



Arizona's Digital Equity Plan

Arizona Commerce Authority

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction and Arizona’s Vision for Digital Equity.....	10
Definitions.....	10
2.1. Vision.....	11
2.2. Alignment with Arizona’s Existing Efforts to Improve Outcomes.....	11
2.3. Strategy and Measurable Objectives.....	16
Goal 1: Increase availability and affordability of reliable, high-speed broadband Internet.....	17
Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services.....	20
Goal 3: Enhance Digital Literacy and Skills Training, Tailored to Covered Populations.....	24
Goal 4: Enhance Safety and Security of Arizona’s Digital Spaces.....	28
Goal 5: Ensure Arizonans Have an Affordable Device That Meets Their Unique Needs.....	29
2.4. The Planning Process.....	30
3. Current State of Digital Equity: Barriers and Assets.....	46
3.1. Asset Inventory.....	46
3.1.1. Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population.....	46
Asset Inventory and Resource Map.....	47
3.1.2. Existing Digital Equity Plans.....	60
3.1.3. Existing Digital Equity Programs.....	65
3.1.4. Broadband Adoption.....	68
3.1.5. Broadband Affordability.....	70
3.2. Needs Assessment.....	72
3.2.1. Barriers and Needs by Covered Population.....	83
Barriers By Covered Population.....	84
Aging Individuals.....	85
Rural Communities.....	87
Incarcerated individuals.....	89
Veterans.....	91
Individuals with a Disability.....	92
Individuals with a Language Barrier.....	94
Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups.....	96
Tribal Nations.....	97

3.2.1.1. Telehealth	101
3.2.1.2. Additional Considerations The Importance of Language.....	102
3.2.2. Broadband Adoption.....	105
3.2.3. Broadband Affordability.....	114
3.2.4. County Reports	118
4. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement	211
4.1. Coordination and Outreach Strategy.....	212
4.2. Stakeholder Engagement.....	214
Key Contributors	214
Moving Forward.....	215
5. Implementation	221
5.1. Implementation Strategy & Core Activities.....	221
5.1.1. State Agencies, Community-Based Organizations, and Higher Education	224
5.2. Timeline	225
6. Conclusion.....	231
7. Appendices.....	232
7.1. Glossary	232
7.2. Arizona’s Stakeholder Asset and Resource Map.....	236
7.2.1. Arizona’s Public Libraries, a report compiled by the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records	247

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1. Executive Summary

Arizona's economic and cultural identity has long been anchored by the "5 C's": Copper, Cattle, Cotton, Citrus, and Climate. Each of these sectors has played a pivotal role in shaping the state's history and development.



As we transcend into a new chapter of Arizona's story, we are stepping into a more connected and digital era; we will add a "6th C" – Connectivity. This new cornerstone represents the state's commitment to expand universal broadband internet access for all Arizonans. Digital connectivity plays a vital role in education, healthcare, business, civic engagement, and everyday life. We aim to bridge the digital divide and foster a more connected, inclusive, and prosperous Arizona. The addition of Connectivity to the iconic 5 C's marks a significant evolution, embracing modern technological advancements while continuing to honor the state's rich heritage.



Arizona's Digital Equity Plan represents the culmination of a year-long, statewide collaborative effort, marked by attentive listening to the voices and feedback of communities across our state. This plan, written in response to the 15 requirements as laid out by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), will address specific barriers faced by Arizonans that fall within the eight covered populations as defined by NTIA:

- Individuals who live in covered households (low-income households*)¹
- Aging individuals
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy

¹ The term "covered household" is defined in Section I.C. of the NOFO and means a household, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census.

- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants

Through a comprehensive data collection process, which included a statewide Listening Tour, online Roundtables, and thoughtful surveys allowing Arizonans that fall into one or more of the covered populations as defined by NTIA to describe the challenges and barriers they face, we found a number of common barriers such as:

- Internet Cost and Stability
- Inclusivity of Resources
- Digital Literacy Upskilling Opportunities
- Online Privacy and Cybersecurity
- Device Access

Recognizing that each of these pillars is interdependent and crucial for achieving digital equity, the Plan leverages state resources, public-private partnerships, and community engagement to create an inclusive digital ecosystem. From expanding broadband infrastructure in underserved areas and making devices more affordable, to enhancing online accessibility and providing robust online safety measures, our strategy aims to help Arizonans become empowered with the tools, skills, and confidence they need to thrive in a digital world.

