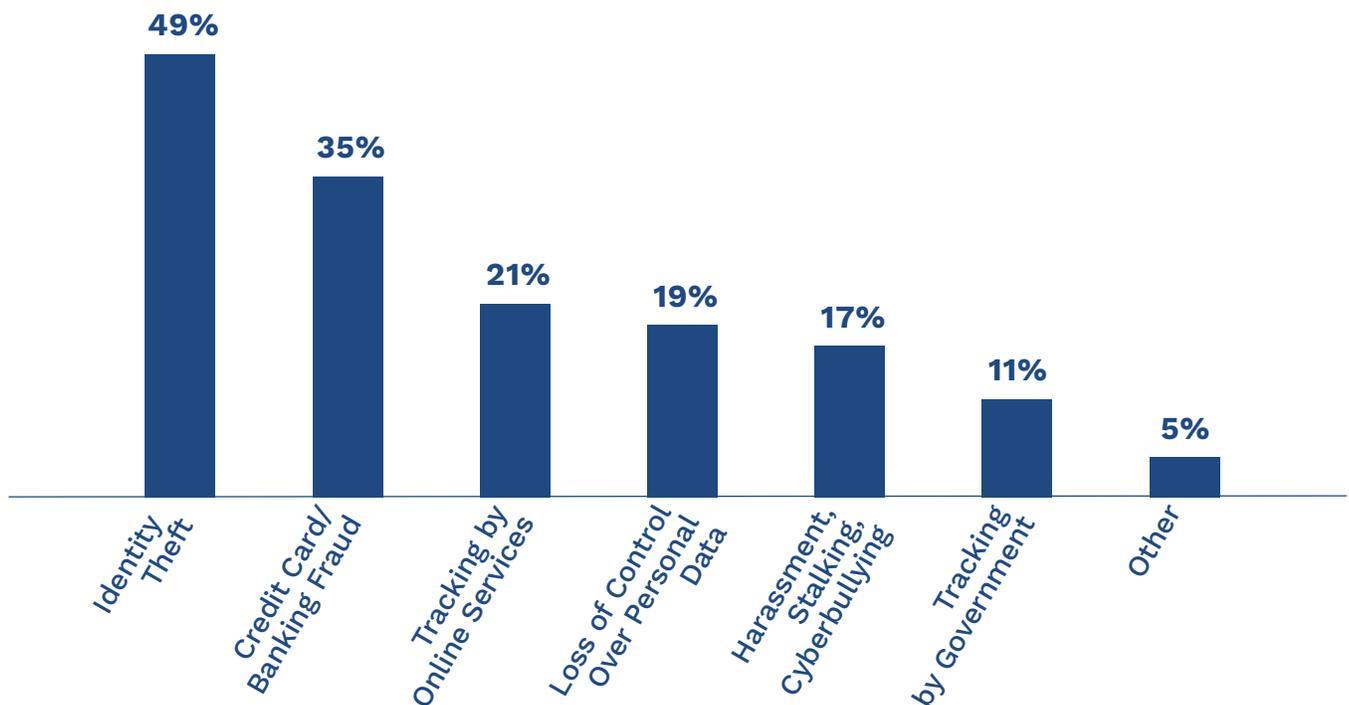
**“I put ‘block’ everything on the code - but on the tablet, I have to code everything. I want to protect my kids.”**

– Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island Focus Group

**“A focus on safety and exposure for young kids and children. It is important to protect your kids and their exposure online at such a young age... There should be more focus on restrictions on adult sites and even for scams – kids are more susceptible.”**

– Pawtucket School District Focus Group

Figure 4: Highest Concerns for Online Privacy and Cybersecurity



Source: NTIA Internet Use Survey 2021

<sup>29</sup> FBI Internet Crime Report 2022: [https://www.ic3.gov/Media/PDF/AnnualReport/2022\\_IC3Report.pdf](https://www.ic3.gov/Media/PDF/AnnualReport/2022_IC3Report.pdf)

Among Community Survey respondents, approximately one-third could not recognize a phishing attempt; the majority indicated a need for more education related to internet scams. Among employers, most respondents identified online privacy and security training for employees as a top digital skill priority.

According to the Digital Equity Public Survey, 46% of all respondents were very concerned about internet safety and 63% have tools or resources to stay safe online.

Across multiple focus groups, participants expressed online privacy, safety, and cybersecurity concerns for children and youth.

### Online Accessibility and Inclusivity of Public Resources and Services

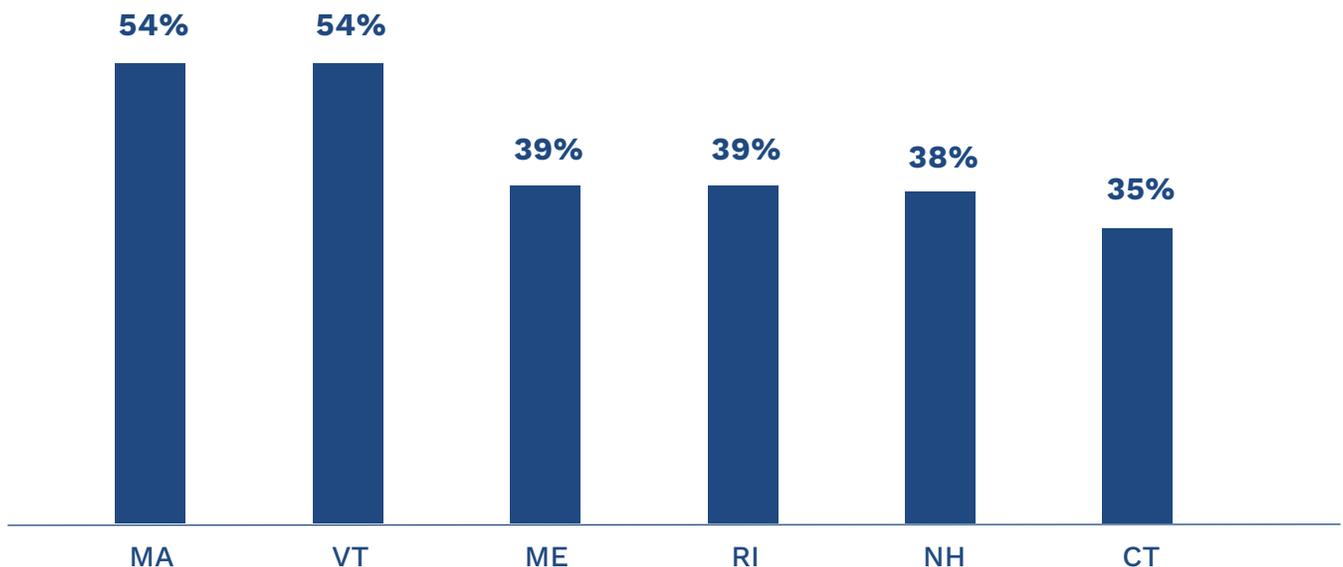
Among Rhode Island’s internet users, only 39% use it to access government

services, including voter registration or driver license renewal, according to the 2021 NTIA Internet Use Survey. This rate is similar to other New England states, but trails Massachusetts and Vermont, where the majority use internet to access online government services.

According to the Digital Equity Public Survey, fewer than half of all respondents (41%) reported that online government services were very accessible. Individuals with disabilities (23%), individuals who are members of racial or ethnic minorities (35%), individuals with language barriers (36%), and rural residents (37%) were least likely to report that online government services were very accessible.

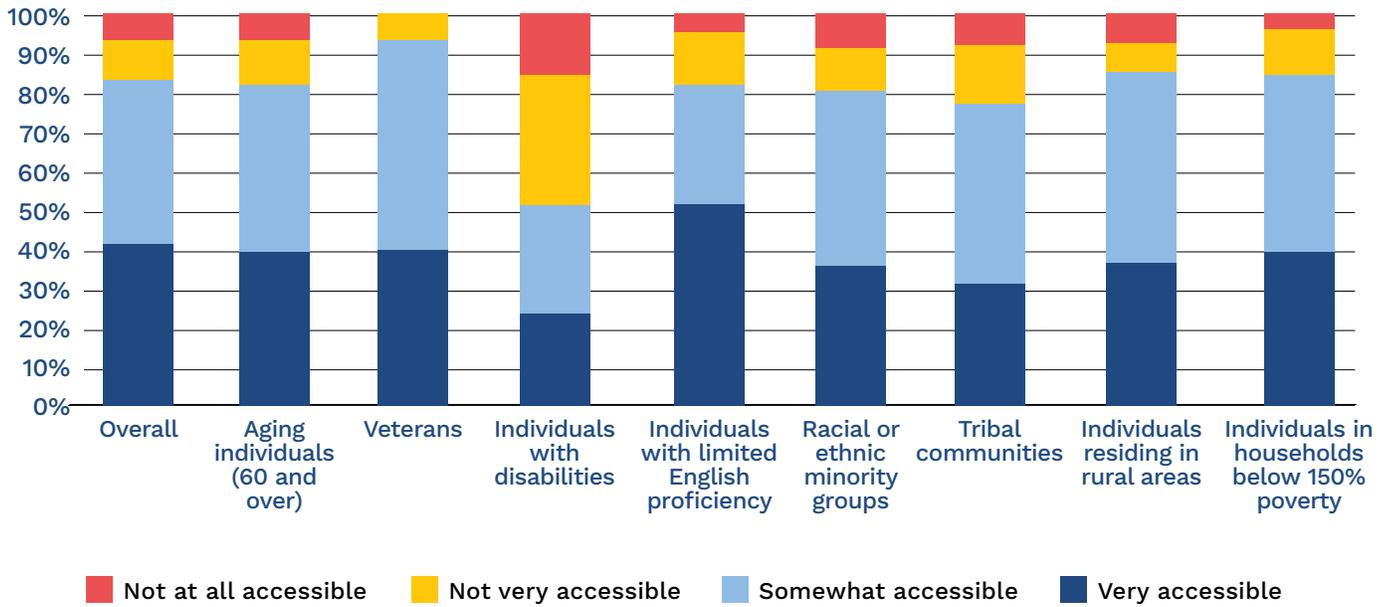
In SkillsRI focus groups and interviews, several stakeholders and residents mentioned the need to improve the accessibility of government websites and online services. The process of filling out online applications is a barrier to accessing public benefits and services.

Figure 5: Accessing Online Government Services Among New England States

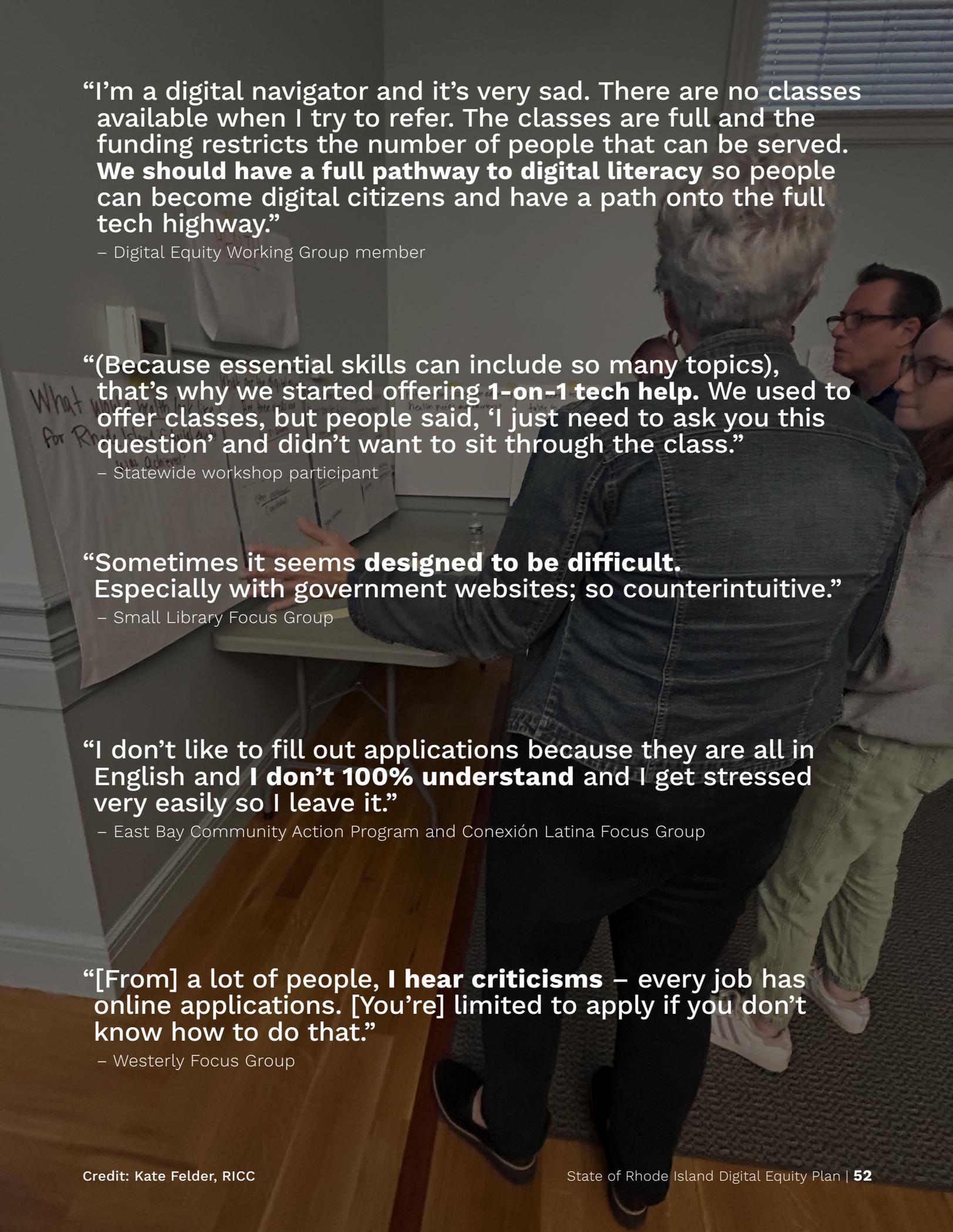


Source: NTIA Internet Use Survey 2021

**Figure 6: How accessible are online government services like benefits portals, DMV services, or paying for permits or tickets to you?**



Source: Digital Equity Public Survey



“I’m a digital navigator and it’s very sad. There are no classes available when I try to refer. The classes are full and the funding restricts the number of people that can be served. **We should have a full pathway to digital literacy** so people can become digital citizens and have a path onto the full tech highway.”

– Digital Equity Working Group member

“(Because essential skills can include so many topics), that’s why we started offering **1-on-1 tech help**. We used to offer classes, but people said, ‘I just need to ask you this question’ and didn’t want to sit through the class.”

– Statewide workshop participant

“Sometimes it seems **designed to be difficult**. Especially with government websites; so counterintuitive.”

– Small Library Focus Group

“I don’t like to fill out applications because they are all in English and I **don’t 100% understand** and I get stressed very easily so I leave it.”

– East Bay Community Action Program and Conexión Latina Focus Group

“[From] a lot of people, I **hear criticisms** – every job has online applications. [You’re] limited to apply if you don’t know how to do that.”

– Westerly Focus Group

### 3.2.2 Covered Population Needs Assessment: Needs, Interests, and Barriers

The following section describes the needs and barriers that have been identified for each Covered Population. This assessment also notes the intersections between Covered Populations, indicating when needs and barriers are shared across multiple groups.

Table 3: Intersections between Rhode Island’s Covered Populations<sup>30</sup>

	Aging individuals	Veterans	Individuals with disabilities	Racial or ethnic minorities	Covered households	Individuals with language barriers	Rural residents
Aging individuals	100%	14%	<b>27%</b>	11%	16%	4%	<b>21%</b>
Veterans	<b>67%</b>	100%	<b>28%</b>	10%	10%	0%	<b>25%</b>
Individuals with disabilities	<b>57%</b>	13%	100%	20%	<b>28%</b>	5%	16%
Racial or ethnic minorities	16%	3%	13%	100%	<b>23%</b>	11%	4%
Covered households	<b>37%</b>	5%	<b>31%</b>	<b>38%</b>	100%	8%	9%
Individuals with language barriers	<b>42%</b>	1%	<b>24%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>35%</b>	100%	5%
Rural residents	<b>29%</b>	7%	12%	6%	9%	1%	100%

Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

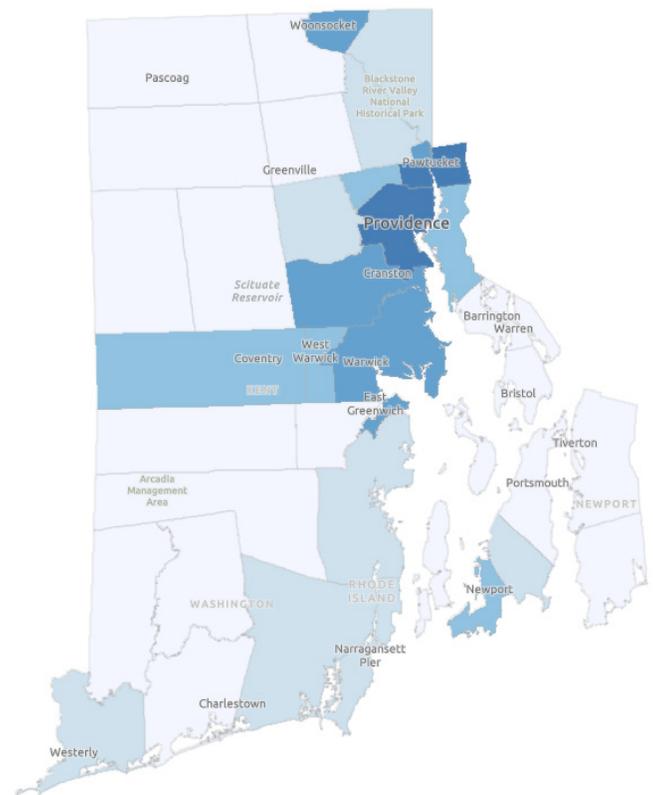
30 As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, ACS does not offer data on individuals who are incarcerated.

# COVERED HOUSEHOLDS

Among Rhode Islanders in covered households, 38% are members of racial or ethnic minority communities, 37% are aging individuals, and 31% have a disability. According to RI Kids Count, there is a concentration of childhood poverty in four core cities — Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket; 64% of Rhode Island’s children live below the poverty line in these cities.<sup>31</sup>

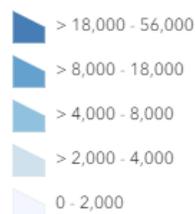
Only 64% of covered households are subscribed to broadband, with a similar rate (63%) of desktop or laptop ownership. SkillsRI focus group participants identified reliable access to devices and connectivity, especially for youth and unhoused individuals, affordability concerns, even for borrowed devices, and the cost of device upkeep as barriers to digital equity. The lack of connectivity and devices, in addition to challenges such as housing and food insecurity, also become barriers to learning digital skills.

Map 5: Covered Household Population by Municipality



## Low Income

Population Below 150% Poverty Line - Low income



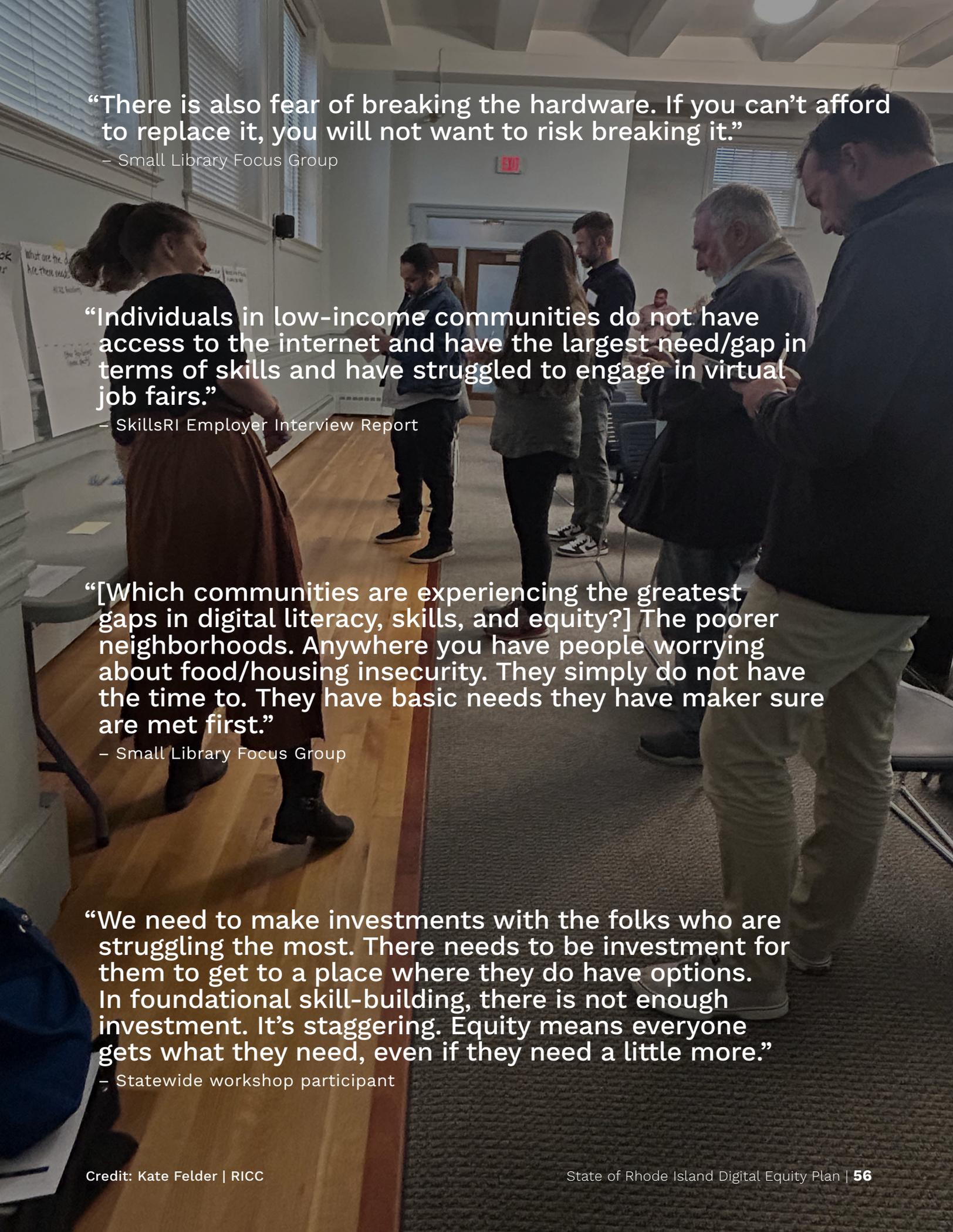
<sup>31</sup> RI Kids Count: [https://www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/2023%20Factbook%20Files/2023\\_Factbook.pdf?ver=2023-05-10-100640-057](https://www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/2023%20Factbook%20Files/2023_Factbook.pdf?ver=2023-05-10-100640-057)

**Results from the Digital Equity Public Survey also show the following barriers for covered households:**

- **Lack of confidence with completing online activities:** among covered household respondents, only 48% were completely confident with searching or applying for job online, 38% with going online for health care or telehealth, and 34% with searching or applying for benefits or resources online.
- **Lack of online safety resources:** Only 50% of respondents had tools or resources to stay safe online.

**“Kids should have more computers in Providence, computers promote education. People aren’t learning how to read or how to do technology. Low-income neighborhoods shouldn’t suffer because they are poor. I lived in Providence in the neighborhoods, I’m concerned about those kids learning.”**

– RI Regional Adult Learning Focus Group



**“There is also fear of breaking the hardware. If you can’t afford to replace it, you will not want to risk breaking it.”**

– Small Library Focus Group

**“Individuals in low-income communities do not have access to the internet and have the largest need/gap in terms of skills and have struggled to engage in virtual job fairs.”**

– SkillsRI Employer Interview Report

**“[Which communities are experiencing the greatest gaps in digital literacy, skills, and equity?] The poorer neighborhoods. Anywhere you have people worrying about food/housing insecurity. They simply do not have the time to. They have basic needs they have maker sure are met first.”**

– Small Library Focus Group

**“We need to make investments with the folks who are struggling the most. There needs to be investment for them to get to a place where they do have options. In foundational skill-building, there is not enough investment. It’s staggering. Equity means everyone gets what they need, even if they need a little more.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

# INDIVIDUALS WITH A LANGUAGE BARRIER

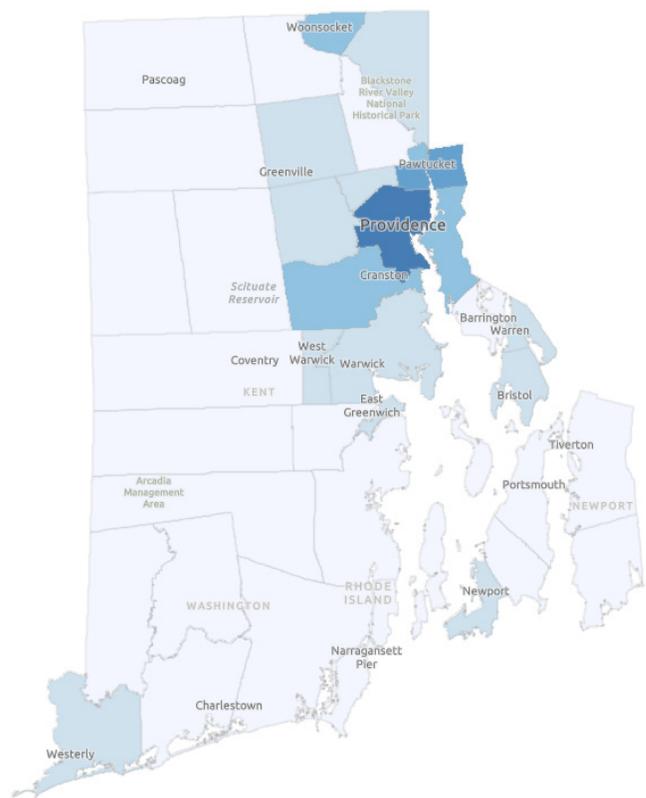
Among Rhode Islanders with limited English proficiency, 82% are members of racial or ethnic minority communities, 42% are aging individuals, and 35% are in covered households.

Rhode Islanders with limited English proficiency have a significantly lower broadband subscription rate (57%) and desktop or laptop computer access rate (48%) compared to statewide averages. According to RIDE's survey of Adult Education students, lower-level English Language Learners and learners in Adult Basic Education (which is designed to teach literacy skills) were cited as having the most significant barriers to participation in distance learning, including lacking a laptop or tablet, limited home internet service, or an inadequate phone data plan.

Among SkillsRI focus group participants, those with language barriers expressed difficulty paying for internet at speeds sufficient for their needs, a reluctance to use free Wi-Fi due to security concerns, frustration with outdated devices, and an over-reliance on family and friends for technical assistance support.

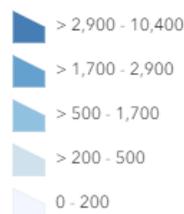
In terms of digital literacy, focus group participants

Map 6: Limited English Proficient Households by Municipality



### Limited English Proficiency

Limited English Proficiency (less than very well) Households



## Results from the Digital Equity Public Survey also show the following barriers for individuals with language barriers:

- **Lack of tech support or assistance:** 44% of respondents did not have or know someone who could help them if they had trouble with their computers or internet.
- **Lack of confidence with completing online activities:** among respondents with language barriers, only 33% were completely confident with searching or applying for jobs online, 29% with going online for health care or telehealth, and 17% with searching or applying for benefits or resources online.
- **Lack of online safety resources:** Only 44% of respondents had tools or resources to stay safe online.
- **Lack of online government resource accessibility:** Only 36% reported that online government services were very accessible.

“Please reduce the price of internet.”

– Central Falls Focus Group

“Sometimes it is so slow. Sometimes I wish I had a larger data plan because I want my kids to have access.”

– East Bay Community Action Program and Conexión Latina Focus Group

“There are places that have free wi-fi access, but it isn’t secure.”

– Central Falls Focus Group

mentioned their desire to build digital skills to increase their earnings, either by applying for jobs online or starting an online business. Focus group and Statewide workshop participants highlighted the challenges for immigrants and refugees to access digital skills training due to language barriers and the need for translated materials and instruction, in addition to the previously mentioned childcare and transportation barriers.

**“[I have a computer from] 2016 and it’s already limited – you have to change things already! And I go crazy because I don’t want a new one!”**

– Central Falls Focus Group

**“My kids are little. Whoever is close and I trust [I ask]. 2 heads are better than 1. Although right now I have a problem with my email, it is full & I can’t open or get new emails. I don’t know how to get rid of email in bulk. I am not sure that email goes through; I am interested in email from school for my kids but I am not sure if it is coming through.”**

– East Bay Community Action Program and Conexión Latina Focus Group

**“I want to learn more about to use technology because I want to open my own business online... I want to have my product, I want to be my own boss but I want to do it online so people can see it through the website. I want to learn more about that.”**

– Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island Focus Group

**“At the library, we work a lot with immigrants, and I am also part of that, [and] the language barrier may create a gap for people to access the services & to identify what their needs are. They have no idea what digital literacy is language-wise.”**

– Digital Learning Instructors Focus Group

“I wish there was an orientation about how to search for information – how to be sure what I am reading and looking for.”

– East Bay Community Action Program and Conexión Latina Focus Group

“I want to know how to protect my kids. Don’t make friends with anyone you don’t know! My other child goes and blocks these people. I want to learn more about that.”

– Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island Focus Group





**“We are always trying to give our elders access because they can’t afford it.”**

– Westerly Focus Group

**“Seniors are the most disenfranchised from the tech world. [They say,] ‘Well I could ask my kids this, but they are so frustrated with me.’ They are just people whose kids are busy; they got lost in this and they don’t want to come.”**

– Small Library Focus Group

**“While access to internet costs anywhere from \$60-\$80 monthly on average, many elderly cannot afford to pay for access and must cut service.”**

– Public Comment

Aging individuals who participated in SkillsRI focus groups had mixed feelings about the need for technology, but many are taking advantage of available classes and tech support. Skills they are interested in learning include using messaging and videoconferencing apps, such as Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and Facebook Messenger, and learning more about social media, including distinguishing between public and private spaces and commenting.

**“Trying to learn how to type and I love it. Digital navigation and digital literacy—I hated it all my life and now I’m practicing.”**

– Cranston Senior Enrichment Center Focus Group

**“That’s the way of the world today, you cannot function without having some knowledge of the computers. It petrifies me. I went home to visit my family for a month. When I came back, I know zero of computers, they changed everything to computers to scan a passport. Thank God they had someone there to help... Everything changes so quickly, and the older we get, the less we like change.”**

– Cranston Senior Enrichment Center Focus Group

Statewide workshop participants cited the need for digital literacy trainings and tech support for aging individuals; “smart home” technologies for independent living; and online privacy, safety, and cybersecurity awareness to avoid online fraud and scams. They also pointed to the benefits of technology for aging individuals, including captioning, live transcription and device features that support hearing and vision loss needs.

FBI IC3 data also reflects the need for more online safety protections for aging individuals. Noting a growing trend, the FBI IC3 began publishing an Elder Fraud Report in 2020. In 2022, aging individuals represented the largest age group of cybercrime victims in Rhode Island, with 219 victims reported. Even more concerning, their monetary losses totaled \$7.3 million, or an average of \$33,400 per victim.<sup>32</sup>

**“We work with people with disabilities and seniors, getting people to get comfortable with technology, so they can live on their own.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

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32 FBI Elder Fraud Report 2022: [https://www.ic3.gov/Media/PDF/AnnualReport/2022\\_IC3ElderFraudReport.pdf](https://www.ic3.gov/Media/PDF/AnnualReport/2022_IC3ElderFraudReport.pdf)

## INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

**RIDOC operates six correctional housing facilities. According to RIDOC's 2022 Annual Population Report, approximately half of Rhode Island's incarcerated population are members of racial or ethnic minority groups. Additionally, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)'s Division of Juvenile Corrections operates the Rhode Island Training School as a correctional and rehabilitation program for youth; the current bed count is approximately 55-60.**

Thirty-five (35) incarcerated individuals participated in focus groups with SkillsRI. Participants noted that the lack of reliable access to broadband and computers are critical barriers to developing computer confidence and competence needed for successful re-entry. They expressed a desire to learn job-related digital skills, including basic keyboarding, email, resume writing, online job search and application, applying for housing and other benefits, online bill pay, and social media. However, a lack of classes and restrictions on technology make it difficult to pursue their education, and some shared that although they were digitally literate prior to their incarceration, they were falling behind in their digital skills due to the rapid pace of change.

**“Textbooks for accounting classes, for example, reference software that they cannot access, learn, or use. School papers are done by hand.”**

– SkillsRI Department of Corrections  
Focus Group Report

**“Technology changes every day. I was very good at it, but it's been four years. Everything is different, and everything is technology. I don't know stuff going on on the outside.”**

– SkillsRI Department of Corrections  
Focus Group Report

The majority of focus group participants described the discharge planning process as insufficient for successful reentry, with many expressing limited knowledge of community resources and federal programs, including second chance Pell grants. Stakeholders mentioned the need for more digital skills and devices, as well as more user-friendly online public resources.

**“Most people know how to do stuff on their phone, but when it comes to actually using a computer to do things, that's when they fall apart...A lot of people in the community that we encounter, formerly incarcerated or homeless, we get a lot of people in here who can't go online to do their bus pass application or can't do their SNAP application because the thing is so confusing.”**

– Community-Based Organization Interview

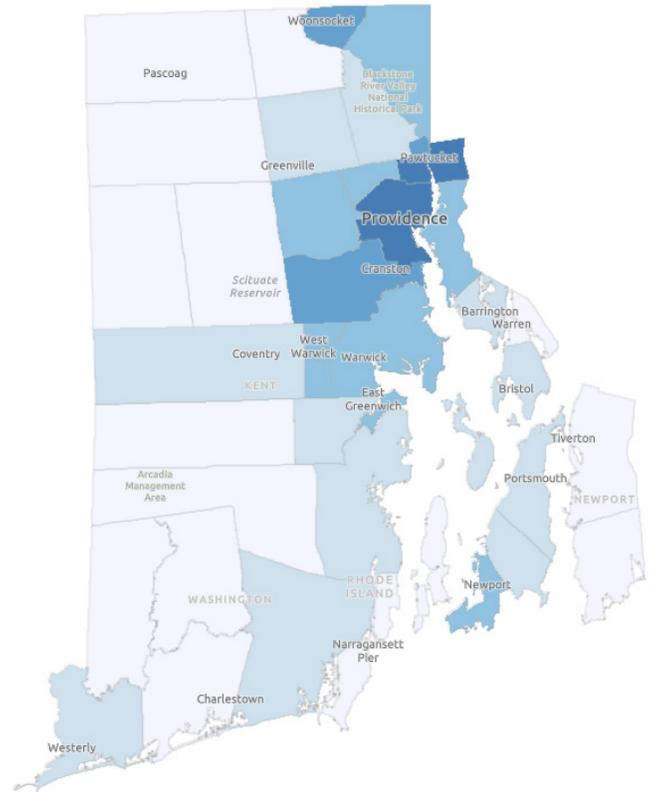
# INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF A RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITY GROUP

Rhode Island has a growing population of racial and ethnic minority communities. Between 2010 and 2020, the state’s Hispanic and Latino population grew by 39%, Black or African American population grew by 29%, Asian population grew by 32%, and American Indian and Alaska Native populations grew by 62%.<sup>33</sup> Among Rhode Islanders who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups, 23% are in covered households.

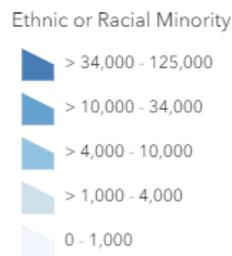
As noted above, individuals who are members of racial or ethnic minorities have lower broadband subscription and home desktop or laptop rates compared to statewide averages. Among racial and ethnic groups, Black or African American residents, American Indian residents, and Hispanic residents have the lowest rates of broadband subscription.

<sup>33</sup> US Census Bureau’s Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census: <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>

Map 8: **Racial or Ethnic Minority Communities by Municipality**

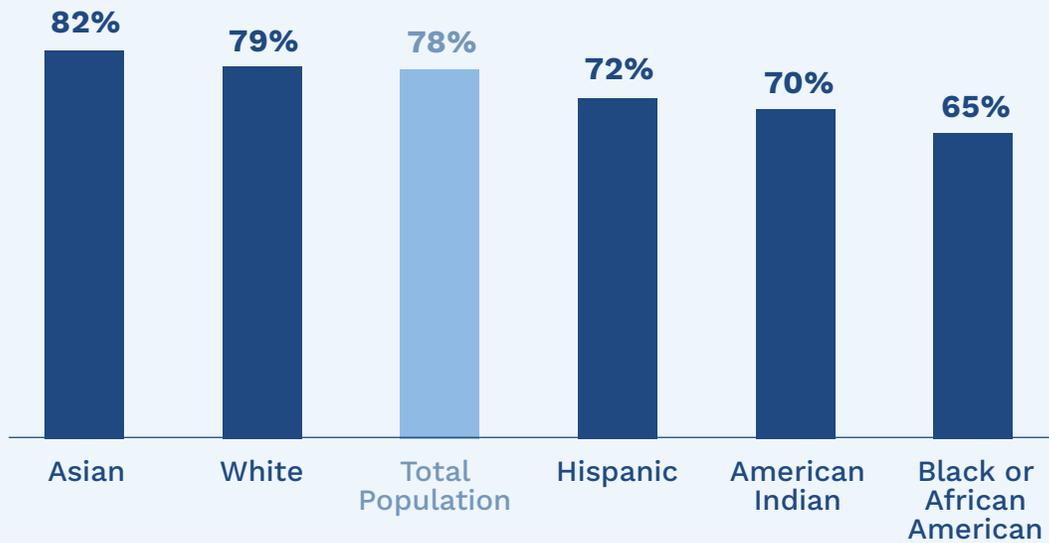


**Ethnic or Racial Minority**



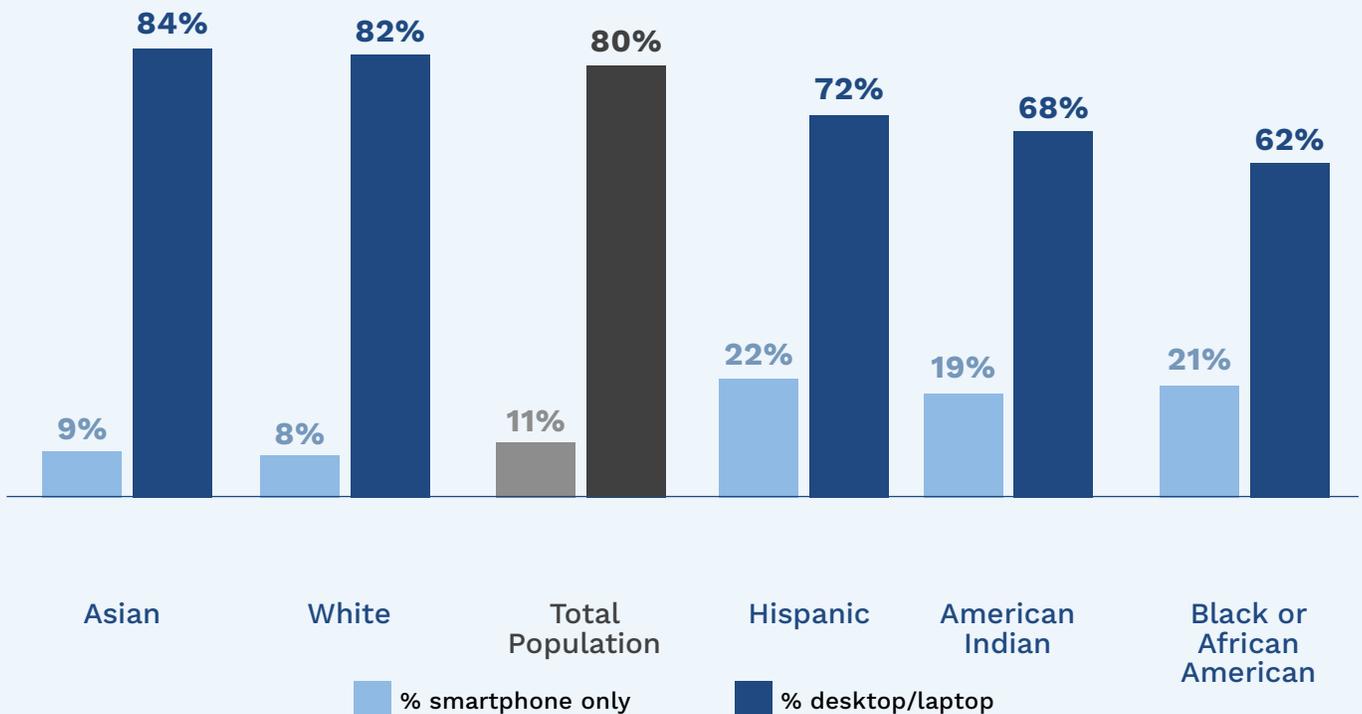
Black or African American residents, American Indian residents, and Hispanic residents also have the lowest rates among racial and ethnic groups of home desktop or laptop access and the highest rates of a smartphone as their only home computing device.

Figure 3: Broadband Subscription Rates by Race or Ethnicity



Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

Figure 4: Device Access by Race or Ethnicity



Source: ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

2023 statewide workshop participants described the need for culturally relevant curriculum for digital literacy and higher quality connections in communities of color.

**Results from the Digital Equity Public Survey also show the following barriers for members of racial or ethnic minorities:**

- **Lack of tech support or assistance:** 36% of respondents did not have or know someone who could help them if they had trouble with their computers or internet.
- **Lack of confidence with completing online activities:** only 37% of respondents were completely confident with going online for health care or telehealth, and 36% with searching or applying for benefits or resources online.
- **Lack of online safety resources:** Only 52% of respondents had tools or resources to stay safe online.
- **Lack of online government resource accessibility:** Only 35% reported that online government services were very accessible.

# VETERANS

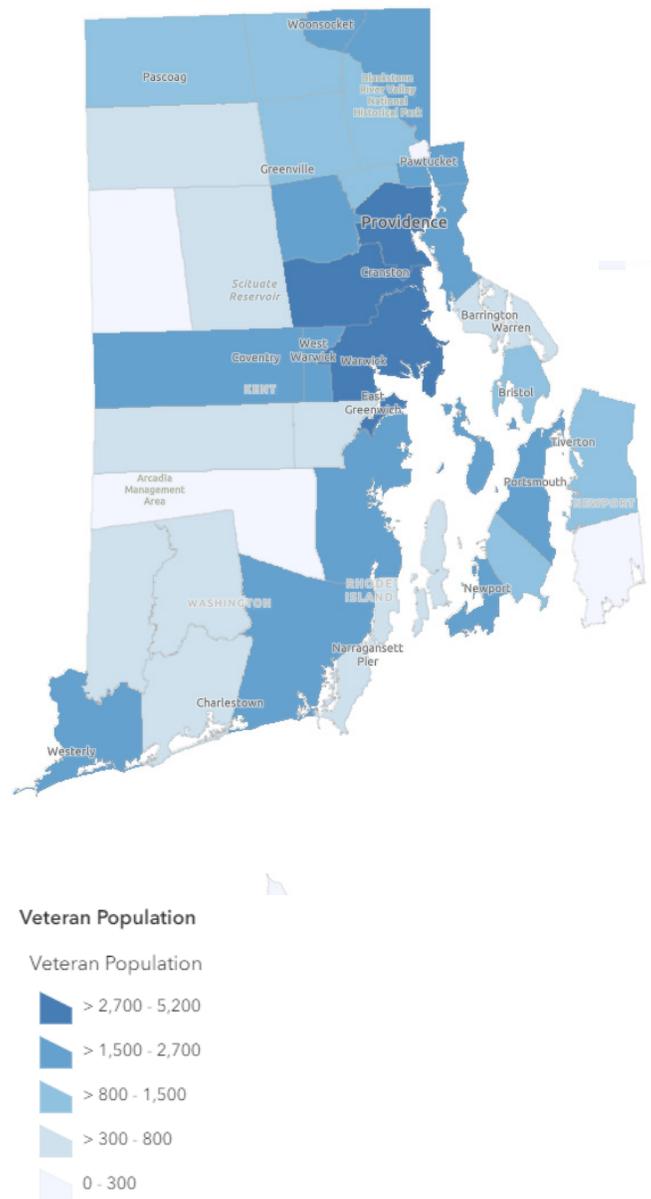
Among Rhode Island's veterans, 67% are aging individuals, 28% have a disability, and 25% reside in a rural municipality.

Compared to statewide averages, veterans have lower broadband subscription rates (72% compared to 78%) and home desktop/laptop rates (77% compared to 80%).

Statewide workshop participants and veteran-serving organizations interviewed described the need for tech support and group classes specifically for veterans to offer peer-to-peer support, more digital skills training for civilian job opportunities, and subject matter expertise in Veterans Affairs' online benefits and health services. They also cited the need for raising awareness and training of telehealth and assistive technologies, especially for disabled or wounded veterans.

Since the majority of Rhode Island's veterans are also aging individuals, they face similar barriers such as lacking digital literacy and having inadequate access to broadband or devices.

Map 9: Veteran Population by Municipality

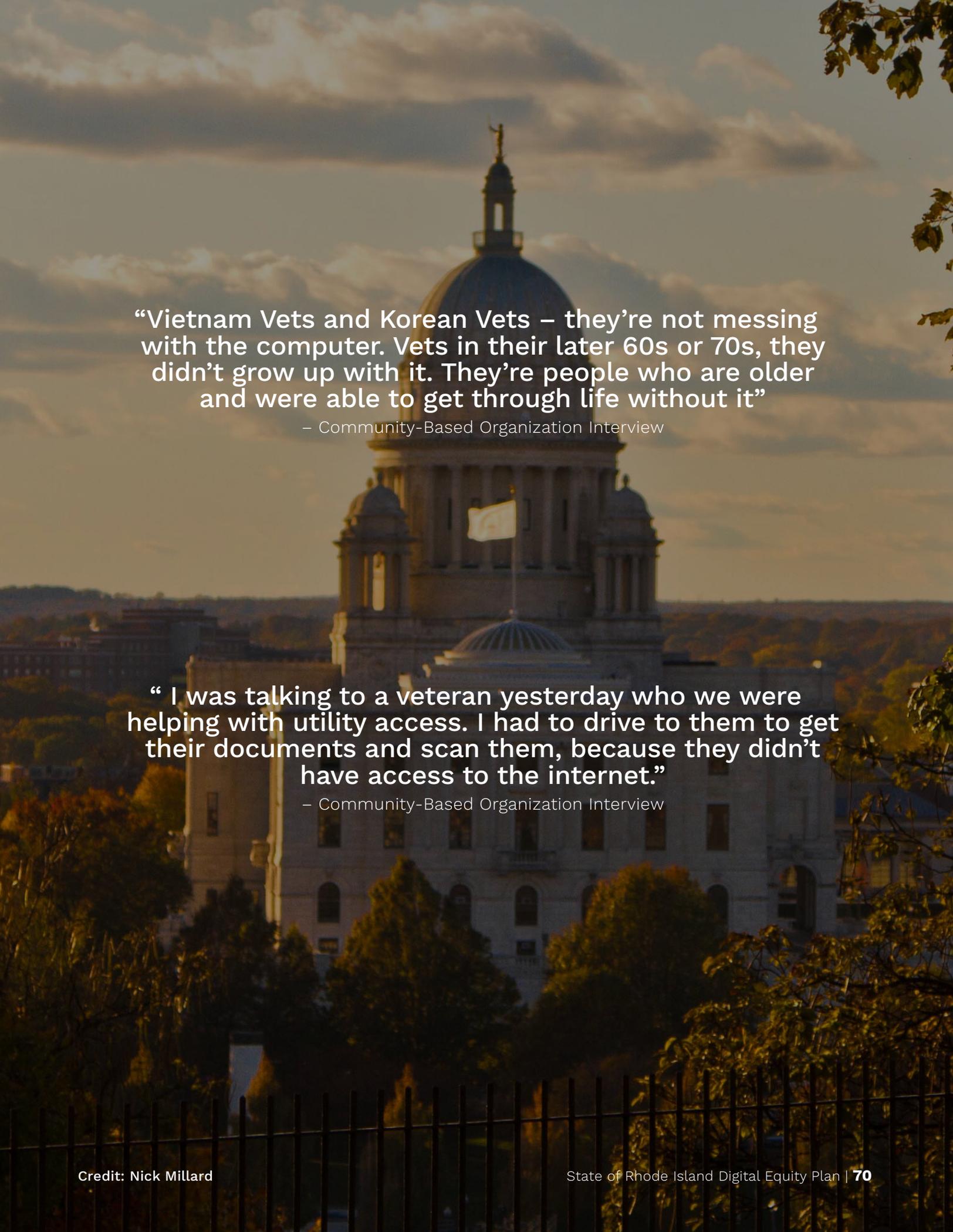


**Results from the Digital Equity Public Survey also show the following barriers for veterans:**

- **Inadequate internet service:** 28% of respondents reported that their internet service does not work well enough to meet their needs.
- **Concerns about internet safety:** 62% of respondents were very concerned.

“Yes, I’ve seen barriers. We have a broad range of older vets and younger vets. Once you get past 60, they don’t want anything to do with computers. Depending on who you’re working with, it limits what you can do, like telehealth. People with limited ability to get around or who don’t have a car, they’re a good candidate for telehealth, but they don’t have the equipment or know-how to use it”

– Community-Based Organization Interview

A photograph of the Rhode Island State Capitol building, featuring a prominent dome and a statue on top. The building is set against a sunset sky with soft, golden light. The foreground shows some trees and a fence.

**“Vietnam Vets and Korean Vets – they’re not messing with the computer. Vets in their later 60s or 70s, they didn’t grow up with it. They’re people who are older and were able to get through life without it”**

– Community-Based Organization Interview

**“ I was talking to a veteran yesterday who we were helping with utility access. I had to drive to them to get their documents and scan them, because they didn’t have access to the internet.”**

– Community-Based Organization Interview

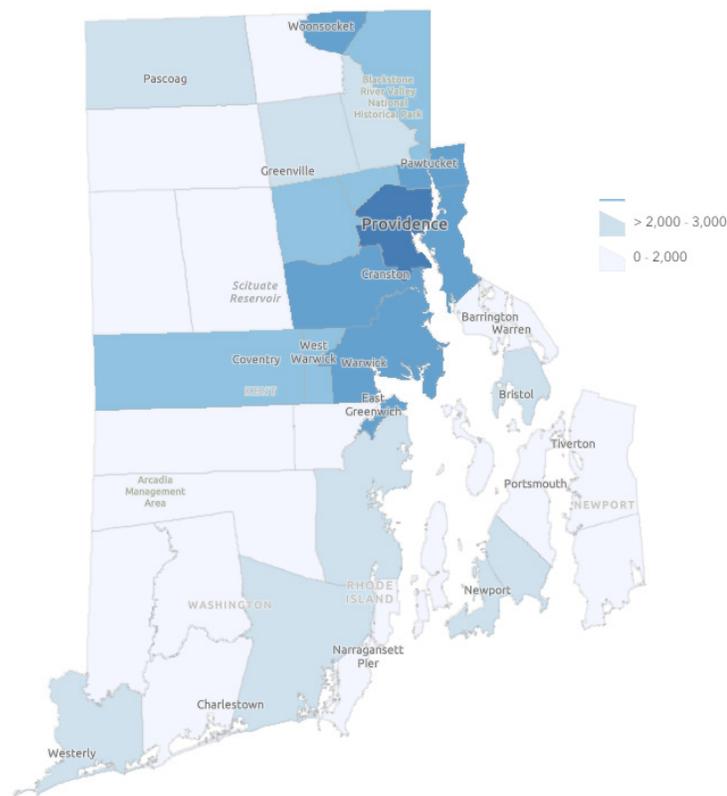
# INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Among Rhode Islanders with disabilities, 57% are aging individuals and 28% are in covered households.

Compared to statewide averages, individuals with disabilities have lower broadband subscription rates (63% compared to 78%) and home desktop/laptop rates (62% compared to 80%).

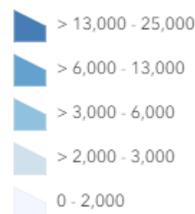
Statewide workshop participants cited multiple needs and barriers for individuals with disabilities, including the cost of accessible devices (including smartphones with user-friendly accessibility features), the need for appropriate assistive technologies, the lack of accessibility of online public services and resources, and the need for transportation to locations for trainings and basic access to technology. A need for digital navigators and trainers familiar with assistive technology and accessibility features in devices was also identified.

Map 10: Population Living with a Disability by Municipality



## Population with Disability

Population With Disability



## Results from the Digital Equity Public Survey also show the following barriers for individuals with disabilities:

- **Inadequate home internet service:** 28% of respondents reported that their internet service does not work well enough to meet their needs.
- **Lack of confidence with completing online activities:** among respondents with disabilities, only 31% were completely confident with searching or applying for job online, 29% with going online for health care or telehealth, and 24% with searching or applying for benefits or resources online.
- **Lack of online safety resources:** Only 44% of respondents had tools or resources to stay safe online.
- **Lack of online government resource accessibility:** Only 23% reported that online government services were very accessible.

**“The need for appropriate adaptive tech and educators who know how to use it.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

**“Non-disabled folks don’t learn or implement digital accessibility accommodations.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

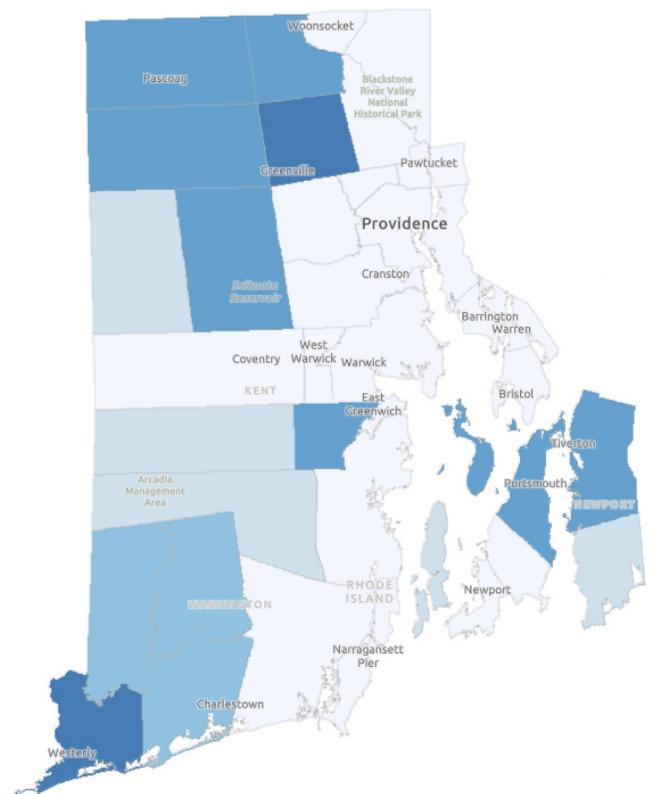
# INDIVIDUALS WHO PRIMARILY RESIDE IN A RURAL AREA

Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) classifies 18 of Rhode Island’s 39 municipalities as rural.<sup>34</sup> Among residents of these municipalities, 29% are aging individuals.

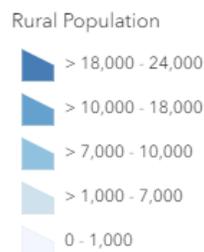
Individuals residing in rural areas have high overall dissatisfaction with the quality and affordability of their current internet service, with only 16% reporting that their service is affordable and 67% reporting dissatisfaction with their service.<sup>35</sup>

Stakeholders cited the lack of high-quality internet connectivity as the main barrier to digital equity for rural residents, impacting their ability to access employment, education, and health services. Individuals from rural municipalities emphasized the need for improved broadband infrastructure, with strong support for both fiber to the premises and wireless technologies.

Map 11: Rural Population by Municipality



## Rural Population



34 RIDOH uses both population density and population size to define rural communities in Rhode Island. Refer to Defining Rural Rhode Island: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/definitions/2022Rural-definition.pdf>

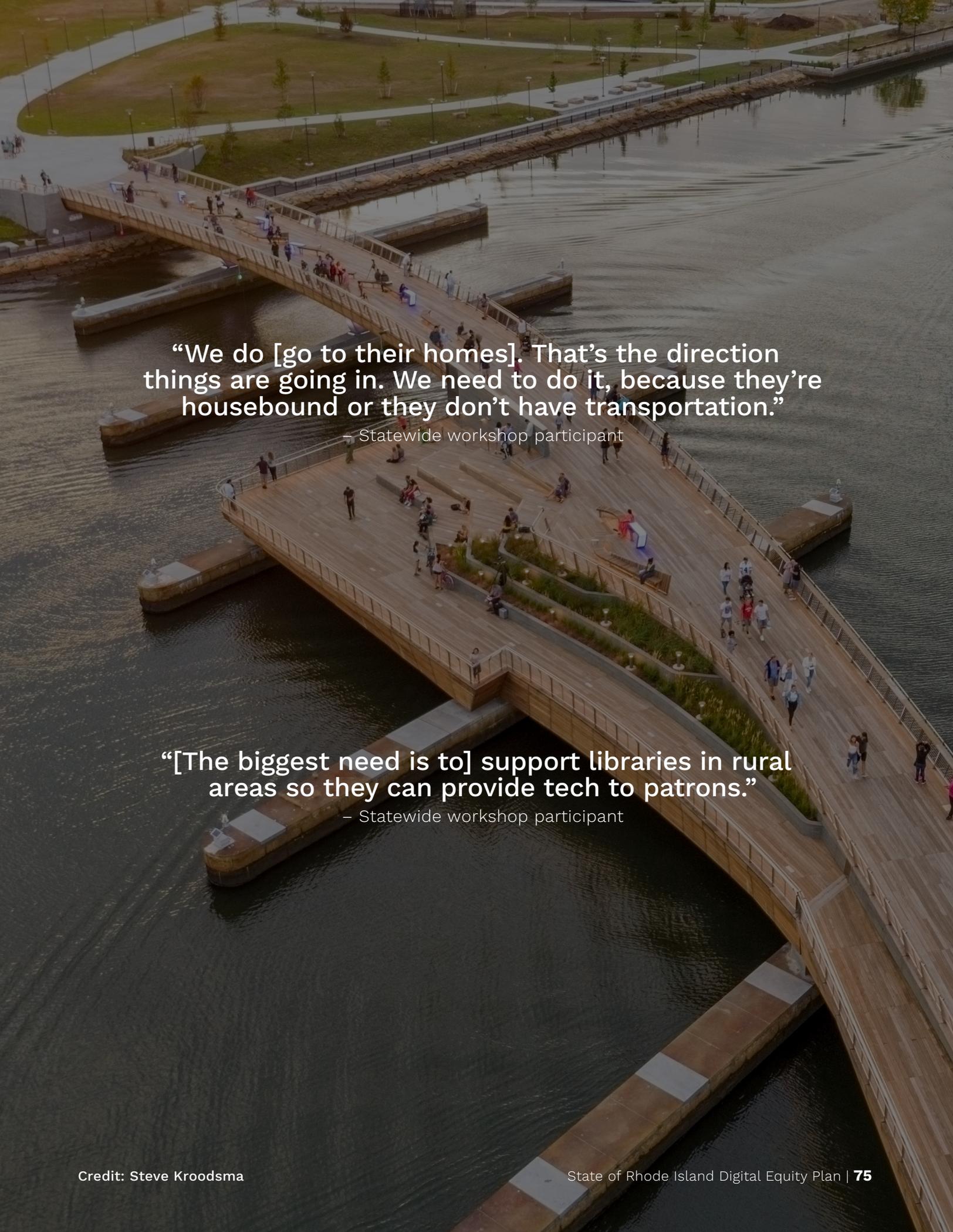
35 RI Internet Connectivity Survey

Results from the Digital Equity Public Survey also show that the lack of online government resource accessibility is a barrier for rural residents, with only 37% of respondents reporting that online government services were very accessible.

**“Rural is not defined by geographic remoteness in Rhode Island but by density. Rural areas have much more limited access to digital services.”**

– Community-Based Organization Interviewee

Challenges with transportation and the lack of capacity in rural libraries, such as limited staffing and hours, are also barriers for rural residents to access digital inclusion services.