To help address these barriers to digital equity, we have laid out the following Goals and Objectives.

Goal 1: Increase availability and affordability of reliable, high-speed broadband Internet.

Objective 1: Provide universal connectivity to unserved and underserved areas and ensure high-speed internet access is available to every household in Arizona

Objective 2: Increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program

Objective 3: Launch and increase enrollment in BEAD-compliant low-cost plan.

Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services

Objective 1: Make online spaces and content more accessible to a wider range of persons

Objective 2: Establish Local and Tribal designated Digital Equity Specialists

Objective 3: Support Local and Tribal capacity for Digital Equity Planning and Activities

Objective 4: Increase Telehealth Access Points and Support Health Navigator Services

Goal 3: Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations

Objective 1: Increase Digital Literacy and Skills

Objective 2: Strengthen Community Support Through Digital Navigation Service Utilization

Objective 3: Ensure Workforce Development opportunities to prepare for jobs created by the BEAD program

Objective 4: Create State Seal of Digital Literacy for high school students

Goal 4: Enhance the Privacy and Security of Arizona’s Digital Spaces

Objective 1: Develop a statewide online safety campaign for individuals of all ages

Goal 5: Ensure Arizonans Have an Affordable Device That Meets Their Unique Needs

Objective 1: Increase the affordability of digital devices

Objective 2: Match Devices to the Need of the Individual, and ensure access to technical support

Objective 3: Create a sustainable device distribution model

For a complete description of the steps Arizona will take to meet these goals, please see Section 2.3 for Strategy and Measurable Objectives, and Section 5.1 for Implementation Strategy and Core Activities. To bridge the digital divide and promote digital equity across Arizona, the state is committed to ensuring universal broadband availability through infrastructure investments, supporting affordable broadband plans for all Arizona households, ensuring at least one internet enabled device per household, and providing inclusive digital skills training. Arizona will build digitally equitable ecosystems through strategic initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and community-responsive solutions.

Arizona is marked by social, cultural, and geographic diversity – with a population of more than 7 million residents spanning 15 counties, 91 municipalities, 57 urban areas, expansive rural regions, and 22 sovereign Tribal nations². The cultural richness and diversity of the state are among its greatest assets. By honoring the distinct needs of each diverse region and population, the plan seeks to support local and culturally relevant solutions that align with the values and unique heritage of each region.

The population of Arizona is widely distributed across rural, remote, urban and Tribal regions (see Figures 1 & 2). Sprawling deserts and mountainous terrain create opportunities and pose obstacles to the pursuit of universal digital access and meaningful online participation. To address these geographical complexities, the Digital Equity Plan leverages innovative technologies, supports strategic collaborations, and highlights local solutions. This multi-faceted approach positions Arizona to overcome barriers, ensuring no community is left disconnected and everyone is positioned for growth and prosperity.

- Arizona ranks 41 in BroadbandNow’s annual ranking of internet coverage, speed, and availability³.
- Of Arizona’s 7,278,717 people, 5,808,000 (79.8%) fall within the covered populations defined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (NTIA).⁴
 - In covered households: 22%
 - Aging Individuals (Aged 60 or older): 24%
 - Incarcerated: 0.9%
 - Veteran: 6.6%

² 1 US Census, List of 2020 Census Urban Areas. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>

³ From “Internet Service Providers in Arizona” by Broadband Now, 2022 <https://broadbandnow.com/Arizona>

⁴ From “Digital Equity Act Population” by NTIA, 2019 <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42>

- With a disability: 13.4%
- With a language barrier: 21.7%
 - English learners: 8.1%
 - Low literacy: 23.4%
- Racial or ethnic minority: 46.0%
- Rural: 14.1%
- 5.2% of the Arizona population are in households lacking fixed broadband availability
- 11.1% of the Arizona population are in households lacking computer or broadband subscription⁵
- 21.1% of the Arizona population is not using the internet
- 38.2% of the Arizona population is not using a PC or tablet computer

More than 90% of the physical area within Arizona is classified as rural by the US Census (See Figure 1). Many rural areas also coincide with NTIA defined high-cost coverage areas with very few or no inhabitants, and high cost to deploy. Adopting digital equity services and ancillary support, in addition to appropriate technology choices through infrastructure programs will be important to consider to right-size ongoing investments and target the appropriate communities.