**“We do [go to their homes]. That’s the direction things are going in. We need to do it, because they’re housebound or they don’t have transportation.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

**“[The biggest need is to] support libraries in rural areas so they can provide tech to patrons.”**

– Statewide workshop participant

Table 4: Summary of Barriers to Digital Equity

Covered Population	Broadband Availability and Affordability	Access to Devices and Technical Support	Digital Literacy	Online Privacy and Cyber-security	Online Accessibility of Public Resources
<b>All</b>	Affordability and reliability of broadband service	Affordability of laptops and desktops Reliance on smartphones limits access to online services, especially distance learning	Need for more training options and resources to meet the needs of each Covered Population (e.g., more 1-on-1 training and multi-skill level classes) Childcare and transportation barriers	Significant concerns about online safety and cybersecurity Need for improved cybersecurity education	Accessibility and usability challenges with online public resources, especially the process of completing online applications
<b>Covered households</b>		Device affordability, including upkeep of devices and maintaining borrowed devices	Lack of confidence with online activities. Lack of connectivity and devices, and challenges such as housing and food insecurity, are barriers to learning digital skills	Lack of online safety resources	
<b>Individuals with a language barrier</b>		Frustration with devices becoming outdated Lack of technical assistance and support	Lack of confidence with online activities. Language barriers - the need for translation of digital skills training and materials Lack of connectivity and devices are barriers to participation in distance learning	Security concerns with using free wi-fi Lack of online safety resources	

<b>Covered Population</b>	<b>Broadband Availability and Affordability</b>	<b>Access to Devices and Technical Support</b>	<b>Digital Literacy</b>	<b>Online Privacy and Cyber-security</b>	<b>Online Accessibility of Public Resources</b>
<b>Aging individuals</b>	Inadequate home internet service.	Lack of technical assistance and support	Need for more trainings and support for aging individuals, focusing on digital confidence for independent living Lack of confidence with online activities	Aging individuals are disproportionately impacted by cybercrime Need for more trainings and awareness on online privacy, safety, and cybersecurity	
<b>Incarcerated individuals</b>	Limited access to broadband	Limited access to computers	Lack of reliable access to computers, broadband, and training to develop digital skills and confidence for successful re-entry		
<b>Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group</b>	Need for higher quality connections in communities of color	Lack of technical assistance or support	Lack of confidence with online activities Need for culturally relevant digital skills training and curriculum for communities of color	Lack of online safety resources	
<b>Veterans</b>	Inadequate home internet service	Need for awareness and training on assistive technologies and devices for telehealth	Lack of digital skills training and support specifically designed for veterans		

<b>Covered Population</b>	<b>Broadband Availability and Affordability</b>	<b>Access to Devices and Technical Support</b>	<b>Digital Literacy</b>	<b>Online Privacy and Cyber-security</b>	<b>Online Accessibility of Public Resources</b>
<b>Individuals with disabilities</b>	Inadequate home internet service	Affordability of accessible devices Need for appropriate assistive technologies	Lack of confidence with online activities Need for trainers and digital navigators who are familiar with assistive technology and accessibility features	Lack of online safety resources	
<b>Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area</b>	Need for higher quality connections and improved infrastructure		Lack of capacity at rural libraries, such as limited staffing and hours, limits access to training and digital inclusion services		

# Community Stories



I'm from Afghanistan and a proud permanent resident of the United States of America, on my way to becoming a citizen. I was an interpreter for the US military in Afghanistan for over 10 years. When I first arrived in Rhode Island in 2021, I knew that I needed a computer to achieve my goals. Even as someone who speaks four languages and is computer literate, getting **a computer was a crucial need** for me and my children. I'm most concerned about my fellow Afghan family members and friends that have settled across Rhode Island. They are struggling—they face **language and cultural barriers, lack of employment, skills and education** and it is difficult meeting basic life needs. We need to do more in Rhode Island so that people who can't afford the internet or a computer or have digital skills can easily have access to such resources so they can also achieve their goals."

– Amin Faqiry



# 4

## Stakeholder Engagement

### 4.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The 2023 Rhode Island Broadband and Digital Equity Strategic Plan sets the following principles for thoughtful stakeholder and community engagement:

- Meet communities where they are
- Enable participatory planning
- Cultivate strong implementation partnerships

Based on these principles, the Corporation developed a coordinated broadband and digital equity stakeholder engagement strategy that addresses both DEA and BEAD requirements. This strategy ensures that equity for Rhode Islanders is the central component of all our activities,

analyses, and assessments. Initial results of the Corporation stakeholder engagement strategy have yielded critical quantitative and qualitative data for a robust, inclusive Digital Equity Plan.

Rhode Island’s stakeholder engagement model is focused on deploying focused promotion and participation strategies to inform and invite participation from key stakeholder groups. The Corporation has prioritized engagement with unserved, underserved, and Covered Population residents in its planning process.

The Corporation’s full-time outreach coordinator leads ongoing stakeholder engagement.

## 4.2 KEY PARTNERS

The Corporation categorizes stakeholders into four categories: government institutions, community organizations, private sector stakeholders, and the broader public. Grouping stakeholder types allows the Corporation to tailor outreach and engagement initiatives to each group’s broadband and digital equity interests. Customizing engagement content and form to each stakeholder type enhances participant experience.

Stakeholder Category	Description	Entities Engaged	Engagement Type
<b>Government Institutions</b>	The Corporation relies on these stakeholders to convene outreach and engagement events in their respective communities. These stakeholders understand the issue because they are informed of federal policies and because digital inequities deeply impact their constituents’ lives. They serve as champions of the message of digital equity and use their platforms to communicate it to the public and private sectors alike.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State agencies, including RI DOT, RI Housing, RIDE, RIDLT, RIOPC, RIDHS, and others</li> <li>• Municipal governments</li> <li>• The Narragansett Indian Tribe<sup>36</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Digital Equity Working Group</li> <li>• Local government roundtables</li> <li>• Meetings hosted by municipalities and councilmembers</li> <li>• Statewide events, including the Broadband Summit and statewide workshops</li> <li>• Session at the biannual League of Cities and Towns meetings and educational sessions</li> <li>• Updates at the monthly municipal leaders’ call hosted by the Governor’s Office</li> <li>• State government consultations</li> <li>• Virtual and in-person meetings</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2.3.6, the Corporation has invited the Narragansett Indian Tribe to a formal consultation on how leaders from the state and the Tribe can enhance collaboration in both broadband and digital equity initiatives for the Tribe. Following the public comment period of Rhode Island’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Initial Proposal, the Corporation is in contact with a representative of the Tribe to help coordinate this consultation. The Narragansett Indian Tribe, which is the only federally recognized tribe in Rhode Island, has approximately 2,400 registered members and governs a reservation covering 1800 acres in the southern part of the state.

<b>Community Organizations</b>	Community organizations interact most directly with Covered Populations and the broader public, and often have the most responsibility for providing direct services and programming.	Includes organizations that the NTIA considers Community Anchor Institutions, such as schools, libraries, health clinics, health centers, hospitals or other medical providers, public safety entities, institutions of higher education, public housing organizations, or community support organizations that facilitate greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including Covered Populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Digital Equity Working Group</li> <li>• Engagement with leading community organizations, including AARP and United Way of Rhode Island</li> <li>• Targeted community workshops</li> <li>• Roundtable discussions</li> <li>• Interviews with community leaders and key community organizations</li> <li>• Virtual and in-person meetings</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>
<b>Private Sector</b>	These are often broadband service providers or system designers, but also can encompass employers of skilled trades. The private broadband industry is a key driver of digital equity and has been included in various outreach and engagement initiatives.	ISPs, fiber optic cabling installation contractors, fiber optic equipment manufacturers, local Rhode Island businesses, subject matter experts, and other private companies, trade groups, and organizations. Also included in this group are private educational institutions and workforce training providers that are not nonprofits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Broadband Advisory Council</li> <li>• Attendees of the Broadband Summit in June 2023</li> <li>• Recipients of all the Corporation newsletters and emails</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>
<b>Broader Public</b>	Public participation in planning processes improves decision-making. Lived experience and participatory planning are foundational to the Corporation's broadband and digital equity program development.	Rhode Islanders, including members of Covered Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community meetings and listening sessions</li> <li>• In-person and virtual events</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Roundtable discussions</li> <li>• The Corporation newsletters, emails, and social media marketing</li> </ul>

## 4.3 METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

### 4.3.1 Surveys

As part of the survey data collection effort, the Corporation has requested input from Rhode Island's government agencies, nonprofits, experts, practitioners, funders, researchers, community organizers, and community members through three surveys:

- **[Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey](#)** focusing on agencies and organizations, to understand where digital equity services are offered, the types of programs and services offered, and the populations targeted. Thus far, responses from 137 organizations have been received.
- **RI Internet Connectivity Survey** of residents to collect data about their access to the internet, service speeds and satisfaction, and affordability. Thus far, 743 responses from 727 unique addresses have been received.
- **Digital Equity Public Survey** of residents to assess the State's baseline for each of the five Measurable Objective categories and major barriers to digital equity, both statewide and for each Covered Population. Complete responses were received from 744 residents, of which 1.3% were submitted in Spanish.

### 4.3.2 Events and Listening Sessions

The Corporation has hosted several events and listening sessions for bidirectional engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and the broader public on digital equity and broadband planning. These include:

- **June 2023 Broadband Summit:** Hosted by the Corporation, NTIA,

and the RI League of Cities and Towns, which gathered over 170 community leaders and stakeholders in an in-person event with a virtual option to attend. The key purpose of this event was to inform participants about Rhode Island's statewide broadband and digital equity initiative to leverage historic levels of federal funding to close the digital divide in the state. This event brought together partners from across the state to discuss ways to collaborate efficiently and effectively and utilize federal funding to close the digital divide.

- **Listening Sessions:** The Corporation works with community groups to host in-person and virtual listening sessions to target Covered Populations and those who serve them. Often held in conjunction with the Corporation's ACP outreach efforts, and many in partnership with the Providence Public Library as another ACP Outreach Grant subawardee, these sessions informed the Corporation's formulation of Digital Equity priorities and design of future programs. Over 40 sessions were held in 2023, at locations including community meetings at wards across the City of Providence, public libraries across the state, Mt. Hope High School (Bristol Warren Regional School District), the West End Food Pantry, Farmers Markets (where SNAP is accepted), and Warren Housing Authority Properties, among many others.

- **Digital Inclusion Week 2023:** The Corporation hosted 13 events across Rhode Island from October 2-6, 2023, as part of the national Digital Inclusion Week. Some events were hosted by members of the Digital Equity Working Group (DEWG), with a goal to spread awareness of resources and to recognize the community partners working toward digital equity.
- **November 2023 Statewide Workshops:** The Corporation hosted two workshops, one held in-person and one virtually, to collaborate with stakeholders on developing key elements of the Digital Equity Plan. Through interactive sessions and discussions, stakeholders provided input on digital equity needs, assets, and potential solutions in each of the five DEA Measurable Objective categories in alignment with state priorities.

### 4.3.3 Statewide Digital Equity Working Group (DEWG)

The DEWG is a multistakeholder group that provides input and guidance to the Corporation and helps develop targeted strategies to address digital equity in Rhode Island. The group meets every two weeks to plan events, discuss findings, and to support each other’s work. The DEWG’s specific functions include helping to gather stakeholder engagement, input, and feedback on BEAD and Digital Equity Plans, and facilitating coordination of state agency partners, community institutions, private partners, and Covered Populations around the measurable objectives and key outcome areas. There are currently 33 members of the DEWG, including representatives from local government, state agencies, and community-based organizations.

Member	Organization
Peter Asen	RI HUD
Zoila Bernal	Community Libraries of Providence
Christopher Bourret	RI Department of Education
Lina Bravo	Providence Public Library
Natalie Chasse	RI Health Equity Zones
John Colantoni	Office of RI Governor McKee
Megan Conway	East Bay CAP – Health Equity Zones
Claudia Cordon	Progreso Latino
Sarah Cote	OneCranston Health Equity Zone
Melly Cruz	City of Providence
Amanda DeGrace	Providence Housing Authority
Jayne DelSesto	RI Department of Corrections
Genesis Diaz	Genesis Center

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Kate Felder	The Corporation
Kimberly Ferrante	Providence VA Medical Center
Ed Garcia	Cranston Public Libraries
Carmela Geer	King Edward House
Deborah Hall	RI HUD
Joanne Kerwin	Lifespan
Bethel Kibebe	RI HUD
Kate Michaud	Town of Warren
Matthew Netto	AARP
Debra Page-Trim	Town of Barrington
Nina Pande	Skills for RI's Future
Kristen Read	Easy Bay CAP - Health Equity Zones
Olivia Read	The Corporation
Stephanie Shea	Community Libraries of Providence
Tommy Sheehan	Hi-Lo Neighborhood Association
Courtney Smith	United Way of RI
Cheryl Space	Community Libraries of Providence
Alexandra Steinberg	ONE Neighborhood Builders
Ivy Swinski	Com CAP
Jacob Tonseth	RI Community Food Bank
John Valletta	Ocean State Center for Independent Living

#### **4.3.4 Broadband Advisory Council (BAC)**

Created by the Rhode Island General Assembly, the BAC is a nine-member group designed to advise the Executive Office of Commerce and the Corporation on broadband implementation efforts undertaken by the agencies. It meets quarterly and reports annually to the General Assembly on its findings and recommendations, advises on broadband implementation efforts undertaken by the agency, and invites telecommunications/IT experts and

broadband stakeholders to inform the committee. The BAC provides written reports to the Speaker of the House and Senate President on the status of Rhode Island broadband efforts and the level and type of funding obligation and expenditure by awardee through any grant program. BAC members include representatives from private sector ISPs, nonprofit organizations, public housing authorities, and state agencies.

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Ernie Almonte	RI League of Cities and Towns
William Fazioli	RI Infrastructure Bank
Rhonda Mitchell	Newport Housing Authority
Mark Preston	Cox Communications
Armand Randolph	RI Emergency Management Agency
Gary Rebelo	Northern RI Boys and Girls Club
Deborah Ruggiero	DR Communications Group
Lauren Slocum	Central RI Chamber of Commerce
Brian Thorn, Chair	RI Commerce Corporation

#### **4.3.5 Skills for Rhode Island’s Future**

A statewide workforce development nonprofit organization, Skills for Rhode Island’s Future (SkillsRI) works to close the Rhode Island’s workforce skills gap, drive business growth, and support unemployed or underemployed Rhode Islanders.

In 2022, SkillsRI spearheaded a process funded by the National Governor’s Association to prepare a set of recommendations and incubated ideas to support the state’s efforts to bridge the digital divide and create digital equity for all Rhode Islanders. This effort included a core team comprising nonprofit and state leaders, including RI Commerce, and produced significant data and community input that have been integrated into the Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan.

#### **4.3.6 Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns (the League)**

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns (the League) is a non-partisan advocacy and membership organization representing all thirty-nine (39) municipalities across Rhode Island. The League represents municipal interests at the state level, fosters collaboration between cities and towns, and provides critical resources to promote our members’ success. Its members include mayors; elected officials; and municipal managers, administrators, and employees throughout Rhode Island. The League co-hosted the June 2023 Broadband Summit alongside the Corporation and the NTIA.

### 4.3.7 Public Comment

The Corporation is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan. From January 9 to February 8, 2024, the draft plan was posted for public comment. During this time, the Corporation continued its stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts to raise awareness of the public comment process. The Corporation worked with the Digital Equity Working Group and Broadband Advisory Council to inform stakeholder networks of the draft plan and public comment opportunity and conducted additional outreach through its extensive stakeholder email distribution list, social media channels, and a webinar.

As the result of these efforts, the Corporation received 460 comments. A summary of comments received and how they were addressed is available in the Appendix.

## 4.4 ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Rhode Island's foundation of inclusive stakeholder collaboration, engagement, and participatory planning will enable the Corporation to continue its stakeholder engagement efforts throughout plan implementation. Among statewide workshop participants, the majority of post-event survey respondents prefer receiving updates through emails and newsletters (67%), attending in-person workshops and events (63%), and attending webinars (56%). Based on these data, the Corporation will continue its email newsletters and webinars, and partner with key digital equity groups to organize Digital Inclusion Week events annually.

As detailed in Chapter 5's Implementation Strategy, the Corporation plans to transition the DEWG to a statewide digital equity coalition, with expanded membership and representation from local networks of digital equity organizations, residents, and additional Covered Population-serving organizations. DEWG meetings and events will provide an open venue for the Corporation to share updates and collaborate with stakeholders on community input and continuous feedback during implementation. To maximize accessibility, meetings will be offered in hybrid formats with in-person and virtual options and will be held in various locations throughout the state to allow stakeholders to visit program sites.

This coalition will play an important role in aligning the Corporation's work with efforts emerging from stakeholders and digital equity organizations, which will support the implementation of this Plan and the development of Rhode Island's ecosystem.

The Corporation will continue to prioritize in-person stakeholder engagement to ensure effective feedback is received from Rhode Islanders not using the internet.<sup>37</sup> Ongoing engagement will also be facilitated by state agencies, libraries, and other core digital equity institutions through their standard programming; statewide and regional bodies, including the coalition, will ensure that these activities keep the implementation of the Digital Equity Plan on track while collecting invaluable input from community members.

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<sup>37</sup> The Corporation updated this section to reflect a public comment calling for continuing resources for in-person engagement.

# Community Stories



The Digital Equity Working Group shows **the power of partnership and collaboration** to serve our residents. One example: RI Commerce received a call from Celia at OneCranston HEZ asking for assistance in enrolling a resident in the Affordable Connectivity Program. For that, we contacted our partners at the Providence Public Library. Celia also had some housing-related questions for her resident, so we contacted our partners at Providence Housing Authority. Because of our active digital equity working group, one email got this resident set up with free internet service, all of her questions answered, and in-person assistance in her native language in less than 24 hours.

**Thank you** to all of our working group members for thoughtful, reliable service in our communities. This is how we go from talking about digital equity to making it so.



Community partners meeting with NTIA | Credit: Providence Housing Authority

# 5

## Implementation

### 5.1 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND KEY ACTIVITIES

In anticipation of the State Capacity Grant Program NOFO, the Corporation is identifying key strategies to address Rhode Island’s digital equity needs. With the current limited funding knowledge, the Corporation has identified strategies and activities that align with State’s vision for equity and prosperity for all State residents (Rhode Island 2030) and the Learn365 Initiative. Our final implementation strategy will be based upon the funding award and its requirements (Note: the activities below are under consideration and will be prioritized and finalized after funding is announced).

The Corporation has identified key strategies and activities for achieving Rhode Island’s digital equity objectives, addressing barriers experienced by Covered Populations and bridging gaps in current state and local efforts. Our plan aligns with the state’s vision for equity and prosperity for all state residents (Rhode Island 2030), the Learn365 Initiative, and existing programs and local ecosystems. The Corporation will engage with state agencies, partner entities, and other organizations to implement this plan. As discussed in [Chapter 2.3.6](#), the Corporation will also continue to engage in consultation with the Narragansett Indian Tribe on how the state and the Tribe can collaborate on digital equity implementation.

Through the Digital Equity Act, Rhode Island will receive a State Digital Equity Capacity Grant to support the implementation of these strategies. During implementation, the Corporation will explore ways to form connections between Digital Equity Act-funded projects and BEAD-funded projects in order to embed digital equity into the fabric of our infrastructure strategy.<sup>38</sup> The Corporation will refine and finalize these strategies and activities after the federal Capacity Grant awards and requirements have been announced.

<sup>38</sup> The Corporation updated text to reflect a public comment encouraging DEA and BEAD proposals to be connected in order to ensure physical infrastructure is supported and the Plan is building a framework for digital inclusion and empowerment.

## Summary of Strategies and Core Activities

STRATEGY	CORE ACTIVITIES
<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities.</p>	<p>1.1. Provide technical assistance for digital skills integration into workforce training, education, small business support, and Covered Population-serving systems statewide.</p> <p>1.2. Invest in existing Covered Population-serving ecosystems to ensure all geographic regions (five counties) have access to comprehensive digital inclusion services.</p> <p>1.3. Incorporate online privacy and cybersecurity skill-building in all digital inclusion services.</p> <p>1.4. Explore new family-sustaining career opportunities for Covered Population residents to deliver digital inclusion services.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> Increase access to affordable, high-quality, large-screen, internet-enabled devices and technical support for those devices that meets residents’ needs.</p>	<p>2.1. Identify and support partner organizations to provide devices, preparation and refurbishment, and help desk and technical support.</p> <p>2.2. Deploy devices through Covered Population-serving organizations and networks.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b> Build partnerships and coordinate funding for affordable high-quality broadband service for Covered Populations.</p>	<p>3.1. Explore the use of broadband infrastructure funds and other state funding sources to provide a statewide affordable housing broadband program.</p> <p>3.2. Coordinate with RIDOC on efforts to bring connectivity to the state’s correctional facilities.</p> <p>3.3. Explore funding to sustain ACP or other affordable broadband options.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b> Leverage digital equity ecosystem to support Rhode Island’s Ongoing Digital Government Initiatives.</p>	<p>4.1. Leverage digital inclusion services to provide online public resource assistance and feedback.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 5:</b> Plan for long-term sustainability and continuity of services.</p>	<p>5.1. Sustain and expand the state’s Digital Equity Working Group, transforming it into a coalition to advance digital equity for Rhode Islanders.</p> <p>5.2. Leverage partnerships to integrate digital equity activities within existing regional, local, and statewide programs and initiatives.</p> <p>5.3. Evaluate digital equity programs for impact on state priorities.</p>



## STRATEGY 1:

# Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state's priorities.

More digital skill training opportunities are necessary for achieving the state's priorities. Individuals with disabilities and aging individuals have the need for trainings on topics such as utilizing accessibility features on their devices or setting up and using smart home technologies to support independent living, while veterans can benefit from group trainings for peer-to-peer support and help navigating online VA benefits. Multiple Covered Populations and stakeholder groups, especially aging individuals, parents, and employers, expressed the need for more training on online privacy and cybersecurity protections. Across the board, stakeholders have expressed the need for trainings to include:

- Flexible hours and proactive methods of delivery (including 1-on-1 training, home-based support, and remote/virtual/on-demand options.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The Corporation updated text to reflect Digital Equity Public Survey results and public comment calling for responsiveness, proactivity, and diversity of training options in assisting individuals seeking digital skills support.

- Curriculum and instruction that are culturally competent, in multiple languages, accessible to individuals with disabilities, and inclusive of assistive technology and accessibility features.<sup>40</sup>
- A diverse range of skill-building with pathways from basic to advanced skills for employment, education, and small business opportunities.
- Online privacy and cybersecurity measures, especially for aging individuals and parents.

The Corporation's strategy is to support and invest in existing Covered Population-serving ecosystems and educational and workforce development programs to ensure individuals have the digital skills needed to achieve their goals.

<sup>40</sup> The Corporation updated text to reflect a public comments calling for culturally competent services and accessible training.

## Objective and KPIs Addressed:

**Objective 1: Digital Skills and Online Safety**—ensure all Rhode Island Covered Populations have the skills and support needed to utilize technology effectively and safely to improve their quality of life, access economic opportunities, and achieve their goals.

## KPIs:

- Number of highest-need Covered Population residents trained in digital skills programs for foundational skills
- Number of programs providing training on digital skills related to state priorities such as health, education, and workforce development
- Number of training programs for online privacy and cybersecurity.

## Covered Populations Addressed: All

1. Low income individuals (Covered Households)
2. Aging individuals
3. Incarcerated individuals
4. Veterans
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Individuals with a language barrier
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
8. Individuals who reside in a rural area

## CORE ACTIVITIES

### 1.1. Provide technical assistance for digital skills integration into workforce training, education, small business support, and Covered Population-serving systems statewide.

The Corporation will evaluate the development of a technical assistance program to help the public secondary education system, workforce development organizations, housing providers, and Covered Population-serving organizations integrate digital skills training into their services. The Corporation will also integrate digital skills training into its existing technical assistance programs that support small businesses, including those designed to support Covered Population-owned businesses. The technical assistance program may include standardized curriculum and resources for trainers.<sup>41</sup>

#### Partners to engage:

- Adult education providers
- Community-based organizations serving Covered Populations, such as:
  - BIPOC-serving organizations
  - Community centers
  - Immigrant and refugee-serving organizations

<sup>41</sup> The Corporation updated this activity to reflect a public comment's recommendation.

- Organizations serving individuals currently or formerly incarcerated
- Organizations serving individuals with disabilities
- Organizations serving rural residents
- Senior centers
- Veteran-serving organizations
- Labor organizations
- Postsecondary education institutions
- Public and affordable housing providers
- Public libraries
- School districts
- Small business support organizations
- Workforce agencies and organizations
- Government Agencies (e.g., DLT and DHS)

## **1.2. Invest in existing Covered Population-serving ecosystems to ensure all geographic regions (five counties) have access to comprehensive digital inclusion services.**

Rhode Island has a rich ecosystem of organizations and programs serving Covered Populations with digital inclusion services. These organizations are trusted by community members and offer programs for digital equity within a broader set of wraparound services.

The Corporation will design a plan to support and invest sustainably in organizations across all five counties to help increase their capacity, reach, effectiveness, and range of digital inclusion services, including digital navigation, foundational digital skill building, on-ramping to advanced digital skills and credentialing programs, and access to devices.

To address stakeholder concerns and gaps in existing services, these services will be designed to include flexible hours and methods of delivery, culturally competent curriculum that is available in multiple languages, and a diverse range of skill-building from basic to advanced skills, including the use of assistive technology and accessibility features. The Corporation will explore the right balance between investing in new and innovative programs and expanding and sustaining existing programs.<sup>42</sup>

The Corporation updated the text in Activity 1.2 in response to 352 comments regarding the need for sustainable investment in digital skills programming, particularly at libraries.

<sup>42</sup> The Corporation updated the activity to reflect public comments calling for investments to sustain existing digital equity programs, while considering new and innovative strategies.

### Partners to engage:

- Adult education providers
- Community-based organizations serving Covered Populations, such as:
  - BIPOC-serving organizations
  - Community centers
  - Immigrant and refugee-serving organizations
  - Organizations serving individuals currently or formerly incarcerated
  - Organizations serving individuals with disabilities
  - Organizations serving rural residents
  - Senior centers
  - Veteran-serving organizations
- Health Equity Zones
- Public libraries
- Workforce agencies and organizations
- Existing digital equity service providers (including Providence Public Library, OSCIL, and University of Rhode Island’s Cyber Seniors program)

### 1.3. Incorporate online privacy and cybersecurity skill-building in digital inclusion services.

Responding to the needs of Rhode Islanders, especially aging individuals and parents within Covered Populations, trainings on online privacy and cybersecurity will be incorporated throughout Rhode Island’s digital equity ecosystem and all digital inclusion services.<sup>43</sup>

### Partners to engage:

- All partners engaged through Activities 1.1 and 1.2.

### 1.4. Explore new family-sustaining career opportunities for Covered Population residents to deliver digital inclusion services.

The Corporation will coordinate among digital inclusion service providers, workforce development organizations, labor organizations, career and technical education, and postsecondary education systems to identify potential opportunities to train and prepare Covered Population residents to serve in roles such as digital navigators, digital skill trainers, device refurbishers, technical support and repair specialists, and broadband technicians.

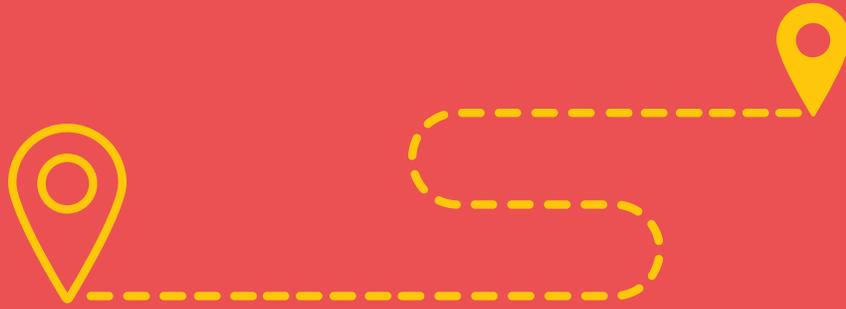
This approach expands Rhode Island’s technology talent pipeline by providing IT training, credentialing, and career opportunities to Covered Population residents, while also increasing trust within the communities they serve.

### Partners to engage:

- All partners engaged through Activities 1.1 and 1.2.
- Career and technical education programs (including those at high schools)
- Labor organizations
- ISPs

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<sup>43</sup> The Corporation updated this activity to reflect a public comment’s suggestion.



## STRATEGY 2:

# Increase access to affordable, high-quality large-screen internet enabled devices and technical support that meets residents' needs.

Devices play a vital role in digital equity, enabling individuals to fully participate in the modern economy and to harness the benefits of broadband connectivity. As detailed in [Chapter 3](#), multiple Covered Populations have significantly lower home computer access rates and much higher rates of having smartphones as their only computing device, impacting their ability to participate in vital services such as online classes, telehealth, and applying for employment. The largest barrier is the affordability of devices and repairs. While the Asset Inventory identified numerous organizations that offer computer and device access, these programs are largely designed for public device access or device lending.

More support is required to achieve the goal of 95% of Rhode Islanders owning a working, large-screen, internet-capable computer that meets their needs, especially among Covered Populations, adult education, postsecondary education, and digital skills training participants.

The Corporation will support Rhode Island organizations in developing a device ecosystem that is sustainable and leverages locally available resources and expertise. The device activities will be tailored to meet the needs of Covered Population residents, including provision of high-quality, large-screen, internet-capable devices that are paired accessible technical support and appropriate software, including assistive technology.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The Corporation updated this section to reflect public comment recommendations.

## Objective and KPIs Addressed:

**Objective 2: Device Access—prioritize Covered Populations to achieve a goal of 95% of Rhode Island residents owning an affordable, high-quality, large-screen, internet-enabled device that meets their needs.**

## KPIs:

- **Number of Covered Population-serving programs that provide devices and device technical support.**
- **% of Covered Population residents who own a large-screen, internet-enabled device.**

## Covered Populations Addressed: All

1. Low income individuals (Covered Households)
2. Aging individuals
3. Incarcerated individuals
4. Veterans
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Individuals with a language barrier
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
8. Individuals who reside in a rural area

## CORE ACTIVITIES

### **2.1. Identify and support partner organizations to provide devices, preparation and refurbishment, and help desk and technical support.**

The Corporation will develop a plan for identifying, supporting, and investing in Rhode Island organizations that can serve as device partners to source, prepare, deliver, and support new and refurbished devices. Device partners can help manage each stage of the device lifecycle and integrate workforce development into their operations, in alignment with Activity 1.4.

To implement this activity, the Corporation will look to involve organizations already offering IT training and credentialing, such as workforce development organizations, the postsecondary education system, and career and technical education programs. The Corporation will prioritize the accessibility of help desk and technical support offerings and will plan for easily accessible locations, virtual options, and culturally competent providers.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The Corporation updated this activity to reflect public comment recommendations.

### **Partners to engage:**

- Businesses
- Career and technical education programs (including those at high schools)
- Postsecondary education institutions
- Organizations specializing in technology, devices, and customer and technical support
- RI Department of Labor and Training
- Workforce agencies and organizations
- Government Agencies with workforce development programs (e.g., DLT & DHS)
- Government agencies with existing device assistance programs (e.g., ORS)

## **2.2. Deploy devices through Covered Population-serving organizations and networks.**

With the Corporation's support, device partners will coordinate device deployment with organizations serving Covered Populations and those offering other digital inclusion services throughout Rhode Island. Deployment partners will ensure devices are received and effectively utilized by residents who need them most. The Corporation plans to prioritize device deployment to support digital skills training and the state's goals in education, workforce development, health, and housing.

### **Partners to engage:**

- All partners engaged through Strategy 1 (digital skills partners).
- All partners engaged through Activity 2.1 (device partners).



## STRATEGY 3:

# Build partnerships and coordinate funding for affordable high-quality broadband service for Covered Populations.

Rhode Island’s BEAD and CPF allocations are the primary mechanisms for funding broadband expansion to unserved and underserved locations and community anchor institutions throughout the state. However, the Corporation recognizes the need for affordable, reliable, and high-quality broadband for **all Rhode Islanders**, especially Covered Populations, even for those

not technically classified as living in unserved or underserved locations. To improve broadband affordability and quality for **all Rhode Islanders**, the Corporation plans to seek out additional funding sources that could be used to expand promising broadband initiatives and sustain broadband affordability benefits.

### Objective and KPIs Addressed:

**Objective 3: Broadband—provide universal access to affordable, reliable broadband service and close broadband adoption gaps in Covered Population communities.**

#### KPIs:

- Number of unserved and underserved locations connected to broadband (through BEAD).

- Number of CAIs connected to gigabit internet (through BEAD).
- Number of public and affordable housing properties and correctional facilities connected to broadband.
- % of eligible residents enrolling in ACP or other affordable broadband benefit.
- Number of ISPs providing low-cost service plans.

## Covered Populations Addressed: All

1. Low income individuals (Covered Households)
2. Aging individuals
3. Incarcerated individuals
4. Veterans
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Individuals with a language barrier
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
8. Individuals who reside in a rural area

## CORE ACTIVITIES

### **3.1. Explore the use of broadband infrastructure funds and other state funding sources to provide a statewide affordable housing broadband program.**

Building upon Newport Housing Authority and Hi-Lo Neighborhood Association's successful model noted in [Chapter 3](#), the Corporation will explore a plan for providing free or low-cost broadband to Rhode Islanders living in public housing and US Department of Housing and Development (HUD)-assisted affordable housing properties. According to data from HUD, over 14,000 Rhode Islanders live in public housing in about 9,000 housing units, with most residents belonging to one or more Covered Populations. For example, 71% of households are extremely low-income, 55% include aging individuals, 46% are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and 29% of residents have a disability. An additional 22,000 Rhode Islanders live in project-based Section 8 housing, with similar demographics.

The Newport Housing model offers an effective and efficient approach for addressing the broadband affordability needs of covered households and other Covered Populations served by public housing at scale. The Corporation will explore the use of broadband infrastructure funds and other state funding sources to replicate the model statewide.

#### **Partners to engage:**

- Federal, state, and municipal funders
- ISPs
- Philanthropy
- Public and affordable housing providers
- Tenant associations

### **3.2. Coordinate with RIDOC on efforts to bring connectivity to the state's correctional facilities.**

The Corporation will coordinate with RIDOC to explore leveraging Rhode Island's broadband infrastructure investments for connectivity at RIDOC

facilities to increase access for incarcerated individuals. The Corporation will also explore expanding connectivity to additional organizations serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, including facilities that provide transitional and reentry services.

**Partners to engage:**

- ISPs
- Organizations serving individuals currently or formerly incarcerated
- RIDOC

### **3.3. Explore diverse and innovative options to provide affordable broadband access.**

As discussed in Chapter 3.1, the federal ACP benefit has been one of the most widely available programs to provide affordable broadband access to Rhode Islanders, with over 80,000 households in our state participating. While the Corporation has made significant strides in increasing ACP enrollment, which now exceeds the national average (48% of RI's eligible households<sup>46</sup> are enrolled compared to 42% nationally), ACP currently lacks a long-term funding source. In January 2024, the FCC began a wind-down process in anticipation of ACP funding running out by April 2024.

In response, the Corporation will explore diverse and innovative options to help ensure Rhode Islanders, especially Covered Populations with the lowest broadband adoption rates (individuals with language barriers, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, and aging individuals), will continue to have affordable broadband access. These options may include:

- Requiring or incentivizing BEAD and CPF broadband infrastructure funding recipients to provide a low-cost service offering
- Partnering with ISPs to expand and promote affordable internet service plans
- Partnering with CAIs to expand and promote hotspot programs and public wi-fi access, including through BEAD-funded upgrades
- Exploring state, federal, philanthropic and private funding sources for other affordable broadband programs
- Convening ACP outreach partners to promote new affordable broadband options, including sharing information on the FCC's new price transparency strategies to help residents compare plans for affordability

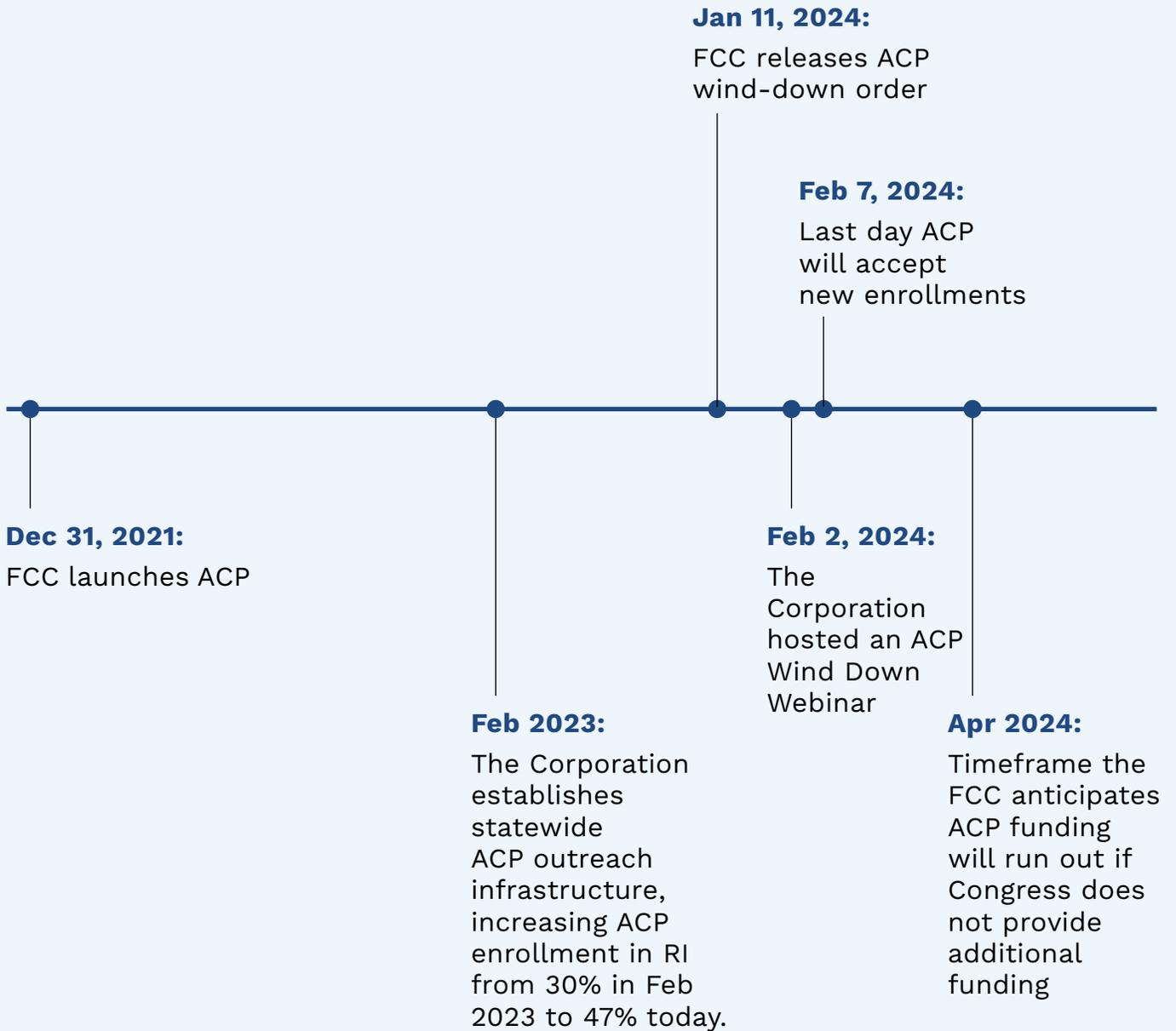
**Partners to engage:**

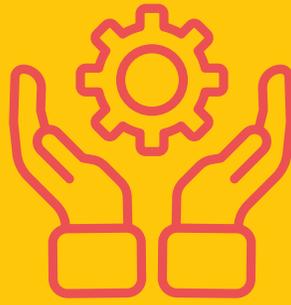
- CAIs
- Federal, state, and municipal funders
- ISPs
- Philanthropy
- Private sector companies

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<sup>46</sup> Education Superhighway Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment Dashboard: <https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/no-home-left-offline/acp-data/>

In response to 409 public comments raising concerns around limited funding for the ACP, the Corporation included the additional potential options above for long term broadband affordability. The Corporation also added a timeline to provide more context on the program.





## STRATEGY 4:

# Leverage digital equity ecosystem to support Rhode Island’s Ongoing Digital Government Initiatives.

As more government services and processes are delivered online, Covered Population-serving organizations and residents have cited accessibility gaps, including difficulties with navigating applications for public benefits or participating in online public meetings. At the same time, the benefits in terms of convenience and efficiency of online government services are widely recognized, as long as these services are well-designed and accompanied by in-person support.

“Moving State Government into 2030” is a Rhode Island 2030 priority, with the state undergoing careful planning to modernize and digitalize government services to make it easier for Rhode Islanders to access resources and interact with government online. To align with this effort, the Corporation will leverage the digital equity ecosystem to coordinate in-person support and feedback mechanisms.

### **Objective and KPIs Addressed:**

**Objective 4: Online Accessibility—ensure essential public resources and services have online accessibility, language access, and usability for Covered Populations.**

### **KPIs:**

- **Number of user-testing groups held with Covered Populations.**
- **Usability ratings for online public services among Covered Populations.**
- **% of state government websites meeting the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standard.**

### **Covered Populations Addressed: All**

1. Low income individuals (Covered Households)
2. Aging individuals
3. Incarcerated individuals
4. Veterans
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Individuals with a language barrier
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
8. Individuals who reside in a rural area

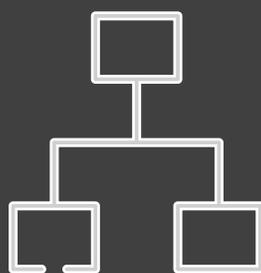
## **CORE ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1. Leverage digital inclusion services to provide online public resource assistance and feedback.**

The Corporation will leverage digital inclusion partners engaged through Strategies 1 and 2 for improving access to online public resources. Digital inclusion partners will be equipped to assist community members with navigating key online public resources and applications. The Corporation will also develop a mechanism for partners to submit feedback from Covered Population residents to improve the accessibility of online public resources.

#### **Partners to engage:**

- All partners engaged through Strategy 1 (digital skills partners)
- All partners engaged through Strategy 2 (device partners)



## STRATEGY 5:

# Plan for long-term sustainability and continuity of services

Throughout the planning process, numerous stakeholders have named the lack of sustainability of digital equity programs as a significant gap in prior efforts. With the federal State Digital Equity Capacity Grant

program designed for a five-year funding period, the Corporation has identified the following activities to help ensure digital equity programs can be sustained in the long term.

### **Objective and KPIs Addressed:**

All

### **Covered Populations Addressed: All**

1. Low income individuals (Covered Households)
2. Aging individuals
3. Incarcerated individuals
4. Veterans
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Individuals with a language barrier
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
8. Individuals who reside in a rural area

## **CORE ACTIVITIES**

### **5.1. Sustain and expand the state’s Digital Equity Working Group, transforming it into a coalition to advance digital equity for Rhode Islanders.**

The Digital Equity Working Group (DEWG) formed during the state’s digital equity planning process has grown to 33 members representing a diverse set of organizations and stakeholders.

The Corporation will transform the DEWG into a coalition that engages all stakeholders working to advance digital equity in Rhode Island. The DEWG will provide a venue for collaboration and partnership, community input on digital equity programs, and promotion of new funding opportunities (including the upcoming federal Digital Equity Competitive Grant program). The DEWG can also serve as a venue for knowledge sharing between new and existing digital inclusion program providers, including digital navigators, digital skill providers, and organizations engaged in promoting affordable broadband options.<sup>47</sup> The Corporation will continually review, evaluate, and expand representation, with a focus on ensuring an inclusive process that results in a diversity of individual, organizational, and sector representation.

### **5.2. Leverage partnerships to integrate digital equity activities within existing regional, local, and statewide programs and initiatives.**

The Corporation will identify new potential partners to integrate digital equity activities into community-based and Covered Population-serving programming, private sector efforts, and across government to grow the digital equity ecosystem. In particular, the Corporation will explore options with other state agencies and philanthropy for adding digital skills training, digital navigation, and device components to their existing grants and funding strategies.

### **5.3. Evaluate digital equity programs for impact on state priorities.**

Strategies throughout this plan have been designed to address the digital divide and help Rhode Islanders advance in state priority areas, such as economic and workforce development, education, and health. As Digital Equity Plan strategies and activities are implemented, the Corporation will evaluate their effectiveness and impact on state priority outcomes, such as improved employment or educational outcomes among recipients of digital inclusion services. If these programs are found to be effective, evaluation results will shape the state’s ongoing investments in digital equity and ensure their sustainability. The Corporation will explore the integration of quantitative evaluation methods with qualitative data and community stories to increase awareness of the long-term benefits of digital equity among community members and potential funders.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Corporation updated this activity to reflect public comments recommending more support for knowledge sharing between digital inclusion practitioners.

<sup>48</sup> The Corporation updated this activity to reflect a public comment calling for investments in storytelling to raise awareness of digital equity’s benefits.

## 5.2 TIMELINE

The preliminary timeline is below. The Corporation will update the timeline when more information is received by the NTIA on Rhode Island’s allocation from the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant program.

The Corporation is committed to maximizing digital equity in the state and will engage in on-going monitoring and evaluation of its plan, with a formal evaluation of KPI’s annually. Any identified enhancements and/or modifications to programming and timing will be made with stakeholder and public input and are subject to NTIA approval. All updated versions of the plan and annual progress reports will be shared publicly.<sup>49</sup>

### 2024: Quarter 1

- Release Initial Draft of Rhode Island’s Digital Equity Plan for 30-day public comment period.
- Engage stakeholders to provide feedback on the Plan through public comment.
- Continue collecting Digital Equity Public Survey and Asset Mapping Survey responses.
- Revise Plan based on public comment and survey results.
- Submit Final Plan to NTIA for approval.
- Continue DEWG meetings (Activity 5.1).

### 2024: Quarter 2

- **State Capacity Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity is released by NTIA along with RI’s Capacity Grant allocation. (tentative – dependent on NTIA)**
- Finalize planned strategies and activities based on the allocation and award requirements.
- Submit application for Capacity Grant funding.

### 2024: Quarter 3

- Begin planning and partner engagement for each strategy.
- Begin planning and coordination on broadband strategies (Strategy 3).
- Monitor ACP program funding and explore alternatives (Activity 3.3).
- Develop monitoring and evaluation plan for evaluating digital equity programs and grantees (Activity 5.3).

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<sup>49</sup> The Corporation updated this section to reflect public comment recommendations.

## **2024: Quarter 4**

- Receive Capacity Grant award.
- Develop Request for Proposals (or other procurement mechanism) for digital skills training (Strategy 1) and device partners (Strategy 2).
- Release 2025-2026 RFP.

## **2025: Quarter 1**

- Select partners funded through 2025-2026 RFP for digital skills training and devices.
- Identify additional device deployment partners (Activity 2.2).
- Partners begin program implementation, including offering online public resource support (Activity 4.2).

## **2025: Quarter 2 – Quarter 3**

- Finalize plan for affordable housing broadband program (Activity 3.1).

## **2025: Quarter 4**

- Produce annual progress report with Year 1 evaluation results. Update the plan if necessary (Activity 5.3).
- Begin coordination for embedding digital equity in more programs and initiatives and additional funding (Activity 5.2).

## **2026 – 2028**

- Continue implementation of all strategies.
- Release 2027-2029 RFP and select funded partners.
- Produce annual progress reports with Year 2 – Year 4 evaluation results. Update the plan if necessary (Activity 5.3).
- Plan for post Capacity Grant program sustainability.

## **2029**

- Continue implementation of all strategies.
- Produce annual progress report with Year 5 evaluation results (Activity 5.3).
- Transition Capacity Grant-funded programs to other funding sources.
- Close out State Capacity Grant.

## Major Milestones

- Final Plan submission to NTIA: Mar 2024
- Application submitted for Capacity Grant funding: May 2024
- Capacity Grant Award received: Oct 2024
- 2025-2026 RFP released for digital skills and device partners: Nov 2024
- 2025-2026 RFP selections announced: Jan 2025
- Digital skills and device strategy implementation: Jan 2025 – Sep 2029
- Finalize plan for affordable housing broadband program: Apr 2025
- 2027-2029 RFP released for digital skills and device partners: Sep 2026
- 2027-2029 RFP selections announced: Nov 2026
- Annual evaluation results showing progress made across all objectives and potential plan updates:
  - Year 1: Dec 2025
  - Year 2: Dec 2026
  - Year 3: Dec 2027
  - Year 4: Dec 2028
  - Year 5: Dec 2029
- State Capacity Grant closeout: Sep 2029



# 6

## Conclusion

The Corporation is grateful for the input and participation of organizations and community members during this planning process. This Digital Equity Plan provides a blueprint to address the state’s digital equity gaps and needs. The Corporation looks forward to working with **all Rhode Islanders** to implement this plan and achieve digital equity in the Ocean State.



Providence Pedestrian Bridge | Credit: Rhode Island Commerce

# 7

## Appendices

- **Appendix A:** Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey organizational respondents
- **Appendix B:** List of organizations engaged through meetings and events
- **Appendix C:** Survey instruments
- **Appendix D:** Event collateral
- **Appendix E:** Digital Equity Public Survey Results
- **Appendix F:** Public Comments

# APPENDIX A: DIGITAL EQUITY ASSET MAPPING SURVEY ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONDENTS

As of January 2024

Adams Public Library	Crossroads Rhode Island - Family Shelter & Domestic Violence Program
AHEPA 245-II Apartments	Cumberland Public Library
Amos House	Davisville Free Library
AMOR RI	Direct Action For Rights And Equality
Aquidneck Island Planning Commission	Dorcas International Institute
Aquidneck Light	East Smithfield Public Library
Ashaway Free Library	Elmhurst School
Barrington Public Library	Family Services of RI
Barrington Public Schools	Genesis Center
Blackstone Valley Community Action Program (BVCAP)	George Hail Free Library
Bristol Warren Regional School District	Greenbush Elementary School
Broad Rock Middle School	Greenville Public Library
Brownell Library	Hazard School
Care New England Health System	HCH Enterprises
CHR Solutions	Hi-Lo Neighborhood Association
City of Newport, RI	Howard Hathaway School
Clark Memorial Library	HUD
Community College Of Rhode Island	Institute for Labor Studies and Research
Community Libraries of Providence	Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Coventry Public Library	Jamestown Housing Authority
Coventry Public Schools	Jamestown Philomenian Library
Cranston Adult Education Programs	John F. Derring Middle School
Cranston Public Library	John F. Horgan Elementary School
Cross Mills Public Library	Johnston Housing Authority

Lincoln Public Library	Providence Public Library
LPI Cabling	Rhode Island College <sup>49</sup>
Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School	Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Maloney Properties Inc. (Agent for Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley)	Rhode Island EMA
Matunuck Elementary School	Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging
Melville Elementary School	Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning
Middletown Public Library	RI AREC Foundation
Middletown Town Hall	RI Department of Corrections
Mobile Beacon	RI League of Cities and Towns
Newport Housing Authority	RI Office of Healthy Aging
North Providence School Department	RIDE state team
North Providence Union Free Library	Rogers Free Library
North Smithfield Public Library	Scituate School Department
Norwood Branch	SOHO Business Enterprises
Ocean State Libraries	South Kingstown Administrative Building
Office of Library and Information Services	South Kingstown High School
ONE Neighborhood Builders	South Kingstown Public Library
OSHEAN, Inc.	Town of Barrington
Pawtucket Adult Education	Town of Hopkinton
Peace Dale Elementary	Town of Middletown
Peace Dale Library	Town of Portsmouth
Pontiac Free Library	Town of Warren
Portsmouth Free Public Library	Town of Westerly
Portsmouth High School	Tri-County Community Action Agency
Portsmouth Middle School	Turning Around Ministries
Preservation of Affordable Housing	Verizon
Providence College	Wakefield Hills Elementary School
Providence Housing Authority	Warren Health Equity Zone

49 The Corporation added Rhode Island College in the appendix reflecting the participation of the organization in asset mapping and Affordable Connectivity Training.

Warwick Public Library	Westerly Library & Wilcox Park
West Warwick Public Library	Willett Free Library
West Warwick Senior High School	Winslow Gardens
Westbay Community Action	Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED THROUGH MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Organizations engaged through the ConnectRI Broadband Summit, Statewide Digital Equity Workshops, and other meetings and events during the digital equity planning process.

AARP	DOC (Department of Corrections)
AccessPoint RI	Donovan House Federally Funded Housing
AHEPA Senior Living	East Bay Community Action Program
Aquidneck Island Planning Commission	East Providence Public Library
ATEL Program	Emergency Management Agency
Bristol Warren Regional School District	Farm Fresh RI
Brownell Library	Fox Point Manor Nursing Home
City of Cranston	Genesis Center
City of East Providence	Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce
City of Newport	Greenville Public Library
City of Providence	Health Equity Zones
Community College of Rhode Island	Hilcrest Village Federally Funded Housing
Community Libraries of Providence	HUD
Councilwoman AnderBois	I3
Councilwoman Peterson	Indelible Solutions
Councilwoman Roias	Innovation Studio
Cox Communications	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
Cranston Public Library	Jamestown Housing Authority
Cranston Senior Center	Justice Assistance
Crossroads Rhode Island	Leon Mathieu Senior Center
Crown Castle	Medicaid
Department of Labor and Training	MET School
Digitunity	Mission Broadband

New England Connectivity & Telecom Assoc	Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
Newport Chamber of Commerce	US Senator Jack Reed
Newport Housing Authority	Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (out of Providence Public Library)
NTIA	Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns
OATS (Older Adults Technology Services)	Rhode Island Office of Library & Information Services
Ocean State Center for Independent Living	Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RI OPC)
Ocean State Libraries	Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission (RIPUC)
Office for Healthy Aging	Rhode Island Society of Technology Educators (RISTE)
ONE Neighborhood Builders	RI Housing
OSHEAN	Salve Regina University
PACE RI	Sertex Broadband Solutions
Progreso Latino	Smithfield Library
Providence American Job Center	South Kingston Schools
Providence Housing Authority	Town of Barrington
Providence Promise	Town of Burrillville
Providence Public Library	Town of Exeter
Providence Veteran Center	Town of Hopkinton RI
Prudence Island School	Town of Little Compton
Public Utilities Commission	Town of Middletown
R.I. Office of Healthy Aging	Town of New Shoreham
Rhode Island Center for Justice (CFJ)	Town of Portsmouth
Rhode Island College <sup>50</sup>	Town of Warren
Rhode Island Commerce Corporation	Town of Westerly
Rhode Island Community Food Bank	Turning Around Ministries
Rhode Island Department of Education	United Way
US Dept of Housing and Urban Development	Ward 12

50 The Corporation added Rhode Island College in the appendix reflecting the participation of the organization in asset mapping and Affordable Connectivity Training.

Washington Park Library	West End Community Center
Varsnet Inc	West End Food Pantry
Verizon Communications	West End Revival Women's Group
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Rhode Island Department	Westbay Community Action Inc
Walcott Associates	Woonsocket Education Department
URI Cyber Seniors	

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

### Rhode Island Statewide Digital Equity Public Survey

Link: <http://bit.ly/connectri-de-survey>

Rhode Island’s ConnectRI team wants to hear from you about your experiences with getting and using internet service. Your input will help the State make sure that everyone can have access to high-quality and affordable internet service, devices, skills training, and digital support. The survey is completely anonymous. Questions are optional, unless specified otherwise. You may skip all optional questions.

We do not ask for any personally identifiable information (e.g., name, email, address). We collect demographic information so that we can make sure we are representing all neighborhoods, towns, cities and demographic groups across Rhode Island, and to enable municipal planning efforts as well as statewide planning. Data from this survey will be retained for one year following the approval of the State’s Digital Equity Plan, then destroyed.

\*Questions are required.

#### **Part 1: Eligibility**

Are you 18 or over? \*

Yes

No

Are you a resident of Rhode Island? \*

Yes

No

#### **Part 2: Availability and Affordability**

1. What is your zip code?

2. Do you have internet service in your home?

Yes

No

If you DO have internet service at home, please answer these questions. If you DO NOT have internet service at home, please skip to Question 8.

3. What kind of internet service do you have at home? (Select all that apply)

A data plan for a smartphone, hotspot, or tablet

Home wireline connection (cable, fiber, DSL, etc.)

Dial-up internet

- Satellite internet
  - No internet service of any kind
  - I don't know
4. How well does your home internet service work?
- Good enough to meet my household's needs
  - Not good enough to meet my household's needs
  - I don't know
5. Is your home internet service bundled with other services such as telephone or TV?
- Yes
  - No
6. **a) (If your internet service is bundled with other services)** Not counting the costs of other services in your bundle, how much do you pay for the internet every month?
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Answer
- b) (If your internet service is NOT bundled with other services)** How much do you pay for the internet every month?
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Answer
7. Is your internet service affordable?
- Not affordable at all
  - Not affordable
  - Affordable
  - Very affordable

If you DO NOT have internet service at home, please answer Question 8.  
If you DO have internet service at home, please skip to Question 9.

8. **a) If you do not have internet service in your home, what is the reason?** (Select all that apply)
- Service is not available in my area
  - Service is too expensive
  - Installation fee is too expensive
  - I am concerned about online privacy or safety
  - I don't feel confident navigating the internet or using online tools
  - I can't afford or don't have access to a device to use the internet

I don't want / don't use the internet.

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**b) If you do not have internet at home, where do you go to use the internet?**  
(Select all that apply)

A workplace

A friend or family member's home

School, college, or university

Library

Community center

Senior Center

Local business, such as a restaurant, cafe, or bookstore (e.g., McDonald's, Taco Bell, Starbucks, etc.)

A public space such as a park or government building

On public transit

I do not regularly access internet in these or any other spaces

9. Have you heard about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) that provides discounted internet service for low-income households?

Yes

No

I don't know

### **Part 3: Device availability, affordability, and technical support**

10. Does everyone in your household have access to the computer devices they need to meet their everyday needs for internet use? (Computers, smartphones, tablets, or other internet enabled devices)?

Yes

No

11. Which of the following devices do you use most of the time to connect to the internet? (Select all that apply)

Cellphone

Desktop computer

Laptop computer

Tablet (or similar device)

Other type of device (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

12. How much would you be able to pay for a laptop or desktop computer?

- \$0-50
- \$50-100
- \$100-150
- \$150-250
- \$250-500
- \$500-1,000
- More than \$1,000

13. If you have trouble with computers or the internet, is there someone in your household or community who can help you? (Select all that apply)

- Yes, I can get help from someone in my household
- Yes, I can get help from someone in my community (such as a friend, neighbor, community-based organization, librarian)
- Yes, I can get help from a paid service in my community
- No
- I don't know

### **Part 4: Digital Skills**

14. Are you able to regularly use the internet for online activities?

- Yes
- No

15. How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
(Completely confident / Fairly confident / Slightly confident / Not confident)

	<b>Completely Confident</b>	<b>Fairly Confident</b>	<b>Slightly Confident</b>	<b>Not Confident</b>
<b>Searching and applying for a job</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Health care or telehealth services</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Participating in your local community</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>General internet searching</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<b>Completely Confident</b>	<b>Fairly Confident</b>	<b>Slightly Confident</b>	<b>Not Confident</b>
<b>Transportation information</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Searching and/or applying for benefits or resources for you and your family</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Completing homework or taking continuing education</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**b)** If you **do not** have regular access to the internet, what would most like to use it for if you could? (Select all that apply)

- Searching and applying for a job
- Health care or telehealth services
- Participating in your local community
- General internet searching
- Transportation information
- Searching and/or applying for benefits or resources for you and your family
- Completing homework or taking continuing education
- Something else
- I don't want to use the internet regularly

16. What kind of digital skills support would you be most interested in? (Select all that apply)

- In person classes
- Online classes
- In person support from a friend or instructor
- A do-it-yourself training module

### **Part 5: Internet Safety**

17. How concerned are you about internet safety?

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not very concerned
- Not at all concerned

18. What are you most concerned about? (Select all that apply)
- That my data could get stolen or used without my consent
  - That I or a loved one could get scammed or tricked
  - That I could be tracked or surveilled
  - That I or a loved one could be harassed or abused online
  - N/A – Not concerned at all
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
19. Are you aware of tools or resources you can use to stay safe online?
- Yes, I have tools and resources I use to stay safe online
  - No, I don't know of any tools or resources to stay safe online
  - I know of tools or resources to stay safe online, but they don't work for me
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Part 6: Accessibility**

20. How accessible are online government services like benefits portals, DMV services, or paying for permits or tickets to you?
- Very accessible
  - Somewhat accessible
  - Not very accessible
  - Not at all accessible
21. When you have used online government services like benefits portals, DMV services, or paying for permits or tickets, how well did they work for you?
- Very well
  - Somewhat well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all

## Part 7: Demographic Questions

22. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 59
- 60 to 74
- 75 or older
- Prefer not to answer

23. What is your gender identity?

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Gender fluid
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

24. How many people, including yourself, currently live in your household? (Note: A household is defined as all the people who currently occupy the housing unit where you live).