⁵ 4 From U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42>

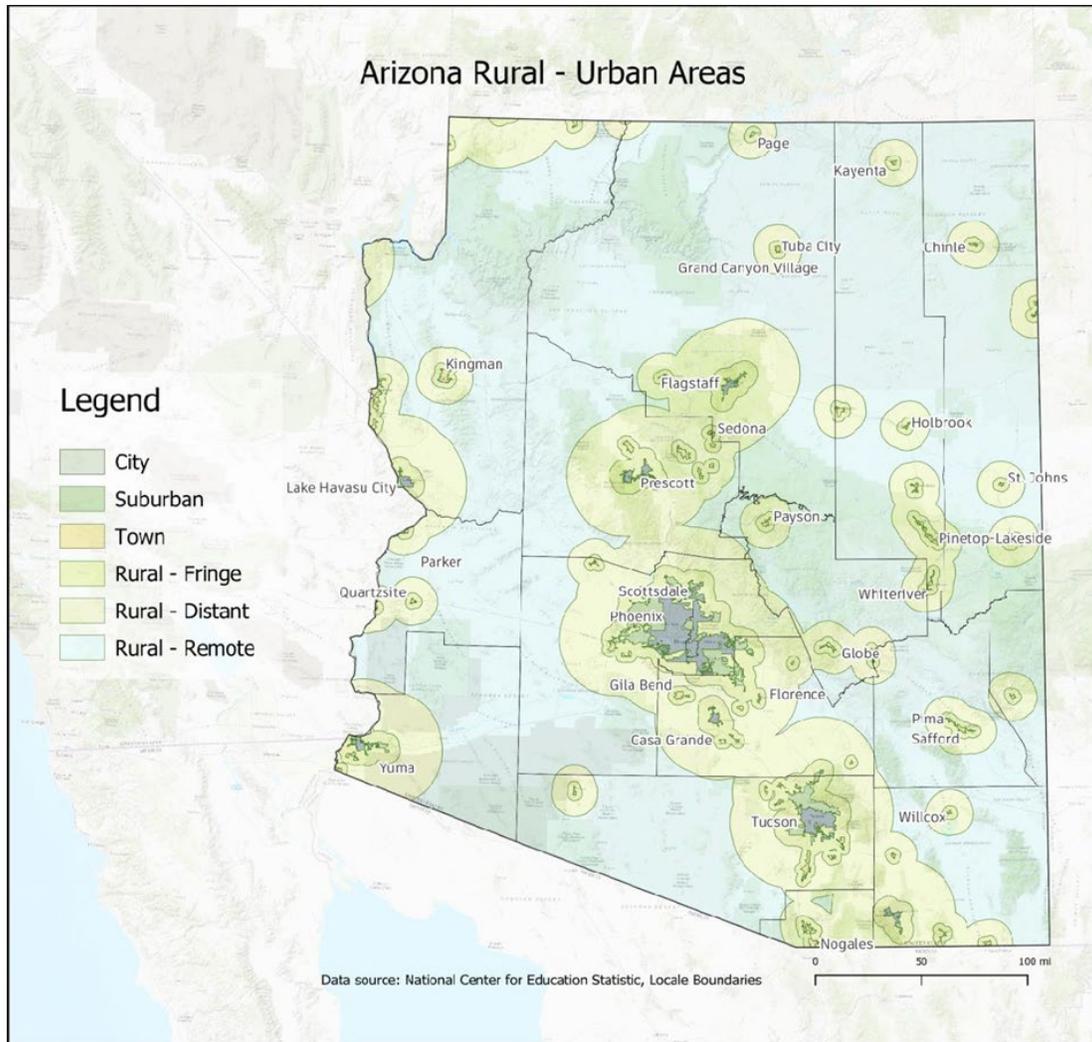


Figure 1: Arizona Local Boundaries are defined by the US Department of Education based on the US Census Urban/Rural classification schema. Categories for fringe, distant, and remote are based on the distance to urban locales. They do not take account of habitability or accessibility. Population data is based on the 2020 Census⁶