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8 or more
- Prefer not to answer

25. How many children under age 18, currently live in your household? (Note: A household is defined as all the people who currently occupy the housing unit where you live).
- 0
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 or more
  - Prefer not to answer
26. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- Less than high school, or high school incomplete (Up to grades 9-11 or Grade 12 with NO diploma)
  - High school graduate (Grade 12 with diploma or GED certificate)
  - Two-year associate degree from a college or university
  - Four-year college or university degree/Bachelor's degree (e.g., BS, BA, AB)
  - Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, MD, JD)
  - Prefer not to answer
27. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban?
- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
28. Which of the following best describes your race? (Select all that apply)
- White or Caucasian
  - Black or African-American
  - Asian or Asian-American
  - Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native
  - Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
  - Some other race (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to answer

29. Do you belong to a North American Indigenous, Native, or Tribal group?
- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
30. What is your total annual household income from all sources, and before taxes?
- Less than \$22,000
  - \$22,000 to \$29,999
  - \$30,000 to \$36,999
  - \$37,000 to \$44,999
  - \$45,000 to \$52,999
  - \$53,000 to \$59,999
  - \$60,000 or more
  - Prefer not to answer
31. Do you identify as a person with a disability? (Note: Disability is defined as physical, emotional, or mental health conditions that result in limitations of activities or restrictions to full participation at school, at work, at home, or in the community).
- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
32. (If yes to Question 31 above) Do you have difficulty in any of the following areas? (Select all that apply)
- Seeing even if wearing glasses
  - Hearing even if using a hearing aid
  - Walking or climbing steps
  - Remembering or concentrating
  - Self-care
  - Communicating, for example understanding or being understood
  - Prefer not to answer
33. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?
- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer

34. Did you serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? (Select all that apply)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

35. In what Rhode Island city or town do you live?\* \_\_\_\_\_

36. Do you live in affordable housing? (Note: Affordable housing is defined as housing subsidized by a housing authority, paid for through a voucher, or in a building run by a private developer.)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Prefer not to answer

## THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the survey! Your response will help shape Rhode Island's policies and investments to close the digital divide for all residents.

ConnectRI works to ensure all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable, accessible high-speed internet in their homes, at their places of employment, and at public facilities by 2027. Learn more about our mission and work at [connectri-ricom.hub.arcgis.com](https://connectri-ricom.hub.arcgis.com).

## Rhode Island Digital Equity Asset Mapping Survey

Link: <https://connectri-ricom.hub.arcgis.com/pages/c4d9b745652c46bb8bd2bd33bf861769>

We are collecting data to determine what organizations in Rhode Island may be eligible for support from one of our programs. As part of this effort, we need input from all government agencies, nonprofits, experts, practitioners, funders, researchers and community organizers. If your work helps people in your community access the internet, computers or digital skills training, or other information and resources, you should take part in this survey.

\*Questions are required.

1. What is the name of your organization?\* \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the address of your organization?\* \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does your organization have more than one location?
  - Yes
  - No
4. Please provide a point of contact in your organization.\* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Enter your name or another POC in your organization.)
5. What is main number for your organization?\* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please enter area code followed by 7 digit telephone number. Numbers only.)
6. What is your phone number?\* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please enter area code followed by 7 digit telephone number. Numbers only.)
7. What is your email?\* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Enter your work email address.)
8. Website URL\* \_\_\_\_\_
9. Which of the following best describes your organization?
  - Career/Tech Center
  - Community-support or community-based organization
  - Correctional Facility
  - Federal Government
  - Foundation/Philanthropic
  - Higher Education
  - Health Facility

- Hospital
- Housing Authority
- Internet Equipment Provider
- Internet Service Provider
- School (K-12)
- Subsidy Program
- Library
- Local Government
- Nonprofit
- Private Sector
- Public Safety Entity
- State Government
- Tribal Government
- Other

### **Community Anchor Institutions**

10. What type of coverage does your organization's programs or services provide?\*

- Statewide
- County-wide or across multiple counties
- City-wide or across multiple cities
- Specific to a Tribe or available to multiple Tribes
- Neighborhood-based or across multiple neighborhoods
- Other

11. Target Population(s):\* Historically underserved groups toward whom the organization/program focuses its digital inclusion services (check all that apply).

- English Language Learners
- Immigrants or Refugees
- Incarcerated Persons
- Low-Income Households
- Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups
- Older Adults

- Persons with Disabilities
- Persons with Low Literacy Levels
- Rural Residents
- Veterans
- Youth

12. Which of the following types of digital equity programs does your organization provide?\* (Please select all that apply.)

- Broadband Access and Affordability (please select this option if you promote or provide access to any of the following: Information or enrollment assistance for subsidy programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), Lifeline/Tribal Lifeline, hotspots, and internet service)
- Broadband adoption programs
- Digital literacy grants
- Digital Skills and Technical Support
- Digital Equity Program Funding
- Digital Equity Research, Planning, or Organizing
- Grant Programs
- Workforce development programs
- I don't know
- Other

13. What types of digital inclusion services does your organization provide?\* Categories of digital inclusion services for which the organization/program delivers services (check all that apply).

- Broadband Access & Affordability
- Device Access
- Digital Inclusion Funding
- Digital Skills & Technical Support
- Printer Access
- Public Device & Internet Access
- Telehealth Services/Support
- I don't know
- Other

14. Does your organization's location have access to gigabit speed broadband service?\* Gigabit-capable broadband is a connection that is able to deliver speeds of 1000Mbps or more (1 Gbps).

Yes

No

I don't know

15. Additional Input: If your company would like to provide additional input that the State should consider about broadband access and affordability programs in the development of the Statewide Digital Equity Plan, please share your perspective here.

## Rhode Island Internet Connectivity Survey

Link: <https://connectri-ricom.hub.arcgis.com/pages/1bc1241dd84a4a69bc8c4a87ab857a7f>

The Rhode Island Internet Connectivity Survey is designed to gather information on locations in the state without adequate internet access and speeds. By taking the survey you can help us identify where broadband investments are needed. Your feedback will inform our broadband initiative to help ensure all the members of our communities have access to affordable broadband and Rhode Island remains a leader in digital connectivity into the future.

Don't have internet? This survey is also for you! Select "No service available".

The survey takes about five minutes to complete and is available in both English and Spanish. The survey includes an internet speed test to connect survey data with broadband speed information.

1. Enter your address\* \_\_\_\_\_
2. What kind of location is this?\*
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Public
  - Industrial
  - State/Municipal
  - Nonprofit
3. Is high speed internet available at this location?\* Selecting yes will bring you to an Ookla Speedtest where you will click the OK button to run the test. Upon completion you will be returned to the survey to capture additional information. This may take a few seconds. Selecting no will allow you to capture additional information on the limitations of broadband availability.
  - Yes (Begin Ookla Speedtest)
  - No Service Available

**If YES to Question 3, please answer these questions. If NO, please skip to Question 16.**

4. Speed test results: These fields are read only and will be autopopulated by the Ookla Speedtest App.
  - a. Download Speed: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Upload Speed: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Ping: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Jitter: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Test ID: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who is your current internet service provider?\* \_\_\_\_\_
6. What type of internet service is this connection?\* If you have multiple services, please complete a separate survey and speed test for each service.
- Cable
  - Cellular
  - Fixed Wireless
  - Fiber
  - Satellite
7. Are you subscribed to a service that promises speeds of at least 100/20 mbps?\* 100/20 means 100 megabits per second download speed (defining how quickly you can take in information from the internet) and 20 megabits per second upload speed. You can find this by looking at a recent internet bill. .
- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
8. Would you like access to speeds of at least 100/20 mbps?\*
- Yes
  - No
9. Is service at your location affordable?\*
- Not affordable at all
  - Not affordable
  - Affordable
  - Very Affordable
10. What is your average monthly Internet bill?\*
- \$1- \$24 per month
  - \$25 - \$49 per month
  - \$50 - \$74 per month
  - \$75 - \$99 per month
  - \$100 - \$149 per month
  - \$150 or more per month
  - Included in rent or association fees

11. Are you currently connected to Wi-Fi or Ethernet?\* Wi-Fi means that you have a router and are accessing the internet from a wired connection in your house without your device being plugged in. Ethernet means your device is directly plugged in to the wired internet connection at your house. And Cellular means that you are accessing the internet without any wireline connection—this is often through a smartphone or tablet “data plan.”

- Ethernet
- Home Wifi
- Public Wifi
- Cellular Hotspot
- I Don't Know
- Other

12. What device are you currently using?\* Please answer regarding the device you are currently using to complete this survey.

- Desktop
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Smartphone
- Android (mobile)
- iOS (mobile)
- Other

13. Home Internet Users\* How many people use the Internet at your home?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- More than 6

14. Are you satisfied with your current service?\*

- Yes
- No

15. Are there any other comments you wish to share regarding broadband service or Internet access in our community? \_\_\_\_\_

**If No to Question 3, please answer these questions.**

16. What device are you currently using to complete this survey?\*

- Desktop
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Smartphone
- Android (mobile)
- iOS (mobile)
- Other

17. Is high speed internet available at this location?\* High speed internet refers to speeds of 100/20 which means 100 megabits per second download speed (defining how quickly you can take in information from the internet) and 20 megabits per second upload speed. You can find this by looking at a recent internet bill.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

18. Do you know what service providers are available in your area?\* If you are currently subscribed to cellular or satellite internet as your primary service, please select "other" and enter the provider name.

- AT&T
- Cox
- HughesNet
- i3
- T Mobile
- Verizon
- Other

19. Do you have a need for a high speed internet connection?\* Would you like access to speeds of at least 100/20 mbps?

- Yes
- No

20. Where do you go most often to access the Internet? (Check all that apply)\*

- Library
- School
- Work
- Community Center
- Senior Center
- Local business or coffee shop
- Relative or Friend's home
- Public Hotspot
- Other

21. Are there any other comments you wish to share regarding broadband service or Internet access in our community? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: EVENT COLLATERAL

### ConnectRI Broadband Summit Invitation



### Date and time

 Thursday, June 1, 2023 · 9am - 5pm EDT

### Location

 Community College of Rhode Island, Newport Campus  
One John H. Chafee Blvd. Newport, RI 02840  
[Show map](#) ▾

### About this event

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration invite you to the Internet for All: ConnectRI Broadband Summit in Newport.

This day-long workshop will bring together critical stakeholders in Rhode Island from the federal, state, and local governments, Tribes, industry, and other key collaborators to discuss coordination on broadband efforts as the state prepares to receive significant broadband funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Connecting all people in Rhode Island to affordable, reliable high-speed internet is critical to our state's economic development and this event will provide an opportunity for us to discuss ways we can work together to efficiently and effectively utilize federal dollars to close the digital divide. [The final agenda can be found here.](#)

## Statewide Digital Equity Workshop Invitation



## Statewide Digital Equity Workshop

### About this event

#### ConnectRI Statewide Digital Equity Workshop (in-person)

Join us for the ConnectRI Statewide Digital Equity Workshop, a one-day event aimed at promoting digital equity in Rhode Island. This workshop is an excellent opportunity to connect with experts, educators, and community leaders who are passionate about bridging the digital divide.

Date: Thu Nov 09 2023

Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (Eastern Standard Time)

Location: 1825 Broad St, Cranston, RI 02905

During this workshop, you will have the chance to participate in interactive sessions, panel discussions, and hands-on activities that address the challenges and opportunities surrounding digital equity. Learn about innovative strategies, resources, and initiatives that can help ensure everyone has equal access to technology and digital skills.

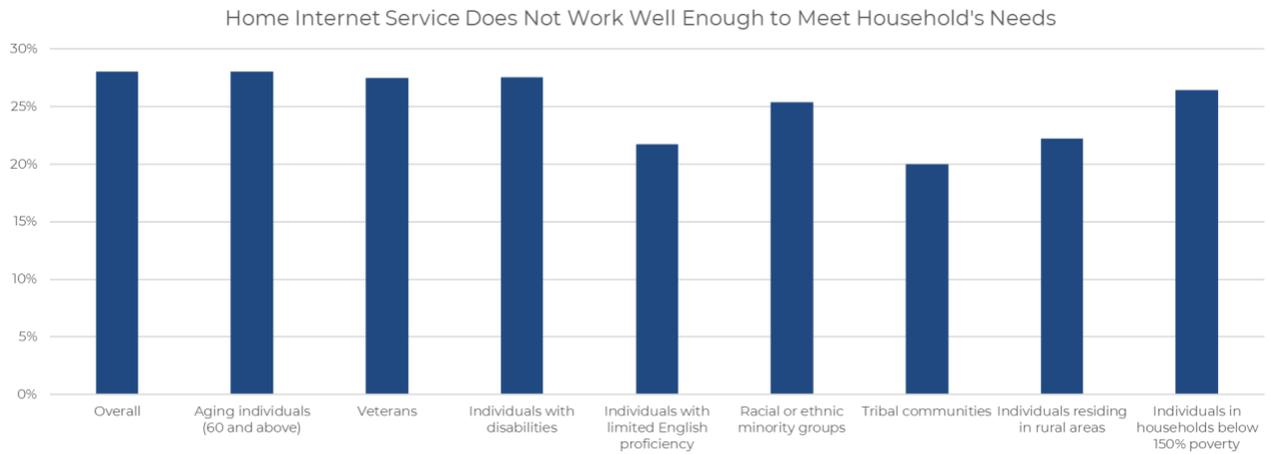
Whether you are an educator, policymaker, community advocate, or simply interested in the topic, this workshop will provide valuable insights and networking opportunities. Come and be a part of the movement towards a more equitable digital future for Rhode Island!

\*William Hall Library has parking available behind the behind the bldg. and it is ADA compliant.

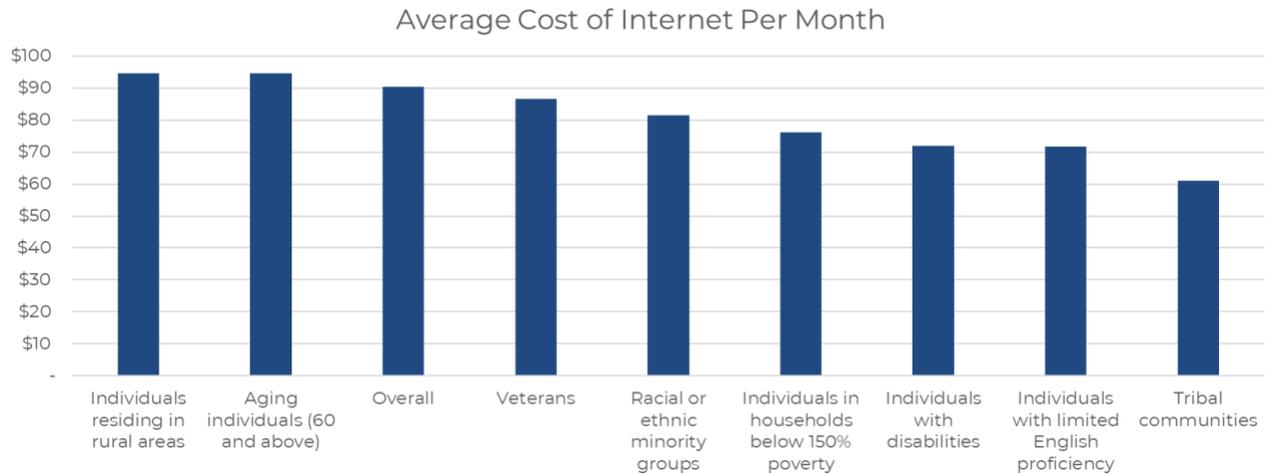
# APPENDIX E: DIGITAL EQUITY PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

This Appendix contains a non-exhaustive selection of charts from the Digital Equity Public Survey results.

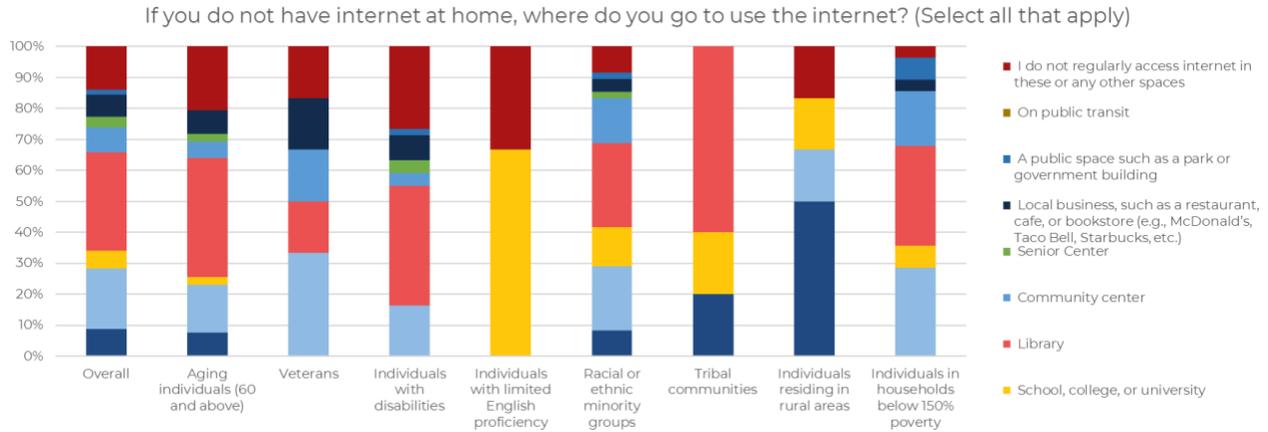
## How well does your home internet service work?



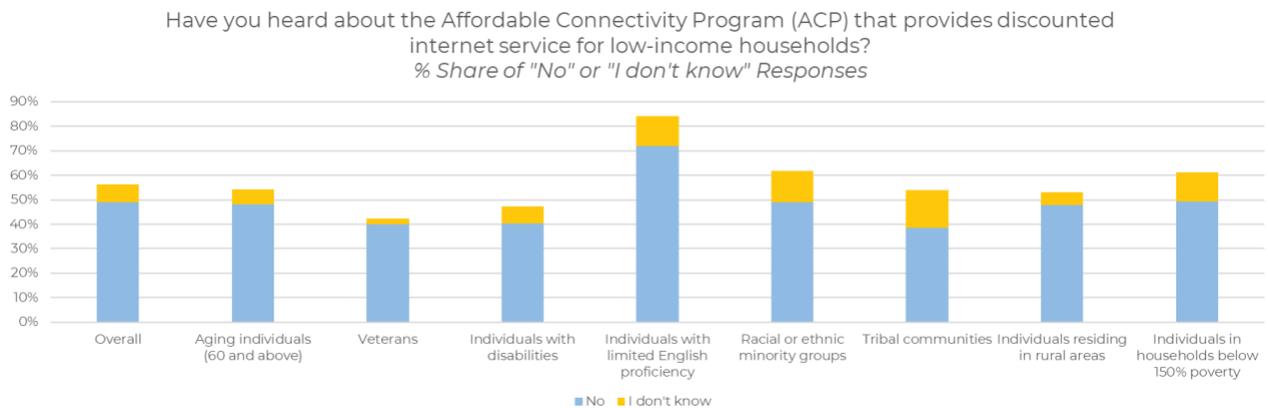
## How much do you pay for the internet every month?



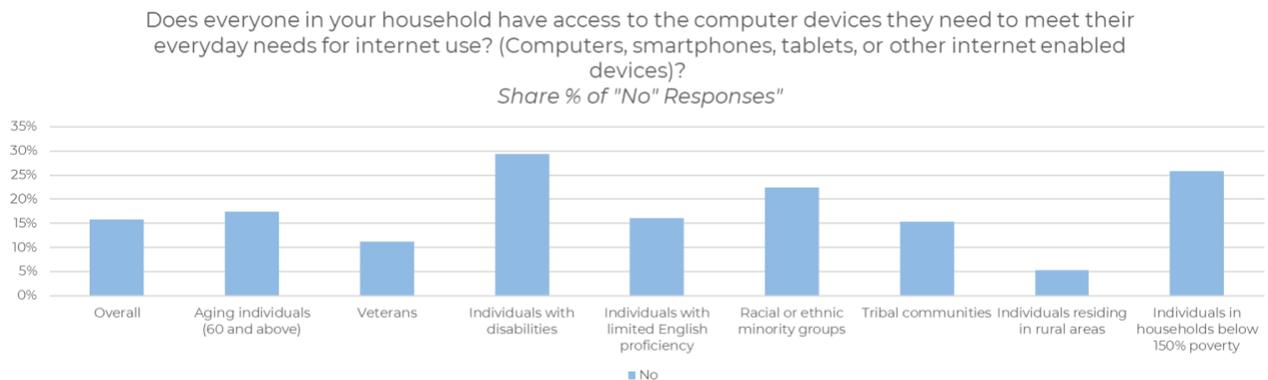
**If you do not have internet at home, where do you go to use the internet? (Select all that apply)**



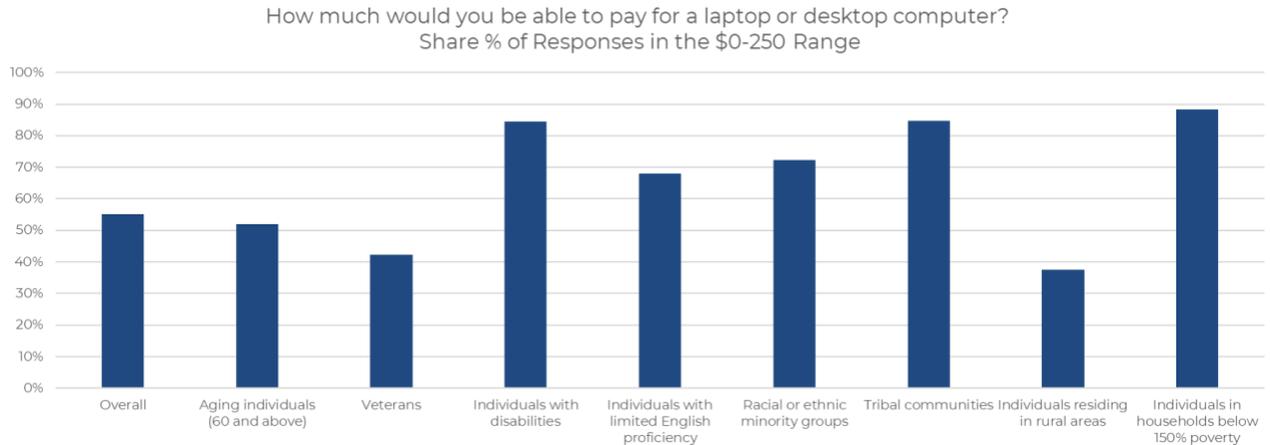
**Have you heard about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) that provides discounted internet service for low-income households?**



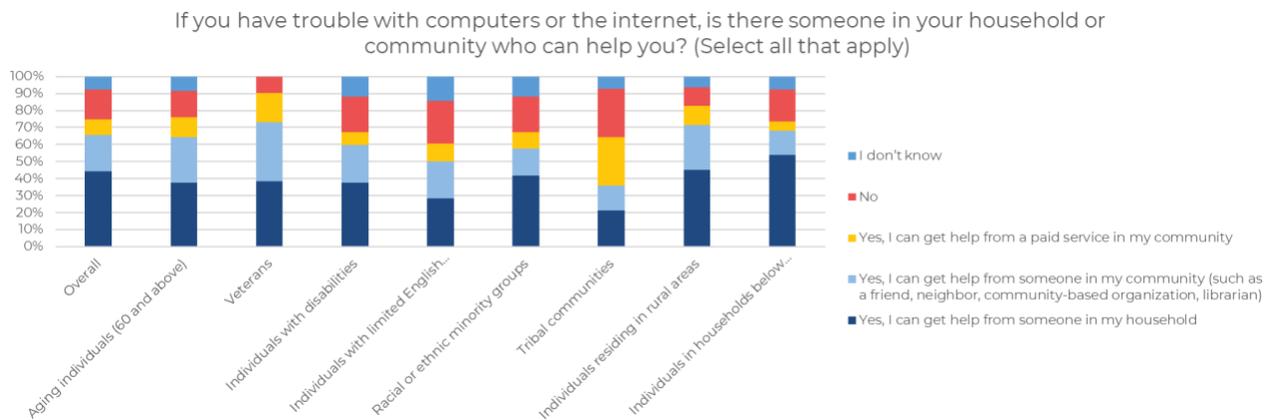
**Does everyone in your household have access to the computer devices they need to meet their everyday needs for internet use? (Computers, smartphones, tablets, or other internet enabled devices)?**



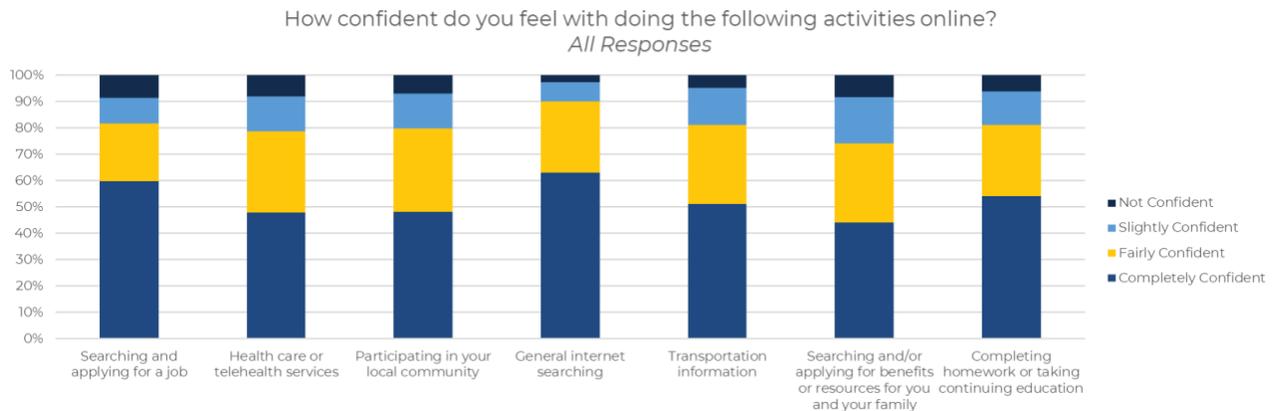
## How much would you be able to pay for a laptop or desktop computer?



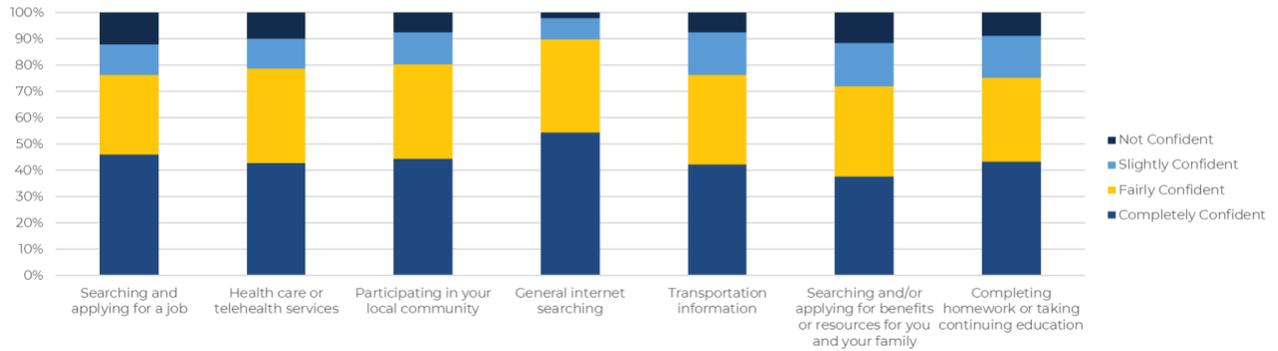
## If you have trouble with computers or the internet, is there someone in your household or community who can help you? (Select all that apply)



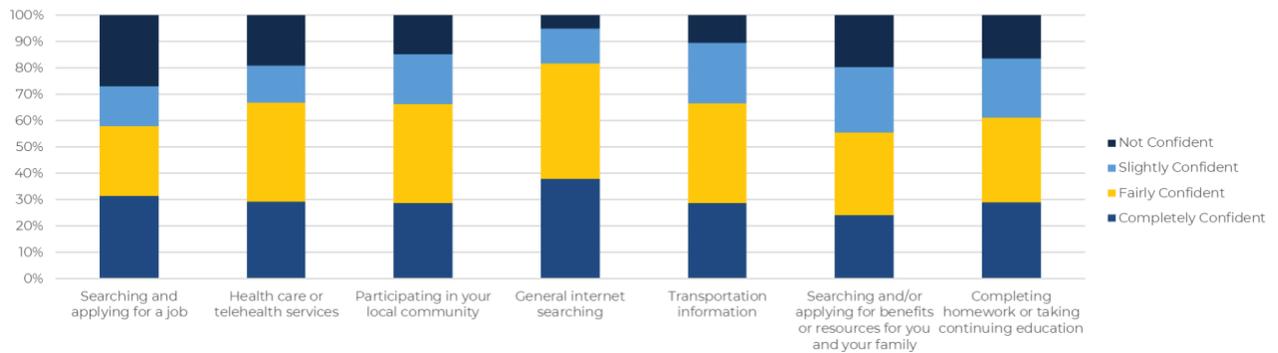
## How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?