⁶ 5 Local Boundaries (2020) <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/LocaleBoundaries>

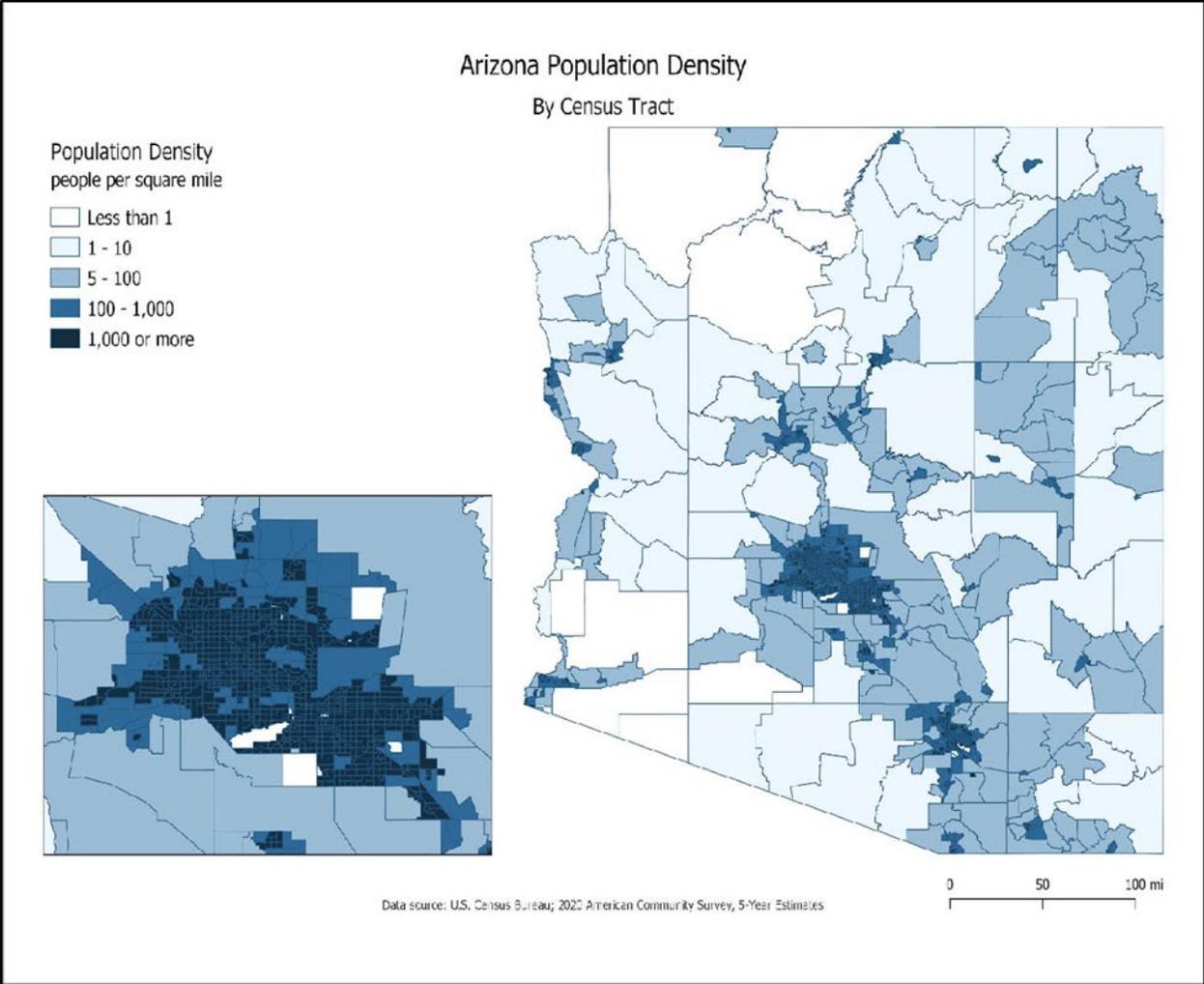


Figure 2: Arizona Population Density at the census tract level, 2017-2021.