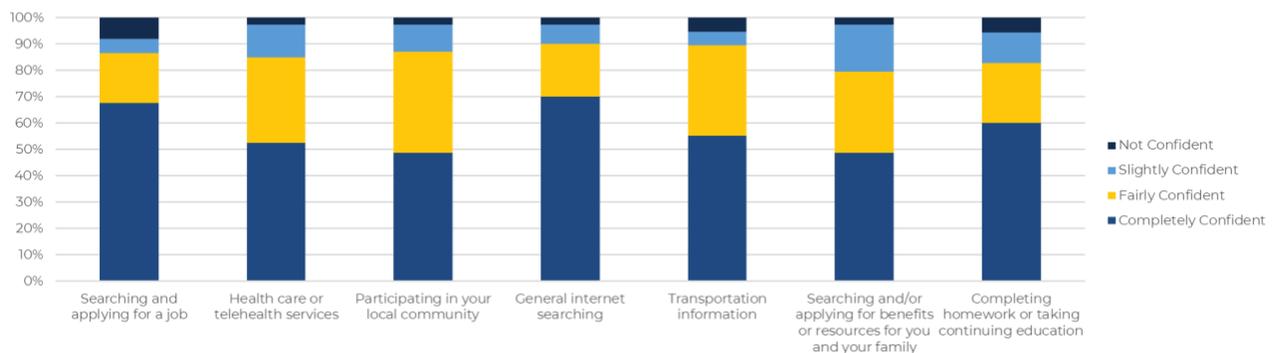
How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
Aging Individuals (60 and above)



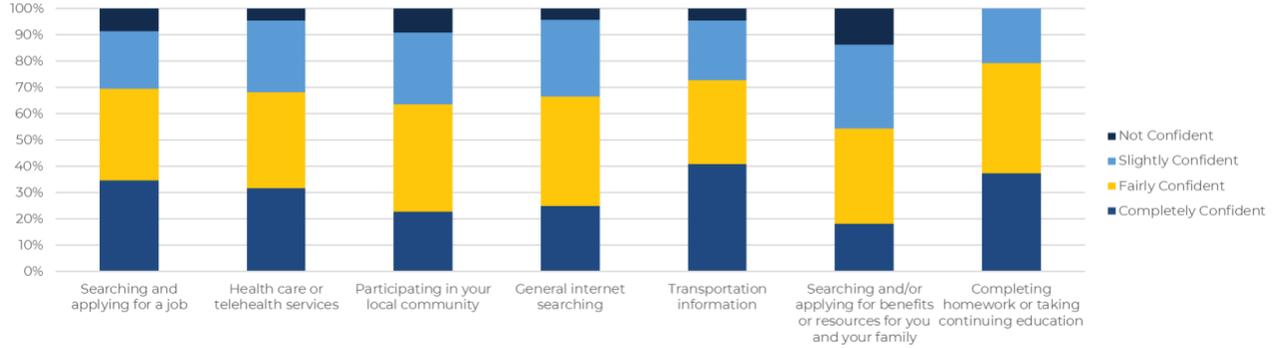
How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
Individuals with Disabilities



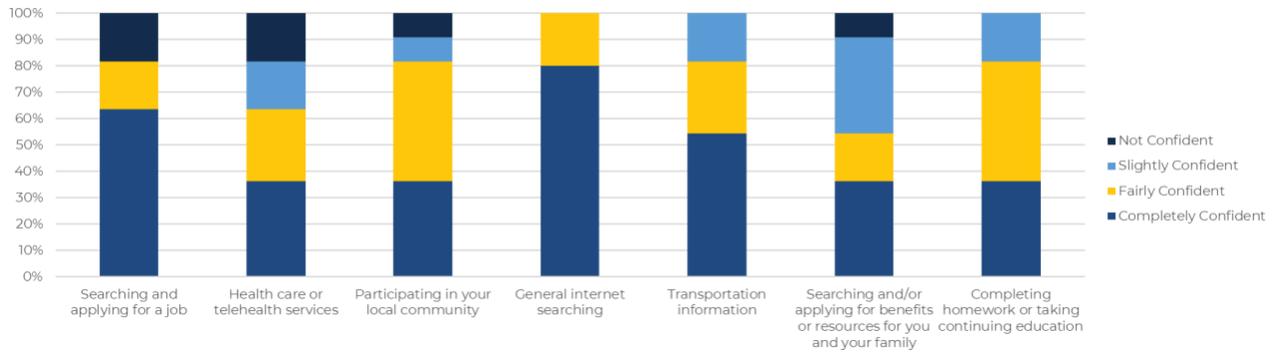
How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
Veterans



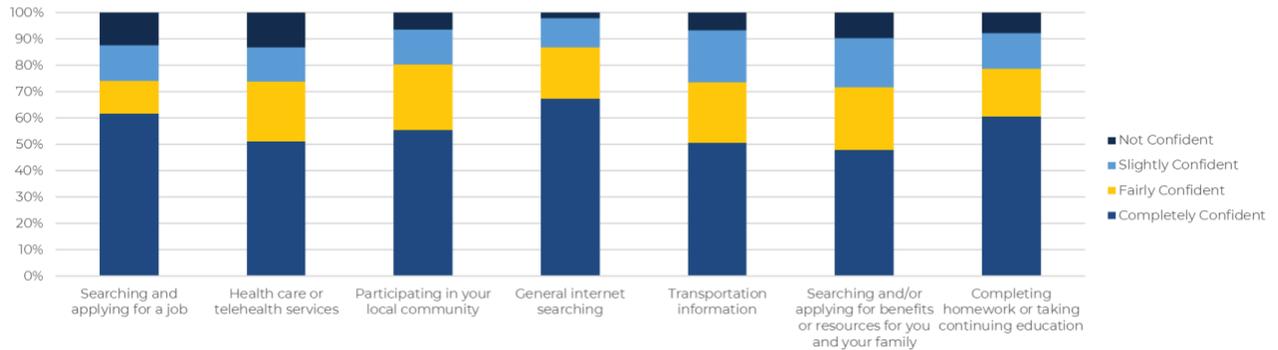
How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
*Individuals with limited English proficiency*



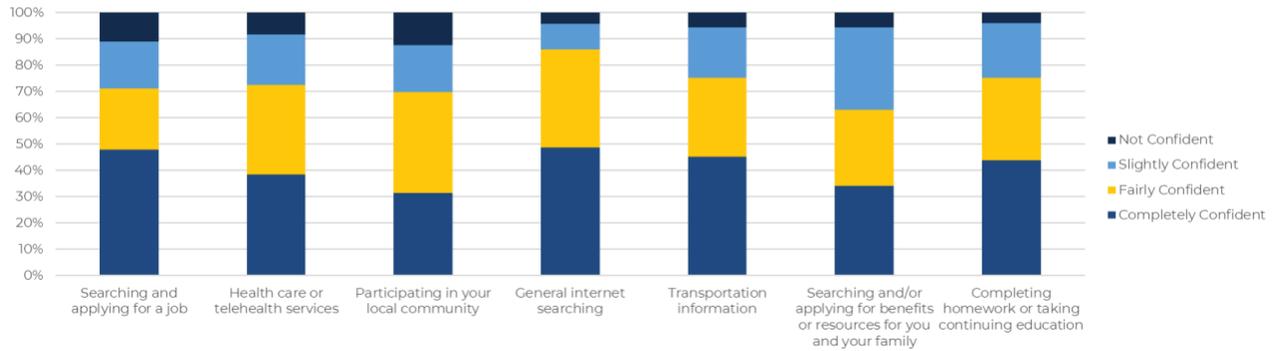
How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
*Tribal Communities*



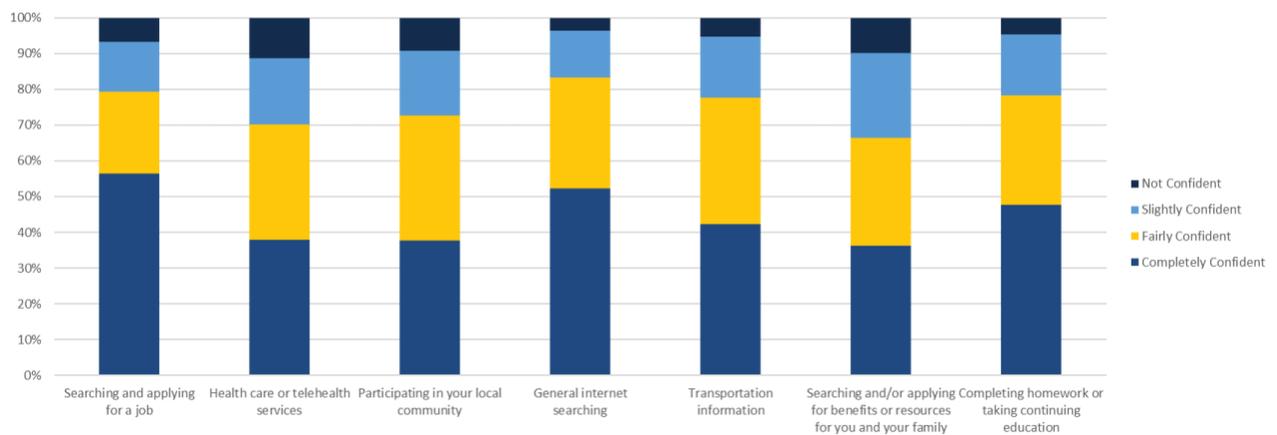
How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
*Individuals residing in rural areas*



How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
Individuals in households below 150% poverty

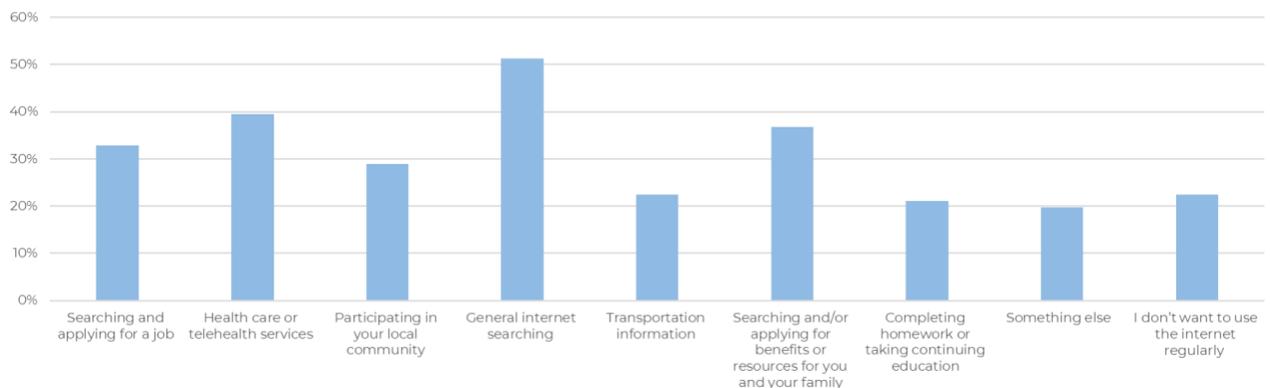


How confident do you feel with doing the following activities online?  
Racial or ethnic minority groups

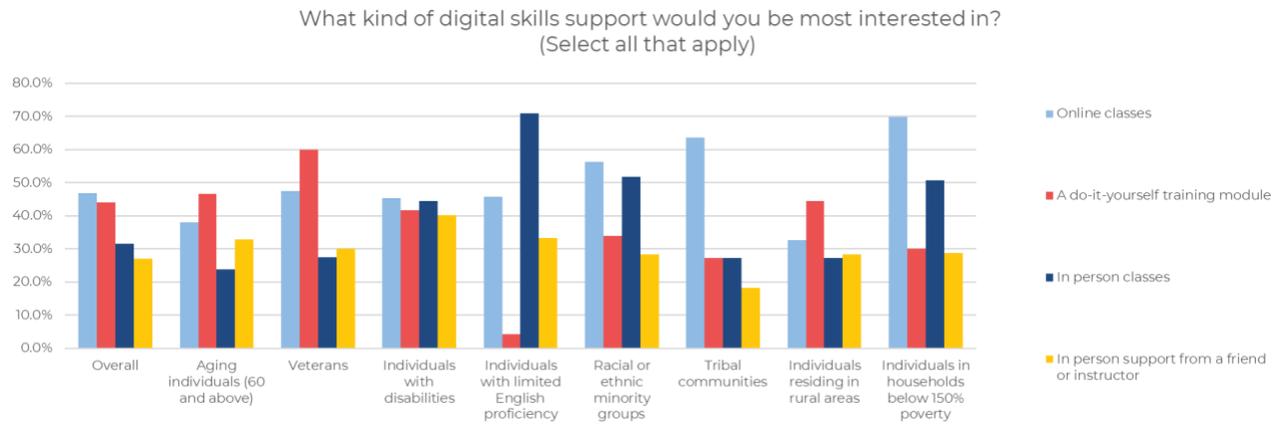


**If you do not have regular access to the internet, what would most like to use it for if you could?**

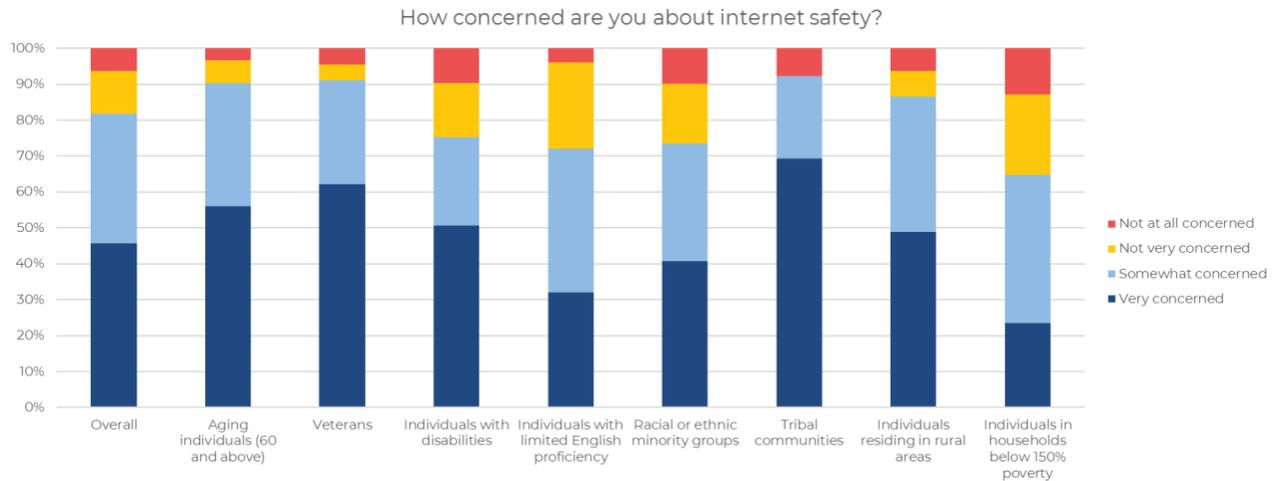
If you do not have regular access to the internet, what would most like to use it for if you could?  
All Responses



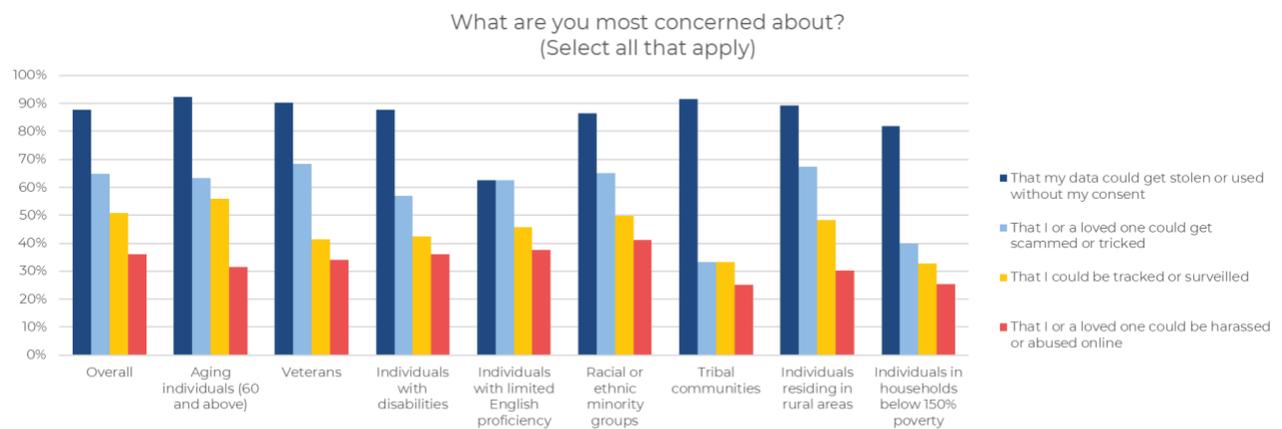
## What kind of digital skills support would you be most interested in? (Select all that apply)



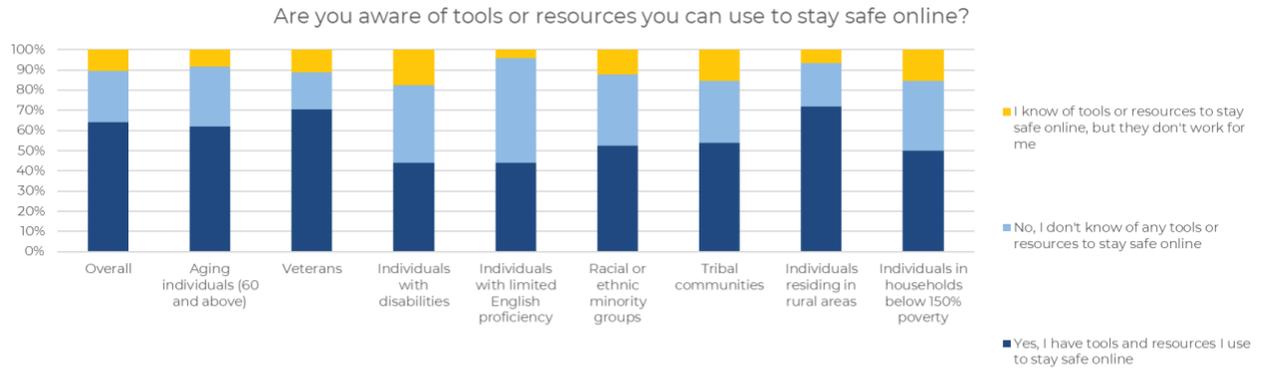
## How concerned are you about internet safety?



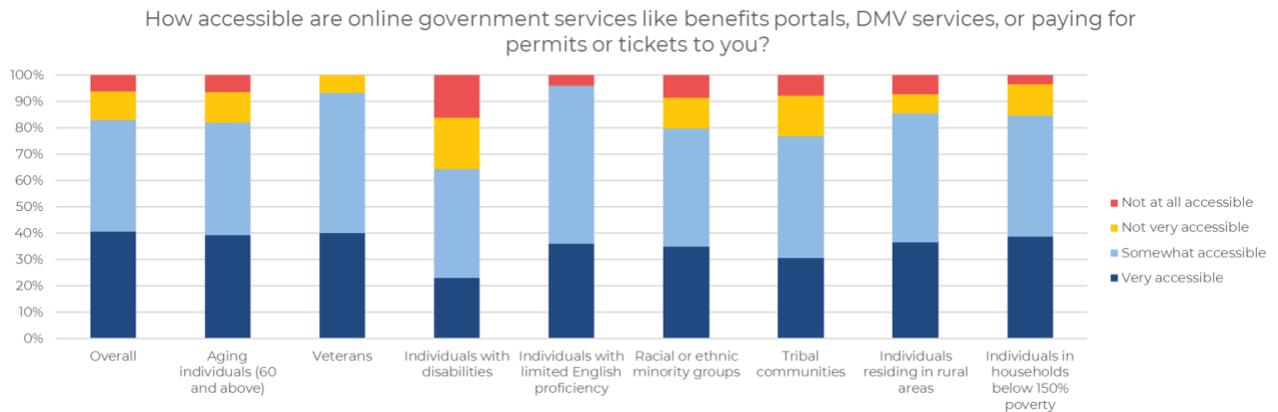
## (If concerned) What are you most concerned about? (Select all that apply)



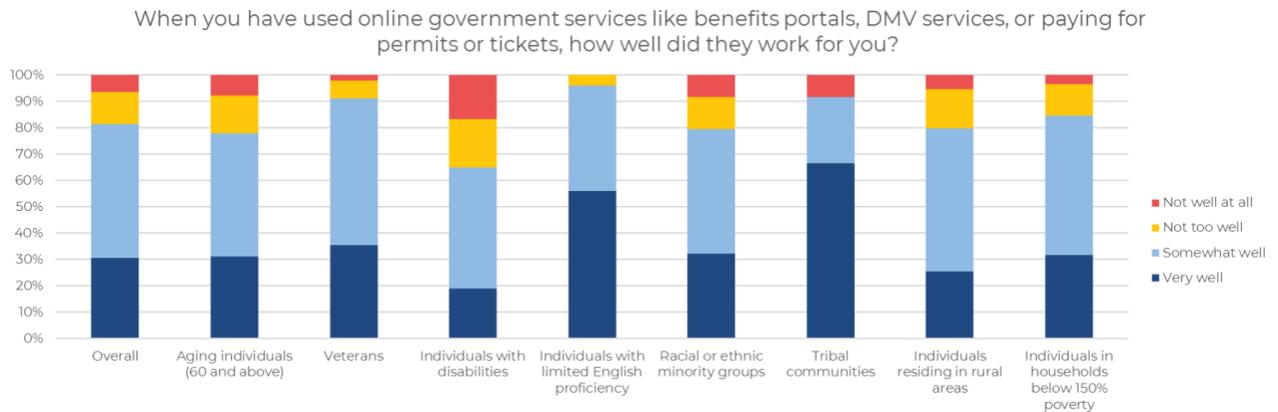
## Are you aware of tools or resources you can use to stay safe online?



## How accessible are online government services like benefits portals, DMV services, or paying for permits or tickets to you?



## When you have used online government services like benefits portals, DMV services, or paying for permits or tickets, how well did they work for you?



## APPENDIX F: PUBLIC COMMENTS

During the public comment period, the Corporation received 460 comments. Comments are displayed below in order of the date they were received with how they were addressed in the final plan. Note: The Corporation received 14 marketing/advertising comments unrelated to the Digital Equity Plan. Those comments are not included in this Appendix.

ID	Commenter	Comment	Relevant Chapter	How It Was Addressed
1	1	<p>RI has one of the largest populations in US of seniors ages 60 and over, especially living on very limited incomes.</p> <p>While access to internet costs anywhere from \$60-\$80 monthly on average, many elderly cannot afford to pay for access and must cut service.</p> <p>Today, everyone is being "required" to do things online to survive modern everyday life. If you are not on internet, you miss out and have no chance to survive.</p> <p>I would like to see at least FREE internet for RI senior citizens who are low to moderate income, so they can have the dignity and security in our digital based society to thrive and survive.</p>	1	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Section 3.2 (Aging Individuals Needs Assessment) and Activity 3.3.
2	2	NHA where I reside is currently connected. It is amazing the difference it has made in my life, both financially and socially. Thank you for your efforts to close the gap. Lets now create a digital workforce to educate all the new users in the senior community.	3	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated Activities 1.1 and 1.2.
3	3	Please do not cut the ACP I used the internet for translation for my kids homework	3	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Section 3.2.1 and Activity 3.3
4	4	Please do not cut the ACP , I used the internet for my english classes	3	Same as ID #3
5	5	Please do not cut the Acp , I used the internet for my child's homework	3	Same as ID #3
6	6	Please do not cut the acp, i need it for my homework	3	Same as ID #3
7	7	Please do not cut the Acp , I needed for my work	3	Same as ID #3
8	8	Please do not cut the Acp , I needed for my work	3	Same as ID #3
9	9	Please do not cut the acp , i need the internet for work	3	Same as ID #3

10	10	Please do not cut the acp , i need the internet for my homework	1	Same as ID #3
11	11	Please do not cut the acp, i need the internet for my english classes	3	Same as ID #3
12	12	Please do not cut the Acp i need the internet to help my grandma with her needs	3	Same as ID #3
13	13	Please to cut the acp , i need the internet to sell my avon products	3	Same as ID #3
14	14	Please do not cut the acp, i need the internet for homework	3	Same as ID #3
15	15	Pleasedo not cut the acp, i need the internet for my kids homework	3	Same as ID #3
16	16	Please do not cut the acp, i need the internet to communicate with my kids	3	Same as ID #3
17	17	Please do not cut the acp , i need the internet for my parents medical needs	3	Same as ID #3
18	18	please do not cut the acp . i need the internet for my english classes	3	Same as ID #3
19	19	please dont cut the acp. I need the internet for my english classes	3	Same as ID #3
20	20	Please do not cut the acp .	3	Same as ID #3
21	21	please do not cut the acp	3	Same as ID #3
22	22	please do not cut the Acp	3	Same as ID #3
23	23	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
24	24	i need the acp , please do not cut it	3	Same as ID #3
25	25	Please do not cut the acp , I need the internet for my medical needs	3	Same as ID #3
26	26	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated Activity 1.2 and Activity 3.3
27	27	Please do not cut the acp , i need the internet for my kids homework	3	Same as ID #3
28	28	please do not cut the acp	3	Same as ID #3
29	29	Renew the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
30	30	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

31	31	The Rhode Island Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL) Program provides landline/home telephones and wireless devices to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, have a speech disability, or have neuromuscular damage or disease that hinders them from using a standard telephone. You must be a RI Resident, have one of the above-mentioned disabilities, and make > 250% of the poverty level. Since many of our senior are low income and have hearing loss, we primarily service older adults. We also provide training to our clients on how to use tablets and smartphones. We are also an Assistive technology Access Partner (ATAP) Partners which also include, East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC), Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and TechACCESS of RI. ATAP is designed as a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. ATAP's main initiatives include: Device Demonstration Device Loan Device Re-Use Training, Public Awareness, Collaboration, Information & Referral <a href="https://ors.ri.gov/programs/adaptive-telephone-equipment-loan-program-atel">https://ors.ri.gov/programs/adaptive-telephone-equipment-loan-program-atel</a> <a href="https://ors.ri.gov/programs/assistive-technology-access-partnership-atap">https://ors.ri.gov/programs/assistive-technology-access-partnership-atap</a>	5	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 3.1 (Asset Inventory) and Activity 2.1.
32	32	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
33	33	Please do not cut the Acp	1	Same as ID #3
34	33	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
35	34	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
36	35	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
37	36	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
38	37	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
39	38	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
40	39	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
41	40	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
42	41	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
43	42	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
44	43	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
45	44	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
46	45	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
47	46	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
48	47	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
49	48	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
50	49	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
51	50	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
52	51	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
53	52	Please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3

54	53	Please do not cut the ACP , i need the internet for my medical supplies	3	Same as ID #3
55	54	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
56	55	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
57	56	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
58	57	please do not cut the ACP	3	Same as ID #3
59	58	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
60	59	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
61	60	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
62	61	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
63	62	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
64	63	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
65	64	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
66	65	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
67	66	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
68	67	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
69	68	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
70	69	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
71	70	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
72	71	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
73	72	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
74	73	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
75	74	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
76	75	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
77	76	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
78	77	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
79	78	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26

80	79	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
81	80	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
82	81	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
83	82	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
84	83	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
85	84	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
86	85	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
87	86	The RI Digital Equity Plan offers a sobering assessment and crucial steps toward addressing inequity as it relates to access and participation in our increasingly virtual world. Providence Public Library is excited to be part of supporting this plan's impact throughout the state through our responsive digital literacy courses and services, wide-ranging partnerships and coalitions, and participation in the RI Digital Equity Working group, represented by Lina Bravo, Digital Equity and Learning Coordinator at PPL. PPL's services predominantly reach low-income, older adults, particularly English language learners who are people of color. Of the 400+ users of PPL's one-on-one Digital Navigation services last year, 67% were non-Native English speakers, 66% non-white, 55% older than 54 years old, and 51% low-income. Upskilling and empowering these demographics is critical to a competitive and competent workforce and healthy and self-sufficient communities overall. We are excited to see such a strong emphasis on strengthening RI's digital equity ecosystem and working toward long-term continuity of services within this plan. Working with community members facing structural barriers to participation requires a holistic, coalitional approach and a significant investment of time and effort. While digital literacy – and digital equity programs more broadly – are critical to addressing education needs and skills gaps among the covered populations emphasized within the RI Digital Equity Plan, it has been a challenge to sustain adequate funding for these services. Longer term, more sustainable investments from entities like RI Commerce are critical to ensuring PPL and our partners in this work can continue our track record of program delivery and deep impact. Thank you for putting forth this plan, and for your continued partnership!	1	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 3.1 (Asset Inventory) and Activity 1.2.
88	87	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
89	88	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

90	89	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
91	90	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
92	91	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
93	92	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
94	93	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
95	94	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
96	95	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
97	96	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
98	97	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
99	98	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
100	99	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
101	100	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
102	101	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
103	102	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	1	Same as ID #26
104	103	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
105	104	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
106	105	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	1	Same as ID #26
107	106	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
108	107	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

109	108	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
110	109	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
111	110	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	1	Same as ID #26
112	110	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
113	111	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
114	112	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
115	113	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
116	114	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
117	115	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
118	116	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
119	117	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
120	118	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
121	119	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
122	120	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

123	121	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
124	122	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
125	123	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
126	124	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
127	125	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
128	126	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
129	127	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
130	128	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
131	129	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
132	130	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
133	131	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
134	132	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
135	133	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
136	134	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
137	135	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
138	136	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

139	137	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
140	138	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
141	139	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
142	140	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
143	141	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
144	142	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
145	143	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
146	144	Please renew the ACP and funding for digital literacy. So many adult learners, and members of the community need it. It would also be so helpful to include the whole list of AE-funded providers under the "examples of statewide assets" on pages 26 and 27, with a link to enrollri.org too. Thank you!	1	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 3.1 (Asset Inventory).
147	145	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

148	146	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
149	147	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
150	148	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
151	149	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
152	150	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
153	151	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
154	152	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
155	153	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
156	154	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
157	155	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
158	156	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
159	157	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
160	158	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
161	159	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
162	160	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
163	161	This is a necessity for everyone .	1	Comment reviewed, comment already addressed in existing draft in the Director's letter and Chapter 1 vision. No changes made.
164	162	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
165	163	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
166	164	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
167	165	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26

168	166	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
169	167	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
170	168	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
171	169	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
172	170	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
173	171	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
174	172	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
175	173	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
176	174	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
177	175	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
178	176	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
179	177	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
180	178	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
181	179	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
182	180	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
183	181	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	1	Same as ID #26
184	182	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
185	183	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
186	184	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
187	185	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
188	186	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
189	187	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
190	188	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
191	189	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
192	190	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26

193	191	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
194	192	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
195	193	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
196	194	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
197	195	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
198	196	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
199	197	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
200	198	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
201	199	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
202	200	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
203	201	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
204	202	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
205	203	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
206	204	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
207	205	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
208	206	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
209	207	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
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214	212	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
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216	214	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
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220	218	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
221	219	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
222	220	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
223	221	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
224	222	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
225	223	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
226	224	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
227	225	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public library.	3	Same as ID #26
228	226	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
229	227	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
230	228	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
231	229	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
232	230	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
233	231	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
234	232	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
235	233	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
236	234	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
237	235	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
238	236	See attached document - OSHEAN is deeply committed to this effort and would love to see it embedded in the BEAD efforts as much as possible.	5	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Chapter 5 introduction.
239	237	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

240	238	<p>RIC is not included in the appendix, yet we are listed in section 3, under Assets. We participated in the asset mapping and had 2 staff attend the Affordable Connectivity training.</p>	7	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Appendix A and B.</p>
241	239	<p>As the leading digital equity nonprofit in the nation with more than a decade of experience providing digital inclusion services, we believe access to technology is a right, not a privilege and that the following best practices are critical to best bridge the digital divide:</p> <p>Holistic Digital Navigation: Focus on addressing all aspects of digital inclusion, including connectivity, access to devices, digital skills, and technical support. Provide comprehensive support to individuals or communities to ensure they have the necessary resources and knowledge to fully participate in the digital world.</p> <p>Assisted at Time of Call, Not 'Air Traffic Control': Be responsive and proactive in assisting individuals seeking support. Instead of acting as a controlling authority, aim to provide personalized assistance in real-time, addressing their specific needs and challenges, with solutions in-the-moment rather than pushing them to make additional phone calls or visit additional websites.</p> <p>Culturally Competent Services: Recognize and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds and identities of the communities served. Tailor services to meet the unique needs and preferences of different cultural groups, ensuring that everyone feels included and valued.</p> <p>Collaborative Process with Trusted Partners: Foster partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), local governments, educational entities, and other trusted stakeholders. Work together to identify and address digital inequities, leveraging collective expertise and resources to achieve more significant impact.</p> <p>In-person and Remote Support through Various Communication Channels: Offer both in-person and remote support options to accommodate different circumstances and preferences. Utilize multiple communication channels, such as phone, email, chat, or video conferencing, to ensure accessibility and convenience for individuals seeking assistance. Providing broadband alone is not enough. We need to provide devices, digital literacy training, and technical support. It is not "if you build it, they will come." Without providing these critical wrap-around services, broadband will go unused and there will still be a significant portion of the population on the wrong side of the digital divide. Furthermore, as a technology refurbisher we support programs that refurbish and redistribute existing devices. By implementing these best practices, your state can enhance digital equity and digital inclusion efforts,</p>	1	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Strategy 1.</p>

		making a positive impact on individuals and communities. Digital equity is social equity.		
242	240	Losing the ACP funding for affordable internet at the same time that DHS is reducing SNAP benefits (that were increased during COVID) is causing financial hardship to many families.	1	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 3.2.1 (Statewide Needs Assessment)
243	241	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
244	242	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
245	243	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
246	244	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26

247	245	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
248	246	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
249	247	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
250	248	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
251	249	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
252	250	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
253	251	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
254	252	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
255	253	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
256	254	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
257	255	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
258	256	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
259	257	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
260	258	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
261	259	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
262	260	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
263	261	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
264	262	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
265	263	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
266	264	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
267	265	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
268	266	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

269	267	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
270	268	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
271	269	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
272	270	Page 28 – remove “individuals with disabilities” Page 35 – remove space in BVCAP. And “and select programs in” before Woonsocket.		Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Chapter 3.1 Asset Inventory.
273	271	Thank you for your thorough and diligent efforts in developing this extensive RI Digital Equity Plan with the goal of implementing effective solutions to this critical issue. Providence Public Library is excited to be part of supporting this plan’s impact throughout the state through our responsive digital literacy courses and services, wide-ranging partnerships and coalitions, and participation in the RI Digital Equity Working group, represented by Lina Bravo, Digital Equity and Learning Coordinator at PPL. Libraries are rightly recognized as key assets in the continued implementation and success of this plan. PPL has been contributing to this ongoing and developing effort for decades and recognizes the uniquely strong positioning libraries have in addressing many of the barriers and needs identified: ensuring affordability of interventions through offering free, accessible services that are open to the public, serving as a safe and welcoming space where members of the public naturally turn for technical support and resource navigation, providing free device and Internet access, and a strong foundation of knowledge and success in helping diverse populations navigate technology tools and information resources. PPL’s services predominantly reach low-income, older adults, particularly English language learners who are people of color. Of the 400+ users of PPL’s one-on-one Digital Navigation services last year, 67% were non-Native English speakers, 66% non-white, 55% older than 54 years old, and 51% low-income. Upskilling and empowering these demographics is critical to a competitive and competent workforce and healthy and self-sufficient communities overall. Our digital literacy education offerings support fundamental improvements and self-empowerment in everyday quality of life as well as success in career development and navigation; basic digital literacy and skills building is frequently offered concurrently with job search and career development support as these needs and challenges are intrinsically linked among many of the populations we serve. We are excited to see such a strong emphasis on strengthening RI’s digital equity ecosystem and	3	Same as ID #87

		working toward long-term continuity of services within this plan. Working with community members facing structural barriers to participation requires a holistic, coalitional approach and a significant investment of time and effort. While digital literacy – and digital equity programs more broadly – are critical to addressing education needs and skills gaps among the covered populations emphasized within the RI Digital Equity Plan, it has been a challenge to sustain adequate funding for these services. Longer term, more sustainable investments from entities like RI Commerce are critical to ensuring PPL and our partners in this work can continue our track record of program delivery and deep impact. The community need for both the digital literacy education and resource access we provide has exponentially outpaced PPL's staff and material resources and capacity, and without additional investments, we will not be able to sustain these offerings and the critical impact they are making. Thank you for putting forth this plan, and for your continued partnership!		
274	272	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
275	273	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
276	274	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
277	275	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
278	276	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
279	277	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
280	278	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
281	279	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
282	280	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
283	281	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
284	282	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
285	283	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
286	284	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
287	285	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

288	286	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
289	287	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
290	288	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
291	289	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
292	290	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
293	291	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
294	292	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
295	293	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
296	294	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
297	295	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
298	296	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
299	297	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
300	298	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
301	299	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
302	300	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
303	301	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
304	302	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
305	303	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
306	304	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
307	305	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

308	306	<p>Thank you for your thorough and diligent efforts in developing this extensive RI Digital Equity Plan with the goal of implementing effective solutions to this critical issue. Providence Public Library is excited to be part of supporting this plan's impact throughout the state through our responsive digital literacy courses and services, wide-ranging partnerships and coalitions, and participation in the RI Digital Equity Working group, represented by Lina Bravo, Digital Equity and Learning Coordinator at PPL. I am a Digital Navigator at PPL who works for the Information Services Department (as opposed to the Adult Ed department). My statistics and work is not included in the numbers provided by PPL, so I wanted to pass them along here. I have been offering 1-on-1 Digital Navigation sessions at PPL since March 2022. At first, I was only offering a few hours a week, and was able to have about 100 sessions from March 2022 to March 2023. In March 2023, PPL expanded the hours I offer Digital Navigation sessions. I have seen a major increase in traffic since. From March 2023 to now, I have had almost 500 Digital Navigation sessions, helping about 150 different individuals, including those with mental or physical disabilities, veterans, refugees, and immigrants. The large majority of the patrons I serve and teach are over 60, identify as BIPOC, and/or are English Language Learners. I help patrons with issues large, small, and everywhere in between. From searching for housing or jobs, to accessing SNAP benefits, to learning Excel or how to type or use a mouse, to helping with that small thing on a patron's device that is driving them crazy; I am here to help. Most of the time, when I first start working with a patron, they feel completely and utterly overwhelmed by today's technological world. A lot of them feel as though society has turned their backs on them. A big part of my job is assuaging those fears, assuring them that there are people, like me, here to help. I am so excited to see such a strong emphasis on strengthening RI's digital equity ecosystem and working toward long-term continuity of services within this plan, but I know that it has been a great challenge for PPL to sustain the funding for these services. I am extremely passionate about the work I do, but, if you would allow me the grace to speak of my own circumstances, it is difficult for me to imagine a future in this role/field because I simply do not make enough to live on. Longer term, more sustainable investments from entities like RI Commerce are critical to ensuring PPL and our partners in this work can continue our track record of program delivery and deep impact. The community need for both the digital literacy education and resource access we provide has exponentially outpaced PPL's staff and material resources and capacity, and without additional investments, we will not be able to sustain these offerings and the critical impact they are making. Thank you.</p>	3	Same as ID #87
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309	307	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
310	308	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
311	309	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
312	310	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
313	311	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
314	312	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
315	313	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
316	314	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
317	315	Thank you for your thorough and diligent efforts in developing this extensive RI Digital Equity Plan with the goal of implementing effective solutions to this critical issue. Providence Public Library is excited to be part of supporting this plan's impact throughout the state through our responsive digital literacy courses and services, wide-ranging partnerships and coalitions, and participation in the RI Digital Equity Working group, represented by Lina Bravo, Digital Equity and Learning Coordinator at PPL. Libraries are rightly recognized as key assets in the continued implementation and success of this plan. PPL has been contributing to this ongoing and developing effort for decades and recognizes the uniquely strong positioning libraries have in addressing many of the barriers and needs identified: ensuring affordability of interventions through offering free, accessible services that are open to the public, serving as a safe and welcoming space where members of the public naturally turn for technical support and resource navigation, providing free device and Internet access, and a strong foundation of knowledge and success in helping diverse populations navigate technology tools and information resources. PPL's services predominantly reach low-income, older adults, particularly English language learners who are people of color. Of the 400+ users of PPL's one-on-one Digital Navigation services last year, 67% were non-Native English speakers, 66% non-white, 55% older than 54 years old, and 51% low-income. Upskilling and empowering these demographics is critical to a competitive and competent workforce and healthy and self-sufficient communities overall. Our digital literacy education offerings	5	Same as ID #87

		<p>support fundamental improvements and self-empowerment in everyday quality of life as well as success in career development and navigation; basic digital literacy and skills building is frequently offered concurrently with job search and career development support as these needs and challenges are intrinsically linked among many of the populations we serve. We are excited to see such a strong emphasis on strengthening RI's digital equity ecosystem and working toward long-term continuity of services within this plan. Working with community members facing structural barriers to participation requires a holistic, coalitional approach and a significant investment of time and effort. While digital literacy – and digital equity programs more broadly – are critical to addressing education needs and skills gaps among the covered populations emphasized within the RI Digital Equity Plan, it has been a challenge to sustain adequate funding for these services. Longer term, more sustainable investments from entities like RI Commerce are critical to ensuring PPL and our partners in this work can continue our track record of program delivery and deep impact. The community need for both the digital literacy education and resource access we provide has exponentially outpaced PPL's staff and material resources and capacity, and without additional investments, we will not be able to sustain these offerings and the critical impact they are making. Thank you for putting forth this plan, and for your continued partnership!</p>		
318	316	<p>Thank you for putting this important document together. This thoroughly highlights the need to discuss targeted approaches for covered populations to create a universal digitally equitable future. We want to propose a change to this section. Activity 3.1 states, "Explore the use of broadband infrastructure funds and other state funding sources to provide a statewide affordable housing broadband program." This statewide affordable housing broadband program would only be available to public housing residents. We applaud this goal to create a statewide affordable housing broadband program and would recommend that RI Commerce include both residents of public housing and of HUD-assisted housing. The Public Housing Authorities of Rhode Island manage 9,049 public housing units. Expanding this to all HUD-assisted housing would include the 10,955 Section 8 vouchers and thousands of residents in privately-owned, HUD-assisted, affordable housing. Additionally, new affordable housing in Rhode Island will not be public housing. We would like to see residents living in any type of HUD-assisted affordable housing able to access the benefit of a statewide affordable housing broadband program. With these changes, we support RI Commerce's Digital Equity Plan. Thank you all for your diligent efforts!</p>	2	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Activity 3.1.</p>

319	316	<p>Alexandra Steinberg of ONE Neighborhood Builders has been an active member of the Digital Equity Working Group and is not listed on the list of Digital Equity Working Group members on page 71. Can you please add her name to the list?With these changes, we support RI Commerce's Digital Equity Plan. Thank you all for your diligent efforts!</p>	4	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Chapter 4.3.3.</p>
320	317	<p>Expert Recommendations on Technology SafetyRecommendations of the United States Government Accountability Office According to a 2012 Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report titled "Telecommunications: Exposure and Testing Requirements for Mobile Phones Should Be Reassessed" it is stated that "By not formally reassessing its current limit, FCC cannot ensure it is using a limit that reflects the latest research on RF energy exposure..." and that "Some consumers may use mobile phones against the body, which FCC does not currently test, and could result in RF energy exposure higher than the FCC limit." This report resulted in two recommendations made to the FCC:Recommendation 1: "The Chairman of the FCC should formally reassess the current RF energy exposure limit, including its effects on human health, the costs and benefits associated with keeping the current limit, and the opinions of relevant health and safety agencies, and change the limit if determined appropriate."Recommendation 2: "The Chairman of the FCC should reassess whether mobile phone testing requirements result in the identification of maximum RF energy exposure in likely usage configurations, particularly when mobile phones are held against the body, and update testing requirements as appropriate."According to the GAO report "Despite many years of consideration, FCC still has no specific plans to take any actions that would satisfy our recommendations. Accordingly, we are closing the recommendations as not implemented."Findings and Ruling of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit 2021 EHT et al. v. FCC :The Court found that the FCC ignored scientific evidence on negative health effects from long term wireless radiation exposure at current allowable levels, especially in regards to children, the health implications of long-term exposure to RF radiation, the ubiquity of wireless devices, and other technological developments that have occurred since the Commission last updated its guidelines; and the impacts of RF radiation on the environment. The Court also ordered the FCC to "provide a reasoned explanation for its decision to retain its testing procedures for determining whether cell phones and other portable electronic devices comply with its guidelines." The court ordered the FCC to examine the record evidence regarding long term exposure to children, health effects unrelated to cancer and environmental impacts. To date, neither the FCC nor the FDA has</p>	1	<p>Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.</p>

		<p>responded. This landmark ruling highlights how no federal health agency has reviewed the full body of current research to ensure current safety standards are protective. Recommendations of The American Academy of Pediatrics The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has written several letters to the FCC calling on them to update wireless safety limits to protect children stating that, "Current FCC standards do not account for the unique vulnerability and use patterns specific to pregnant women and children. It is essential that any new standard for cell phones or other wireless devices be based on protecting the youngest and most vulnerable populations to ensure they are safeguarded throughout their lifetimes." In response to the National Toxicology Program animal study findings of cancer and DNA damage from cell phone radiation, the AAP also issued the cell phone safety tips specifically for families to reduce exposure to wireless radiation including, "If you plan to watch a movie on your device, download it first, then switch to airplane mode while you watch in order to avoid unnecessary radiation exposure." The American Academy of Pediatrics states of cell towers that, "An Egyptian study confirmed concerns that living nearby mobile phone base stations increased the risk for developing: Headaches, Memory problems, Dizziness, Depression, Sleep problems"</p>		
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321	317	<p>Recommendations of the New Hampshire State Commission on 5G Health and Environment In 2019 the New Hampshire government passed House Bill 522 “An act establishing a commission to study the environmental and health effects of evolving 5G technology.” The Commission released its Final Report on Commission to Study the Environmental and Health Effects of Evolving 5G Technology in 2020 with findings that safety assurance for wireless technology “come into question because of the thousands of peer-reviewed studies documenting deleterious health effects associated with cellphone radiation exposure.” In its report the Commission issued 15 recommendations:Support statewide deployment of fiber optic cable connectivity with wired connections inside homes.New Hampshire schools and libraries should replace Wi-Fi with hardwired connections. Require setbacks for new wireless antennas from residences, businesses, and schools. New Hampshire health agencies educate the public on minimizing radiofrequency radiation (RFR) exposure with public service announcements on radio, television, and print. “Warnings concerning the newborn and young as well as pregnant women”Establish RFR free zones in commercial and public buildings New measurement protocols needed to evaluate high data rate, signal characteristics associated with biological effects and summative effects of multiple radiation sources. RFR signal strength measurements for cell sites should be done by independent contractors.NH professional licensure to offer education so home inspectors can include RFR intensity measurements. Warning signs to be posted in commercial and public buildings.The State should measure RFR and post maps with measurements for the public. Require 5G structures to be labeled for RFR at eye level and readable from nine feet away.Engage agencies with ecological knowledge to develop RFR safety limits that will protect the trees, plants, birds, insects, and pollinators.Under the National Environmental Policy Act, FCC should do an environmental impact statement as to the effect on New Hampshire and the country as a whole from 5G and the expansion of RF wireless technologies.Cell phones and wireless devices should be equipped with updated software that stops cell phones from radiating when positioned against the body.A resolution to US Congress to require the FCC to commission an independent health study and review of safety limits. Recommendations of The Connecticut Department of Public Health The Connecticut Department of Public Health states in its FAQs on Cell Phones that it is “wise” to reduce cell phone radio frequency to one’s brain.Recommendations of The North Carolina Public Health DepartmentThe North Carolina Public Health Department lists the full cancer findings of the NTP study, the FDA stance and also the American Academy of</p>	2	<p>Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.</p>
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	<p>Pediatrics recommendations to reduce cell phone radiation stating “there is some concern that exposure to non-ionizing radiation, also called radio frequency radiation, that is emitted by cell phones may result in an increased risk of cancer or other health effects” Recommendations of The Maryland State Children’s Environmental Health And Protection Advisory Council The Maryland State Children’s Environmental Health And Protection Advisory Council, whose 19 member Commission includes experts in public health, pediatricians, state health and environment agencies and legislators issued a report recommending reducing wireless exposure to children in schools and homes. Recommendations of The California Department of Health The California Department of Health released an advisory on how to reduce cell phone radiation stating children may be more at risk and “Although the science is still evolving, some laboratory experiments and human health studies have suggested the possibility that long-term, high use of cell phones may be linked to certain types of cancer and other health effects.” Recommendations include, “Parents should consider reducing the time their children use cell phones and encourage them to turn the devices off at night.” Recommendations of The Santa Clara Medical Association The Santa Clara Medical Association Best Practices for Technology in schools recommends reducing Wi-Fi exposure and restricting cell towers near schools. Recommendations of The California Medical Association In 2014, the California Medical Association passed two resolutions regarding wireless standards: 1. To “support efforts to reevaluate microwave safety exposure levels associated with wireless communication devices, including consideration of adverse non-thermal biologic and health effects from non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation used in wireless communications”; and 2. To “support efforts to implement new safety exposure limits for wireless devices to levels that do not cause human or environmental harm based on scientific research.”</p>		
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322	317	<p>Scientific Research on Wireless Impact to Health and Environment          Wireless radiation cannot be considered safe and FCC limits are inadequate to address long term health effects from daily exposure to wireless radiation. As stated by the EPA, FDA, and Department of Interior, current FCC guidelines address heating effects of short term exposures only. Current FCC human exposure guidelines are unchanged since 1996 and were based on now antiquated limits developed by ANSI/IEEE C95.1-1992 and NCRP's 1986 Report. These limits identified the level of adverse effects based on studies which exposed a few monkeys and rats to RF radiation for less than one hour, more than 40 years ago. They do not consider the biological effects of non-thermal or long-term low-level exposures of radiofrequency radiation documented in the scientific literature. Current guidelines also do not consider the documented effects of modulations and pulsation on living cells. As the DC Circuit recognized, these antiquated studies are a far cry from properly assessing the health and environmental impacts of modern technology and ubiquitous wireless devices. No federal agency with health or science expertise has evaluated the comprehensive body of scientific research on the human health and environmental impacts of wireless radiation. An ever growing body of scientific evidence documents adverse effects from RF radiation at exposure levels well below FCC limits with research findings that include cancer, the induction of oxidative stress, epigenetic effects, impacts to neurotransmitters, memory, brain development and damage to the immune, endocrine, hematological and reproductive system. Further, studies have found impacts to tree canopy, plant growth, pollinator health and the orientation, migration and breeding of wildlife. The science clearly indicates that wireless networks create harmful interference in humans as well as flora and fauna. Attachments 2 and Attachment 3 below document the significant body of scientific evidence indicating adverse effects to humans and the environment from radiofrequency exposure. Further, as documented in Attachment 1 on Regulatory Gaps, there are no federal agencies with health and science expertise engaged in activities related to reviewing the science on health effects of rising environmental RF levels from network infrastructure. 2. Performance, Scalability, Cybersecurity and Competition          Despite efforts made to fund broadband expansion, according to the State of Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan, "Among RI Internet Connectivity Survey respondents: 53% of respondents are not satisfied with their current service." Performance and Scalability          While wireless infrastructure promises faster and cheaper deployment, it is no match for the performance of fiber infrastructure and ends up being costlier in the long run to maintain and upgrade. The poor performance metrics of</p>	3	Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.
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	<p>wireless infrastructure costs our states billions of dollars when residents and businesses are held up by unreliable service, low speeds, and issues with cybersecurity and privacy. Baseline speed requirements of 100/20Mbps (download/upload) can be achieved with current cable infrastructure, the kind that already exists for most homes and businesses. 5G wireless infrastructure offers speeds similar to what cable currently provides and is limited in its capacity to reliably offer faster upload speeds, unreliably peaking at just 50 Mbps when standing near the transmitter. Using funding for wireless infrastructure will put communities in another digital divide in just a few years when bandwidth demands increase with future technology demands. Baseline speeds for fiber infrastructure is 1000/1000 Mbps (download/upload) far surpassing wireless speeds at its minimum performance capabilities. Currently cities that have adopted all fiber networks are seeing speeds of 10,000/10,000 Mbps with the capabilities of upgrading to Terabyte symmetrical speeds and quantum technology. Chattanooga, Tennessee adopted fiber to the premises 12 years ago with symmetrical speeds of 1000 Mbps and has now upgraded to 10 Gbps (or 10,000 Mbps) symmetrical speeds by simply replacing the software and keeping all the fiber intact. Fiber upgrades cost a fraction of wireless infrastructure upgrades. These savings will be passed down to underserved communities that need it the most. That is why it is critical to invest in a superior infrastructure, that is fiber, now which will pay off in the future. The pandemic shutdowns forced large families to work and school from home and it was a quick lesson on the imperative need for fast, reliable internet that not only allowed us to quickly download information but to also have fast upload speeds so that multiple family members can have online video calls at the same time. Wireless infrastructure fails in allowing multiple users on the same network to reliably have online video meetings at the same time.</p>		
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323	317	<p>Wireless infrastructure fails during inclement weather or when the path of the signal is obstructed. Fiber and current cable infrastructure can reliably offer superior service without these challenges. Cybersecurity While it is important to teach residents cyber safety it is equally important to harden the infrastructure to keep out bad actors. Wireless broadband presents a major cybersecurity risk. Individuals, institutions and businesses have suffered great losses as wireless signals are easily accessible to hackers. Fiber and current cable infrastructure can reliably offer superior service with less risk to cybersecurity. Competition The quality of broadband will make or break the ability for these communities to compete with the rest of the United States and the world. Other countries have recognized the importance of fiber optics all the way to the premises and have invested heavily to reach 100% penetration, ensuring that even rural communities with unfavorable terrain have fiber. As of 2019 - 92% of China's internet users had fiber all the way to the home. 62% of homes in the European Union 39 bloc nations have fiber to the premises. United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Singapore and Hong Kong all have higher than 90% penetration of fiber all the way to the premises while Iceland, Spain and Portugal are catching up at 76.8%, 73.5% and 71.1% respectively. The US, on the other hand, stands at 16.39% penetration of fiber to the premises and ranked 30th among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, as of 2020. 3. Energy Efficiency According to IEEE Magazine, 5G base stations are expected to consume roughly 3 times the power of 4G base stations and more 5G base stations are required to cover the same area. Energy consumption is expected to increase by 61 times from 2020 to 2030 with 5G. Adding more strain on electric grids, especially when we have not fully moved to renewable energy, will further exacerbate carbon emissions. According to countries that have already installed fiber to the homes (FTTH), like China and Spain, fiber is 85% more energy efficient than copper yielding a saving of 208GWh which represents a reduction of 56,500 tons of CO2 emissions. One study done by the Federal Environment Ministry of Germany and the German Environment Agency found that video transmission through fiber optics is nearly 50 times more energy efficient than wireless. Research on whole network level assessments of the operational energy use implications of 5G warns "Energy-intensive user practices contribute to ever-growing levels of data traffic, and counteract the energy-saving potential of 5G efficiency improvements." Promoting technology that increases carbon pollution in already disadvantaged neighborhoods will further exacerbate environmental and social injustices.4. EHT Recommendations Recommendation 1: Individuals such as those with Electromagnetic Field (EMF) related disabilities</p>	4	Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.
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		<p>and vulnerable populations like children, pregnant women, the sick and elderly should have equal access to safe wired (wireless radiation-free) technology. According to the Digital Equity Plan “this plan will unlock federal funding specifically to support digital equity as part of the Corporation’s efforts to ensure all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable, high-speed internet in their homes, at their places of employment, and in public facilities.” There is a segment of the population that has developed or will develop microwave sickness, a debilitating reaction to electromagnetic fields including RFR. Microwave sickness is well documented in the medical literature. Electromagnetic related disability is recognized by the US government and multiple other entities. In addition, certain segments of the population are more vulnerable to radiofrequency impacts, including children, pregnant women, the sick and the elderly. The goal of The Corporation is to provide connectivity to all Americans, regardless of disability status or age. Wired internet connections can safely and more effectively provide internet connectivity without the risks to individuals especially those with electromagnetic disabilities and vulnerable populations. This is in line with the expert recommendations cited above to provide fiber optics connectivity to all premises and hardwired connections all the way to devices, including replacing Wi-Fi with hardwired connections.</p>		
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324	317	<p>Please see attached for full statement with footnotes and links: EHT shares the vision of The Corporation “to leverage a best-in-class, resilient, sustainable, and scalable broadband infrastructure to propel the state’s 21st century economic, education, healthcare, civic and social engagement, and quality of life, by ensuring all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable, accessible high-speed internet in their homes, at their places of employment, and at public facilities by 2027.” Digital equity initiatives focus on communities with technology access disparities who oftentimes also experience disparities in environmental, social and/or health justice. We submit that a responsible digital equity plan must consider the quality, sustainability and upgradability of the technology being introduced and also their impact on the environment and health to ensure continuity into the future. The four overarching objectives of The Corporation’s Digital Equity Plan are: “1) Digital Skills and Online Safety; 2) Device Access; 3) Broadband; 4) Online Accessibility; “We urge The Corporation to favor wired connections all the way to the end user where feasible in these communities and not wireless infrastructure which will not meet future connectivity needs, harm the environment and the health of residents and create another digital divide in just a few years. Wired connections are superior to wireless as evidenced by the following sections: 1. Scientific and policy documentation on human health and environment supporting the use of wired versus wireless broadband 2. Performance, scalability, cybersecurity and competition 3. Energy efficiency 4. EHT Recommendations 5. Attachments 1. Scientific and Policy Documentation on Human Health and Environment Supporting the Use of Wired versus Wireless Broadband The scientific evidence is adequate to support strong public health policies to reduce wireless radiation, especially for children and vulnerable populations. A growing body of scientific evidence of wireless radio frequency (RF) radiation at levels far below FCC limits is showing evidence of cancer, increased oxidative stress, genetic damage, structural and functional changes of the reproductive system, memory deficit, behavioral problems, and neurological impacts. However, despite these health issues, wireless technologies are often put forward as the solution to bridge the digital divide and connect the unconnected. Thus, vulnerable populations often end up receiving significantly increased exposure of radiofrequency radiation, an emerging environmental justice issue. Research shows that the environmental levels of radiofrequency radiation (RFR) that people are exposed to have increased with the densification of cell tower networks closer to where people live, work and play and levels are highest in urban areas. Studies show a 70x increase. Cell towers are often disproportionately placed in neighborhoods with higher</p>	5	<p>Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.</p>
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		<p>numbers of minorities and students needing free and reduced meals. In Montgomery County, for example, cell towers are overwhelmingly placed in schools with higher numbers of minorities, english as a second language students, and those who subscribe to free and reduced lunch rates. Parents in schools with a higher white and more affluent population have organized and successfully fought off the towers. Cell antennas are being put up in front of apartments and renters are not being informed nor are they a part of the decision making process. Low income families and renters have less ability to move or mitigate exposures. Health care inequalities will further exacerbate health inequities as people in under-resourced communities will receive unequal care for the damages from exposure to RFR. Policies to fasttrack 5G and wireless technology are pushed to fix the digital divide despite evidence indicating it could exacerbate the digital divide. In June 2020, the U.S. the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on 5G which concluded that 5G may “worsen” the digital divide. The experts the GAO convened stated that “5G deployment would likely exacerbate disparities in access to telecommunications services, known as the ‘digital divide.’”</p>		
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325	317	<p>Recommendation 3: “Strategy 1: Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities.” Strategy 1 offers a list of core activities and should also include education on the impacts of RF exposure on humans, especially children, pregnant women, the sick and the elderly and ways to mitigate these impacts.</p> <p>Environmental Health Trust has developed public health fact sheets and educational resources to communicate all the ways to reduce everyday wireless exposures. These educational resources are free and should be included in the State of Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan as part of the education plans to leverage.</p> <p>Also, broadening the definition of stakeholders to include a wider range of groups including public health and environmental health organizations such as Environmental Health Trust as well as community groups and organizations. More outreach needs to be done with the American public so they understand this issue and can participate in the process.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: We recommend that wired networks be installed instead of wireless access points. In addition, wired computers and associated equipment, along with training, should be provided to communities so they can learn how to use wired computers and technology.</p> <p>We recommend against wireless broadband technology and instead recommend wired networks whenever possible. For example, in a library each desk can be equipped with an ethernet connection and adapters, same with schools. Elderly centers can be equipped with wired computers.</p>	6	<p>Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.</p>
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		<p>If Wi-Fi or wireless systems are to be installed then proper RFR measurements should be taken and publicly posted on maps so the RF radiation measurements may be accessed by all individuals concerned with wireless radiation exposure, especially those with electromagnetic sensitivity. We also recommend that proper signage be posted on all locations with Wi-fi hotspots and other wireless transmitters, visible at least 9 feet away, so that individuals with electromagnetic sensitivities may be alerted prior to high exposure. Full transparency is needed regarding RF exposures.</p> <p>5. Attachments</p> <p>ATTACHMENT 1: Today's Regulatory Gap Regarding Radiofrequency Bioeffects</p> <p>ATTACHMENT 2: Radio-frequency Radiation Impacts on the Environment</p> <p>ATTACHMENT 3: Radio-frequency Radiation Impacts on Human Health</p> <p>ATTACHMENT 4: Legal and Liability Issues of Wireless</p> <p>We are happy to meet with and provide The Corporation and affiliates with more information and resources if needed. We are also happy to partner with The Corporation to provide the digital safety skills training mentioned above.</p>		
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326	317	<p>ATTACHMENT 1: Today's Regulatory Gap Regarding Radiofrequency Bioeffects</p> <p>Although the public and elected officials assume that federal agencies are engaged in RF activities to ensure public health and environmental protection, this is inaccurate. FCC RF exposure limits are guidelines only, as they are not federally developed safety standards whereby agencies reviewed the totality of scientific evidence, performed risk analysis and identified a level of adverse effect to base an exposure limit on that would ensure adequate public protection. A review of federal agency involvement indicates minimal research and oversight activities along with serious regulatory gaps including but not limited to:</p> <p>Issues related to the FCC's 1996 limits.</p> <p>RF guidelines were designed for humans, not animals or plants, and only for effects of high intensity short term acute exposures. The limits were not designed to protect against effects of long term exposure.</p> <p>There is no periodic or ongoing transparent evaluation of current scientific research to ensure FCC limits are adequate (no hazard evaluation, quantitative risk assessment of the totality of science including impacts to brain development, reproduction or immune system) by any federal agency with health and safety expertise.</p> <p>Issues related to transparency, monitoring, data gathering and oversight.</p> <p>There is no federal registry for all wireless facility sites, macro cell towers, and 5G/4G "small cell" wireless facilities.</p>	7	<p>Comment reviewed – forwarded to FCC.</p>
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		<p>There is no measuring, monitoring or mapping program for environmental RF levels.</p> <p>There is no post market surveillance program nor public/industry reporting system to gather data on health and environmental impacts.</p> <p>Issues related to compliance</p> <p>There is no oversight and enforcement program in place to ensure RF emissions from network antennas and devices are compliant.</p> <p>Current industry-generated or commissioned pre-construction reports and post-construction testing are largely inadequate, if not inaccurate, in large part because the modeling protocols and programs have not been validated for real world accuracy.</p> <p>There are no up-to-date, minimum standards for preparing RF compliance reports, studies and evaluations nor quality control.</p> <p>As of June 2023, FCC has not issued updated guidance on how to comply with RF rules, which includes newly licensed frequencies and services, since 1997. The existing guidance, Evaluating Compliance with FCC Guidelines for Human Exposure to Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields (FCC OET 65 (1997), which provides assistance in determining whether proposed or existing transmitting facilities, operations or devices comply with limits for human exposure to radiofrequency (RF) adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules, is outdated. Independent inspectors, informed by up-to-date guidance, should be required to carry out on-the-ground measurements post antenna deployments to verify compliance with human exposure limits.</p> <p>Field compliance reports taking actual measurements can reach different conclusions depending on, for example, the number of measurements, location of measurements in relation to the antennas and the length of measurement in</p>		
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		<p>each location. Furthermore, reports are inconsistent regarding the inclusion of peak measurements versus averaged measurements, and the inclusion of actual values versus percentage of FCC limits.</p> <p>Issues related to agency authority.</p> <p>There is no agency with authority regarding impacts of ambient environmental exposures from the RF emissions of cell towers and base station antennas (including 4G, 5G) which is engaged in any scientific activities (as compared to cell phones of which the FDA has shared authority and has shown only limited activities).</p> <p>There is no agency with authority nor activities related to impacts of RF exposures to wildlife, animals and the natural environment (plants and trees).</p> <p>Issues related to bioeffects research and safety testing.</p> <p>There is no regulatory process for premarket safety testing (as currently done with drugs) to ensure new wireless communication frequencies, antenna systems and technologies are safe.</p> <p>There is no federal research program on biological impacts except for a small ongoing animal study by the National Toxicology Program.</p> <p>There is no agency carrying out pre-or post-market studies research activities related to evaluating the health and environmental impacts of new technologies (i.e, new modulations such as 5G, or higher frequencies to be used in future technologies and/or antenna systems such as beamforming etc.).</p>		
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327	318	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
328	319	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
329	320	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
330	321	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
331	322	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
332	323	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
333	324	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
334	325	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
335	326	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
336	327	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
337	328	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
338	329	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
339	330	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
340	331	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
341	332	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
342	333	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
343	334	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
344	335	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
345	336	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
346	337	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
347	338	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
348	339	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
349	340	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26