Affordability is closely linked with the need for choice and competition among service providers, as seen in places like Gila County, where such competition is viewed as essential for improving service quality and pricing. Second, the importance of knowledge and digital literacy is consistently highlighted. Communities like those in Pima County put significant emphasis on not just the availability but also the quality of technology and digital literacy skills, indicating that the ability to navigate the digital world effectively is considered as important as having access to it. Third, localization of services and community engagement emerge as pivotal; local community centers and libraries are frequently identified as key community resources underscoring the preference for local solutions that are tailored to meet the needs of each community.

Tribal lands make up approximately 28% of the total land area of Arizona (see Figure 3,) including the largest reservation in the U.S., the Navajo Nation, which spans multiple states. Arizona recognizes the 22 Tribal governments within the state, the sovereignty of these Tribal governments, and their jurisdiction over their lands. This Digital Equity Plan seeks to support the Tribes’ efforts to build internal capacity, enhance digital equity, and support the well-being of all tribal communities who are also residents of

Arizona. Tribal governments and the state of Arizona have shared practical interests to work together to assure Tribal-State coordination that enhances digital equity.

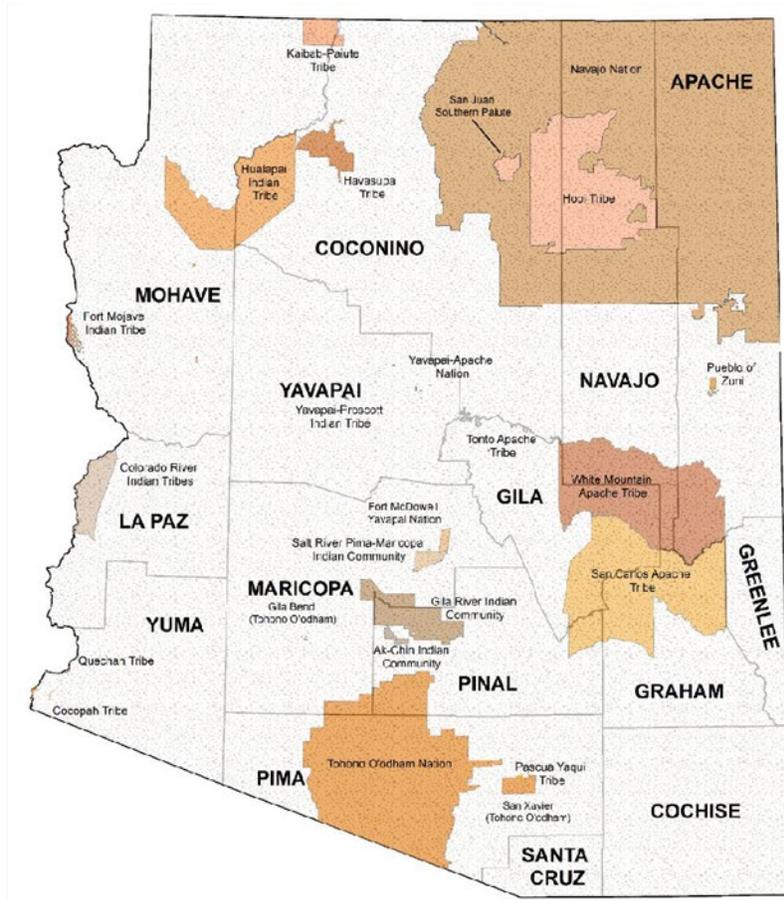


Figure 3: Intertribal Council of Arizona map of Tribal homelands in Arizona by County (2021)⁷

This plan is designed to serve as a tailored roadmap for addressing the complex challenges unique to our state and our people. At the heart of the document is an acknowledgment of the intersectional experiences faced by Arizona's covered populations. The proposed strategies, programs, and interventions are designed to address visible and hidden barriers that limit meaningful online participation while fostering community responsive digital inclusion that resonates with the values and aspirations of each community.

⁷ Tribal Homelands- Arizona (2021) <https://itcaonline.com/>

Introduction and Arizona’s Vision for Digital Equity

Arizona’s BEAD Five-Year Action Plan illustrated the state’s plan to provide reliable high-speed internet to every household. Now, as we look to the future, the next piece to the puzzle is Digital Equity. With this plan, Arizona will lay the groundwork for this important next step and ensure a pathway to successful adoption of high-speed internet.

Definitions

Digital Equity: Digital equity is the condition in which all individuals have the information technology capacity to participate fully in every aspect of society, democracy, and the economy.

Digital Inclusion: Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

This includes five elements:

1. Affordable, robust broadband internet service
2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
3. Access to digital literacy training
4. Quality technical support
5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration

Digital Inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use of technology.

Digital Literacy:

The Arizona Digital Equity Plan uses the American Library Association’s definition of Digital Literacy:

Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

A person with digital literacy skills:

- Possesses a variety of skills – technical and cognitive – required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in a wide variety of formats.
- Is able to use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information.
- Understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information.
- Uses these skills and the appropriate technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and on occasion, the general public.

- Uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community⁸.

Please see the Appendix for a full glossary of terms used in this plan.

2.1. Vision

A digitally equitable and inclusive Arizona where every Arizonan, regardless of their location or circumstance, has affordable, high-speed reliable internet and the tools, digital skills, and resources needed to thrive in the digital age.

Our Mission: To bridge the digital divide and promote digital equity across Arizona, the state is committed to ensuring universal broadband availability through infrastructure investments, supporting affordable broadband plans for all Arizona families, ensuring at least one internet enabled device per household, and providing inclusive digital skills training. Arizona will build digitally equitable ecosystems through strategic initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and community-responsive solutions. This work will specifically look at strategies to support Arizonans with the highest rate of digital inequity, such as those who fall into one of the covered populations as defined by NTIA.

2.2. Alignment with Arizona’s Existing Efforts to Improve Outcomes

Governor Hobbs’ Goals for a thriving Arizona:

Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan is a collaborative effort among a diverse group of stakeholders from around the state and across multiple sectors. The vision and mission of the Digital Equity Plan align with the priorities of Arizona’s Governor⁹ and reflect a seamless approach to positioning Arizona and all Arizonans to thrive.

Goal	Description
<i>Education for Everyone</i>	<p>Among other catastrophic impacts, the pandemic slowed the growth of Arizona students academically and led many students to skip higher education to enter the workforce, particularly in low-income communities and tribal lands.</p> <p>Governor Hobbs is committed to increasing postsecondary education attainment, math proficiency rates of 8th graders, and high school graduation rates.</p> <p>Providing equitable access to digital education tools, resources, devices, and training programs in coordination with K-12 schools and institutions of higher education, will enable individuals of all ages to develop essential digital skills and thrive in a technology-driven society.</p> <p>Supported in Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan in Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services, and Goal 3: Provide Relevant</p>

⁸ 8 Digital Literacy Taskforce. (2011). What is digital literacy? American Library Association. Retrieved August 8, 2022 from <https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/16260>

⁹ From “Office of the Governor Katie Hobbs-Priorities”2023 <https://azgovernor.gov/governor/priorities>

<p><i>Build Thriving and Supportive Communities Across Arizona</i></p>	<p>Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations</p> <p>The most effective way to address financial insecurity is to equip households with the resources and support they need before a crisis ensues. Perhaps the ultimate consequence of financial insecurity is losing a home.</p> <p>Governor Hobbs is committed to improving economic well-being by facilitating access to digital platforms geared at encouraging participation in prevention initiatives and job support— ultimately with the goal of keeping Arizonans from housing insecurity.</p> <p>Supported in Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services, and Goal 3: Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations</p>
<p><i>Health and Reproductive Freedom</i></p>	<p>Access to affordable, high-quality health care is a matter of life, death, and liberty for the people in our state. Arizona’s digital equity work will complement Governor Hobbs’ strategic priority of growing Arizona’s health workforce, thereby ensuring access to affordable, high-quality care for years to come.</p> <p>This plan will further solidify Arizona’s role as a leader in telemedicine, will expand health education opportunities, and will promote access to care via digital diagnostic tools. Utilizing technology will expand healthcare delivery, enhance patient outcomes, and support families in achieving optimal health and well-being.</p> <p>Supported in Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services</p>
<p><i>Resilience, Water, and the Environment</i></p>	<p>Compounding threats to Arizona’s water, natural resources, and climate are disrupting the economy, livelihoods, and quality of life. Governor Hobbs is committed to ensuring a resilient environment for future generations of Arizonans.</p> <p>Specifically, digital equity and skills training investments will promote energy efficient technologies and support workforce development programs to prepare Arizonans for jobs in the clean energy and energy efficiency sectors. Supported in Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services, and Goal 3: Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations</p>
<p><i>Public Safety, Border Security, and Corrections Reform</i></p>	<p>Keeping Arizona communities safe and secure is a top priority. As governments and citizens become increasingly connected online through significant broadband and digital equity efforts, threats have the potential to increase. Governor Hobbs is committed to improving cyber protections by working to ensure an adequately resourced and trained cyber workforce.</p>