350	341	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
351	342	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
352	343	<p>Thank you for your thorough and diligent efforts in developing this extensive RI Digital Equity Plan with the goal of implementing effective solutions to this critical issue. Providence Public Library is excited to be part of supporting this plan’s impact throughout the state through our responsive digital literacy courses and services, wide-ranging partnerships and coalitions, and participation in the RI Digital Equity Working group, represented by Lina Bravo, Digital Equity and Learning Coordinator at PPL.</p> <p>Libraries are rightly recognized as key assets in the continued implementation and success of this plan. PPL has been contributing to this ongoing and developing effort for decades and recognizes the uniquely strong positioning libraries have in addressing many of the barriers and needs identified: ensuring affordability of interventions through offering free, accessible services that are open to the public, serving as a safe and welcoming space where members of the public naturally turn for technical support and resource navigation, providing free device and Internet access, and a strong foundation of knowledge and success in helping diverse populations navigate technology tools and information resources. PPL’s services predominantly reach low-income, older adults, particularly English language learners who are people of color. Of the 400+ users of PPL’s one-on-one Digital Navigation services last year, 67% were non-Native English speakers, 66% non-white, 55% older than 54 years old, and 51% low-income. Upskilling and empowering these demographics is critical to a competitive and competent workforce and healthy and self-sufficient communities overall. Our digital literacy education offerings support fundamental improvements and self-empowerment in everyday quality of life as well as success in career development and navigation; basic digital literacy and skills building is frequently offered concurrently with job search and career development support as these needs and challenges are intrinsically linked among many of the populations we serve.</p> <p>We are excited to see such a strong emphasis on strengthening RI’s digital equity ecosystem and working toward long-term continuity of services within this plan. Working with community members facing structural barriers to participation requires a holistic, coalitional approach and a significant investment of time and effort. While digital literacy – and digital equity programs more broadly – are critical to addressing education needs and</p>	1	Same as ID #87

		<p>skills gaps among the covered populations emphasized within the RI Digital Equity Plan, it has been a challenge to sustain adequate funding for these services. Longer term, more sustainable investments from entities like RI Commerce are critical to ensuring PPL and our partners in this work can continue our track record of program delivery and deep impact. The community need for both the digital literacy education and resource access we provide has exponentially outpaced PPL's staff and material resources and capacity, and without additional investments, we will not be able to sustain these offerings and the critical impact they are making.</p> <p>Thank you for putting forth this plan, and for your continued partnership!</p>		
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353	344	<p>This comment is regarding the entire plan not just one section. Here at the Ocean State Center for Independent Living, we believe in the need for accessibility to be at the forefront of the proposal and how independent testing before and after release should be required. Devices considered to be included in distribution should be the best at accessibility or assessed by Agencies that work with adaption like OSCIL and Tech Access. Adaptive Technology including accessibility software for technology should be included in funding, these devices can change the digital divide some Rhode Islanders with disabilities face every day. Funds will be needed for continued training to successfully use these devices to increase digital equity. We recommend allocating funds for ASL interpreters to be present at training courses to ensure the deaf community has access to the proper information and understanding. Programs across the State of Rhode Island like the DigiAge technology program at OSCIL, funded by the Office of Healthy Aging, and University of Rhode Island's Cyber Seniors are losing funding in 2024 which means these programs will need to be re-funded or replaced to help those in the Aging and Disability Communities. We suggest that allocating funds to these programs would be the easiest solution, but if not possible, working with these organizations and agencies to create new, more advanced programs would benefit Rhode Islanders in the long term. What we see at OSCIL is a need to embrace a long-term service that provides those in the State of Rhode Island with the tools and training needed to broaden their endeavors and allow access to a brighter future. Devices should be repairable or upgradeable, while being adaptable. The inclusion of the very experienced agencies and organizations in the State of Rhode Island is of the utmost importance, as they can and have facilitated programs for years that provide these services successfully. Thank you, Sincerely OSCIL Staff</p>	1	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Strategy 1, Activity 1.2, and Strategy 2.</p>
354	345	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26</p>
355	346	<p>Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26</p>
356	347	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26</p>
357	348	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26</p>
358	349	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26</p>

359	350	<p>Role of digital navigators: Nearly 20% of Americans lack a broadband connection or digital device at home according to the 2020 US Census (Kalmus, 2022). The Boston Consulting Group studied digital navigator programs over a few years and found from a survey of over 1,500 people that digital navigators can increase the effectiveness of digital equity programs (Kalmus, 2022). With support from a digital navigator, over 65% of survey respondents were able to obtain internet access, computer or tablet at home, and over 85% reported using the internet more (Kalmus, 2022). This illustrates the crucial role that digital navigators play and we need to continue to support these roles across Rhode Island. We are excited to see that the plan identified the need for: On page 59, the need for digital navigators and trainers are listed On page 59 the need for accessibility features and assistive technology are listed On page 64, the plan mentions that there is a lack of capacity at rural libraries, such as limited staffing and hours, limits access to training and digital inclusion services Strategy 1 Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities. 1.4 - explore family sustaining career opportunities to deliver digital inclusion services Train and prepare covered population residents to serve in roles such as digital navigators, digital skill trainers, device refurbishers, technical support and repair specialists and broadband technicians We would like to see the following changes implemented to support digital navigators Develop dedicated support lines to assist community members with digital literacy skills such as: identifying scams and cybersecurity risks on personal devices, access patient portals for medical treatment or communication, submitting job applications and much more Support the development of a standardized digital navigator curriculum and assessments Expand the capacity of digital navigators with added funding Support knowledge sharing between digital navigators that are existing and new digital navigators Develop &amp; provide increased financial support for outreach campaigns Invest in research &amp; evaluation to improve existing program design and closely measure impacts Role of nonprofits &amp; community organizations Local nonprofits serve as a trusted, community resource which can be easily accessed by members of the community. We appreciate the community asset mapping efforts listed on page 69 of the plan and have completed this form to add our organization, Lead for America - American Connection Corps as a potential asset. Many individuals already accessing a nonprofits services may also be eligible for federal/state broadband programs. It’s important to acknowledge that nonprofits can be a crucial resource in capacity building. Digital navigators can be placed within nonprofits in the community. In order to reach this capacity, we’d like to see the following additions</p>	5	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 3.1 Asset Inventory and Activity 5.1.</p>
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		<p>to the plan: Expanded financial resources to hire and train staff to serve as digital navigatorsWe'd like to see the plan incorporate leveraging nonprofits to educate communities on financial resources to assist with the cost of internet, similar to the affordable connectivity program (ACP)Encourage incorporation of digital upskilling into existing workforce development programsBoots on the ground capacity There is an increasing need for boots-on-the-ground capacity building in rural and emerging communities and we believe that the American Connection Corps model has proven successful in helping to meet this need and can be used as an example for expanding and improving Rhode Island's digital opportunity plan implementation. Since 2021, ACC has successfully graduated 75 AmeriCorps members, who have hosted over 360+ digital skill-building workshops and community forums, and launched 75+ public-private partnerships. As a result of these members' service they have enrolled 6,500+ households into the American Connectivity Program (ACP) Benefits and channeled \$45,503,609 to local communities. We appreciate that on page 40 of the Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan, Volunteer Rhode Island (VNH) is listed as a resource to integrate AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteer programs with capacity building initiatives, but we hope additional emphasis will be placed on partnering with the ServeRI state service commission as well as other AmeriCorps programs such as ours to build a talent pipeline and critical capacity for these efforts.We would like to emphasize that AmeriCorps Members can be strategically recruited and leveraged to help communities build capacity for digital inclusion. For example in 2023, Lead for America implemented a groundbreaking public private partnership with the state of Massachusetts and Comcast to provide Digital Navigators to nonprofits and regional planning organizations statewide by placing 15 American Connection Corps members acro</p>		
360	351	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
361	352	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
362	353	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
363	354	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
364	355	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
365	356	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

366	357	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
367	358	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
368	359	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
369	360	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
370	361	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
371	362	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
372	363	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
373	364	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
374	365	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
375	366	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
376	367	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
377	368	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
378	369	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
379	370	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
380	371	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
381	372	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
382	373	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
383	374	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
384	375	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
385	376	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

386	377	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
387	378	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
388	379	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
389	380	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
390	381	<p>One key requirement of state digital equity plans is that they include a state’s vision of digital equity. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) suggests that digital equity visions address at least these two questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What will digital equity look like in the context of your state?</li> <li>2. What are the broad goals that should be accomplished in executing this plan (e.g., improve rural health outcomes, increase underrepresented youth employment in technology-related fields)?</li> </ol> <p>NTIA has specifically advised states to “lead with equity,” intentionally identifying, amplifying, and centering the voices of those most affected by the digital divide and disconnected communities.</p> <p>With the extraordinary task and responsibility of state policymakers and local communities in mind, the Benton Institute for Broadband &amp; Society launched the Visions of Digital Equity project to aid both in ensuring that more community voices are heard in crafting visions that increase opportunity for all.</p> <p>Through surveys, community meetings, interviews, conversations, and a collaborative writing process with community contributors, we have arrived at a set of principles to help guide both the process and the resulting visions of digital equity.</p> <p>We learned that a well-crafted vision of digital equity has the potential to be very powerful. It can:</p>	2	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 2.1 Vision for Digital Equity and 5.2 Timeline

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a glimpse of a state transformed by universal connectivity,</li> <li>• Provide a roadmap and resources for the digital inclusion efforts to come, and</li> <li>• Act as a north star for goal setting, planning, and implementation efforts over the months and years to come.</li> </ul> <p>The best visions of digital equity will be community centered and focused on creating change, specific and clearly articulated, and ambitious but attainable.</p> <p>The Benton Institute for Broadband &amp; Society reviewed the draft State of Rhode Island Digital Equity Plan and shared a summary of it with our readers (<a href="https://www.benton.org/blog/wholistic-digital-equity-plan-rhode-island">https://www.benton.org/blog/wholistic-digital-equity-plan-rhode-island</a>).</p> <p>Upon review, we offer 10 Principles for Digital Equity Visions (see attachment and <a href="https://www.benton.org/sites/default/files/VisionsDigitalEquity.pdf">https://www.benton.org/sites/default/files/VisionsDigitalEquity.pdf</a>). We hope these principles help the people of Rhode Island evaluate both the draft Digital Equity Plan and the Commerce Corporation's revision of the plan. To that end, we also offer A Checklist for Evaluating Digital Equity Visions (see <a href="https://www.benton.org/sites/default/files/DEV_checklist.pdf">https://www.benton.org/sites/default/files/DEV_checklist.pdf</a>)</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the plan; I would be happy to answer any questions or discuss the potential of Rhode Island's vision for digital equity.</p>		
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391	382	Providence Public Library has seen and can attest to the critical impact of the work underway through the implementation of the RI Digital Equity Plan. It is an area that the Library has focused on for decades and has pledged to continue, in partnership with other libraries and entities committed to these goals. The community need for both the digital literacy education and resource access that the Library provides continues to grow and without additional investments, we will struggle to sustain these offerings and the enormous impact they are making.	1	Same as ID #87
392	383	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
393	384	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
394	385	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
395	386	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
396	387	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
397	388	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
398	389	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
399	390	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26
400	391	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
401	392	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
402	393	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26
403	394	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26

404	395	<p>AARP appreciates the opportunity to comment on Rhode Island's Draft Digital Equity Plan ("Plan"), which was created by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation ("Corporation"). (Please see attached document with our full comments, as our comments do not fit into the space allotted for each section.) These comments reflect in part AARP's perspective based on its many years of experience advocating for older adults on many issues, including on reliable, affordable high-speed internet access, as well as its review of the draft digital equity plans of 48 other states. AARP commends the Plan's comprehensive discussion and analysis of the challenges to and benefits from achieving digital equity as well as for a thoughtful and clearly articulated roadmap for narrowing digital disparities in Rhode Island. The Plan reflects extensive data analysis as well as extensive stakeholder outreach and engagement. The Executive Summary provides a valuable overview of the core components of the Plan. This will greatly benefit readers who don't have time to read the entire Plan. On page 23, the Plan cites Census Bureau data that finds that over 20% of the state's population reflect individuals with a language barrier (one of the eight "covered populations" in the Digital Equity Act). AARP is hopeful that the Corporation will add links to translations of the Executive Summary into the major languages spoken in Rhode Island, a practice that AARP has observed some other states have implemented. AARP is also hopeful that the website will provide an easy-to-use link for those lacking English proficiency to connect to information about and during the state's implementation of the Plan.</p>	1	<p>Comment reviewed, changes will be considered during implementation period.</p>
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405	395	<p>AARP appreciates the opportunity to comment on Rhode Island's Draft Digital Equity Plan ("Plan"), which was created by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation ("Corporation"). These comments reflect in part AARP's perspective based on its many years of experience advocating for older adults on many issues, including on reliable, affordable high-speed internet access, as well as its review of the draft digital equity plans of 48 other states. AARP commends the Plan's comprehensive discussion and analysis of the challenges to and benefits from achieving digital equity as well as for a thoughtful and clearly articulated roadmap for narrowing digital disparities in Rhode Island. The Plan reflects extensive data analysis as well as extensive stakeholder outreach and engagement. The Executive Summary provides a valuable overview of the core components of the Plan. This will greatly benefit readers who don't have time to read the entire Plan. On page 23, the Plan cites Census Bureau data that finds that over 20% of the state's population reflect individuals with a language barrier (one of the eight "covered populations" in the Digital Equity Act). AARP is hopeful that the Corporation will add links to translations of the Executive Summary into the major languages spoken in Rhode Island, a practice that AARP has observed some other states have implemented. AARP is also hopeful that the website will provide an easy-to-use link for those lacking English proficiency to connect to information about and during the state's implementation of the Plan.</p>	2	<p>Comment reviewed, changes will be considered during implementation period.</p>
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406	395	<p>AARP appreciates the Plan's comprehensive inventory of assets across Rhode Island that promote digital equity. Rhode Island has an impressive foundation to support its continuing efforts to close digital gaps. AARP appreciates being recognized as a digital inclusion asset in 3.1.3 on page 32. We are hopeful the final Plan will also include Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP's program "Senior Planet" as an asset to older adults in Rhode Island. Please note as well as offering online classes through Senior Planet to older adults in Rhode Island, Senior Planet also hosts a National Tech Hotline: 888-713-3495 which is monitored by Senior Planet Trainers from 9am – 5pm EDT, Monday through Friday. These programs are designed to help older adults aged 60 and older thrive in the digital world and harnesses technology to change the way we age. Senior Planet also has a licensing program that equips local organizations across the country with the tools and curriculum to help older adults access technology and use it to enhance their lives. AARP is hopeful that the Corporation updates and publicizes these inventories to inform best practices throughout the state and considers making some of the information available in languages in addition to English. The Plan provides a valuable overview of existing resources that facilitate adoption and affordability. Among other programs are various organizations' and agencies' efforts to increase Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) participation. AARP welcomes the opportunity to contribute to ACP or successor affordability program outreach and education. The needs assessment in Section 3.2 is comprehensive and will provide a valuable tool as the Plan implements programs and projects throughout the state. AARP commends the Corporation gathering both quantitative data and qualitative feedback to inform the Plan's needs assessment. Rhode Island's summary findings for older adults are consistent with AARP's experience based on its advocacy in many states and at the federal level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability - Affordability remains a key barrier preventing older adults from getting online. Many older adults live on fixed incomes with Social Security being the primary source of income. When adding car or transportation costs, groceries, health and medical costs, and other living expenses, it can be difficult for older residents to manage an additional bill for broadband. Affordability as a barrier for older adults is further evidenced by ACP participation within the state. 49% of all ACP enrollees in Rhode Island are households with a resident 50 or older. That's over 38,000 households. Summary findings on page 52 mention affordability as a barrier for older adults, however the Summary of Barriers to Digital Equity on page 63 does not include affordability as a barrier for older adults. AARP is hopeful that the final Plan will clearly indicate affordability remains a barrier for older</li> </ul>	3	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 3.1 Asset Inventory and 3.2.2 Covered Population Needs Assessment. Comment reviewed, changes will be considered during implementation period.</p>
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	<p>adults. • Reliability - AARP supports an additional Objective within Goal 1 that directs action toward improving internet reliability within the state. Older adults, especially in rural areas, may experience slow speeds that struggle to upload or download items. Completing online job or government benefit applications or ordering something through an e-commerce platform creates a challenge, especially when the internet service times out. Internet reliability is also a significant challenge for educators, institutions, and students, in addition to employers, businesses, and the agriculture sector. User dissatisfaction with reliability and speed are important because they provide evidence of disparate levels of technology and quality of high-speed internet access. The reliability of the high-speed internet access that covered populations can afford and that are available in their communities should mirror that offered to and subscribed to by others in Rhode Island. • Digital literacy – As technology and Internet-connected devices become more integrated into daily life, there is a tendency to assume that everyone has a certain base level of proficiency. But the reality is that even if we can achieve universal broadband availability, affordability, and device distribution, a lack of digital skills will leave too many older adults in Rhode Island unable to benefit from those successes. From navigating websites, to using a word processor, to assessing the reliability of information online, digital skills building is fundamental to ensuring equitable access to technology and the Internet. • Devices/Tech support - Not all older adults in Rhode Island have devices that meet their needs. In fact, American Community Survey data show that older adult households in the state continue to lag behind younger demographics, when it comes to devices. AARP maintains that assistive technologies should be available to those who need it and that technical assistance will be needed as more underserved populations get ac</p>		
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407	395	<p>The Plan reflects extensive and multi-faceted outreach. Successful implementation of the Plan depends on maintaining and expanding the impressive level of collaboration and partnerships the Plan undertook. AARP appreciates the Corporation's efforts to conduct a Broadband Summit, over 40 listening sessions, 13 Digital Inclusion Week events, and two statewide workshops in 2023. This in-person solicitation provides rich information to overlay the insights provided by federal government data and Rhode Island's three surveys. AARP suggests the Corporation invest sufficient resources to continue in-person solicitation to ensure effective feedback is received from populations not using the internet. Mail and in-person surveys, focus groups, roundtables, community partner events are all excellent avenues to foster collaboration and to ensure true progress is achieved throughout the forthcoming grant period and beyond. AARP highly commends the Plan's "Community Stories" spread throughout the entire document. These stories improve the readability of the Plan and help connect the reader to underserved populations. AARP appreciates being acknowledged as a contributor to the Statewide Digital Equity Working Group on page 71.</p>	4	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in 4.4 Ongoing Engagement. Comment reviewed, changes will be considered during implementation period.</p>
408	395	<p>The Plan's approach to implementation dovetails well with the assets and barriers the Plan identifies and builds off of the partnerships and relationships described. The many elements of the plans for implementation appear ambitious yet pragmatic. The Summary of Strategies and Core Activities chart on page 76 is useful, however please specify which covered populations will benefit the most from each core activity described.</p> <p>AARP commends the Plan for committing to Objectives and KPIs for each of the five strategies put forward. We note that the Plan states an intention to refine and finalize proposed strategies and activities after the federal Capacity Grant awards and requirement have been announced. AARP encourages the final Plan to incorporate clear and measurable short, medium, and long-term KPI's that focus on outcomes, when possible. For example, "Number of training programs for online privacy and cybersecurity" could be changed to "Number of covered individuals that feel more confident in protecting their online privacy after attending a digital skills class", or instead of "Number of programs providing training on digital skills related to state priorities...", this could be changed to "Number of covered individuals that report an increase in feeling socially connected due to attending a digital skills class... etc." AARP is hopeful the final Plan will tie these covered population-specific actions back to covered population-specific needs assessment findings and anchor them to a quantified</p>	5	<p>Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Core Activities 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 5.3. Comment reviewed, changes will be considered during implementation period.</p>

		<p>baseline for each.</p> <p>Strategy 1: Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities.</p> <p>AARP appreciates Rhode Island's consideration of curriculum and trainer development as part of core activities of Strategy 1 “Create and align opportunities for Rhode Islanders to obtain the digital skills necessary to achieve our state’s priorities.” Please ensure “existing Covered Population-serving ecosystems” have standardized curriculum and appropriate resources such as trainers, administrators to ensure long-term access and enjoyment of digital inclusion services.</p> <p>AARP recommends the final Plan include an action to require subgrantees to detail a plan for ongoing technical assistance related to their devices, whether given for ownership or available as a loan. Subgrantees would provide narrative details on fixes or replacements for broken devices, a plan for basic IT guidance for device recipients, and consider inclusion of limited warranties for refurbished devices. A KPI could track progress through annual subgrantee reporting, including number of devices deployed and number of residents assisted with technical support.</p> <p>AARP commends Core Activity 1.2 to invest in existing Covered Population-serving ecosystems to ensure all geographic regions (five counties) have access to comprehensive digital inclusion services. In achieving this activity, AARP recommends Rhode Island balance investments between capacity building and direct services and between proven models and new, innovative strategies. For reasons outlined in comments on the Barriers and Needs section above, AARP supports Core Activity 1.3 to incorporate online privacy and cybersecurity skill-building in digital inclusion services. Please ensure aging individuals that have lived experience with digital inclusion services are tapped to support Core Activity 1.4.</p> <p>Strategy 2: Increase access to affordable, high-quality large-screen internet enabled devices and technical support that meets residents’ needs.</p> <p>AARP appreciates this strategy as device access is a barrier for all covered populations. This strategy considers accessibility of technology and will ensure those with differing needs can access and adopt the technology they</p>		
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		<p>require. How will Rhode Island ensure they understand what devices are required to “meet residents’ needs”? We commend Objective 2 that includes both a help desk and technical support. We recommend that the help desk and technical support are offered in easily accessible locations or virtually and are provided in a culturally competent manner. We also caution Rhode Island from creating an ecosystem of used devices and device loan programs as an avenue for getting devices to people. Used devices can often provide a subpar experience and can be a detriment to overall digital skill adoption as they may require additional maintenance or no longer offer updates/security patches. Device loans may hinder the individual from practicing skills learned in digital skills programs. An example of this can be seen in the plan on page 41 “Government gives out refurbished Androids which are a waste when people have accessibility issues.”– Statewide workshop participant.</p> <p>It is unclear how the KPIs under Objective 2 “Device Access-prioritize Covered Populations to achieve a goal of 95%...” will measure if a device has met a person’s needs. Please consider incorporating a survey that me</p>		
409	395	<p>AARP welcomes the opportunity to work with the Corporation and other key stakeholders to help Rhode Island make progress toward its ambitious digital equity goals. Aging individuals overlap with other covered populations -- AARP is fully prepared to partner with other organizations and community-based groups to contribute to achieving digital equity for all. AARP commends Rhode Island on its Draft Digital Equity Plan and respectfully requests consideration of suggestions contained herein be incorporated into the final Plan.</p>	6	<p>Comment reviewed, changes will be considered during implementation period.</p>
410	396	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
411	397	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
412	398	<p>Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
413	399	<p>Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
414	400	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
415	401	<p>Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
416	402	<p>Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>
417	403	<p>Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.</p>	3	<p>Same as ID #26.</p>

418	404	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
419	405	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26.
420	406	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
421	407	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
422	408	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
423	409	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
424	410	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
425	411	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26.
426	412	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
427	413	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
428	414	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26.
429	415	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
430	416	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
431	417	Please see attached document in Implementation	1	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Activities 3.3, 5.1
432	417	Please see attached document in Implementation	2	Same as ID #431
433	417	Please see attached document in Implementation	3	Same as ID #431
434	417	Please see attached document in Implementation	4	Same as ID #431
435	417	Please see attached EducationSuperHighway Comments and Model Language for Rhode Island's Digital Equity Act Plan	5	Same as ID #431

436	418	We largely support the goals and activities outlined in the Digital Equity Plan. In Strategy 3.1, we would recommend that consideration of funding sources in affordable housing be leveraged for all HUD-assisted affordable housing residents, such as LIHTC developments and other subsidized housing, not just public housing. This would reach even more low-income Rhode Islanders who will benefit. Community development corporations (CDCs) and nonprofit affordable housing providers can play an important role in the stakeholder engagement process.	5	Comment reviewed, changes incorporated in Activity 3.1
437	419	Digital Equity is of course a laudable goal. When considering how to provide digital access for the disabled, please be aware that many Rhode Islanders are disabled by the very wireless infrastructure that most believe is the only way to provide internet connectivity--wireless infrastructure. This is a false assumption. Wired Fiber-Optics To and Through the Premises is the safe, fast, secure, reliable, affordable, and future-proof alternative to utilizing wireless infrastructure, which emits radiofrequency/microwave radiation that is in fact a pollutant. Please read this document, which was submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, this past November, 2023. It discusses the plight of those who have become disabled by exposure to the radiation emitted from wireless infrastructure and wireless devices. This disability is referred to as EHS (electrohypersensitivity), EMS (electromagnetic sensitivity), or microwave sickness. It has been recognized by the U.S. Access Board as a disability since 2002. This document explains ways to afford true inclusivity to those disabled by this now ubiquitous infrastructure. <a href="https://thenationalcall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/HHS-Submission-11-13-23-FINAL.pdf">https://thenationalcall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/HHS-Submission-11-13-23-FINAL.pdf</a>	2	Comment reviewed - forwarded to FCC.
438	420	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
439	421	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26.
440	422	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
441	423	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
442	424	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
443	425	Renew the ACP and fund digital skills training in public libraries.	3	Same as ID #26.
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445	427	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.
446	428	Renovar el ACP y financiar el entrenamiento en habilidades digitales en las bibliotecas públicas.	3	Same as ID #26.

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