	<p>As we provide technology, connectivity, and digital services, we must be aware of threat actors looking to take advantage of vulnerable technologies and people and do everything we can to prepare and protect both. Digital equity work will support the State in its work to collaborate with all levels of the educational escort, industry partners, and other organizations, to ensure sustainable workforce pipelines and creative development of effective cyber professionals.</p> <p>Governor Hobbs is committed to increasing access to rehabilitative services, improved quality and access to reentry services, and skill building opportunities for individuals in prison and throughout the reentry process to increase employment opportunities after leaving prison and reduce recidivism. Supported in Goal 4: Enhance the Privacy and Security of Arizona’s Digital Spaces</p>
<p><i>Affordable and Thriving Economy</i></p>	<p>Governor Hobbs is working to grow an economy for all Arizonans by putting money back in Arizonans’ pockets, improving the affordability of everyday expenses, growing our workforce and wages, and positioning Arizona to be at the epicenter of economic success.</p> <p>The Hobbs administration will prioritize bridging the digital skills gap and creating opportunities for all Arizonans through training, mentorship, and resources to support improved digital literacy and the skill-building needed to succeed in a rapidly evolving job market.</p> <p>Supported in Goal 1: Increase availability and affordability of reliable, high-speed broadband Internet, Goal 3: Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations</p>
<p><i>Building Connectivity and Infrastructure</i></p>	<p>Arizona is one of the fastest growing states in the country. Governor Hobbs is committed to ensuring Arizonans have accessible, cost-effective infrastructure. By 2030, Governor Hobbs aims to build out broadband infrastructure to all of Arizona and ensure hardworking families have access to affordable internet. Governor Hobbs is committed to ensuring every Arizonan has high-speed, reliable, and affordable Internet, particularly individuals in low-income and historically marginalized communities.</p> <p>Supported in Goal 1: Increase availability and affordability of reliable, high-speed broadband Internet</p>

Table 1: Governor Hobbs' Goals

To ensure the success of the Governor's priorities and the goals of the Digital Equity Plan, we have identified these additional strategies to ensure the Digital Equity Plan overlaps with statewide goals related to Economic Growth, Improving Education, Improving Health Outcomes, Civic and Social Engagement, and Access to Essential Service, for all covered populations:

Workforce Development and Economic Growth

The Arizona Digital Equity Plan stands in strategic congruence with the Governor's workforce development objectives, serving as a foundational pillar for the state's economic and social advancement. The Workforce Arizona Council, established under the auspices of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and A.R.S. § 41-5401, is the embodiment of this vision, tasked with crafting a dynamic and effective workforce ecosystem. The Council's composition—a tapestry of private sector leaders, community advocates, labor organization representatives, governmental figures, and legislative members—reflects a multifaceted approach to fortifying Arizona's labor market.

Central to the Council's mission is the cultivation of an inclusive workforce system, one that not only connects businesses with job seekers but also integrates educational pathways to foster a thriving state economy. This mission dovetails with the objectives of the Arizona Digital Equity Plan, which emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and inclusion as cornerstones for workforce development. (See Goal 3, Objective 1.) The CEO of the Arizona Commerce Authority, the designated entity for the State Digital Equity Planning Grant, plays a pivotal role in this alignment, ensuring that initiatives spearheaded by the State Broadband Office are in lockstep with the Council's directives.

The Workforce Arizona Council's Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 delineates a clear trajectory towards achieving the state's workforce aspirations. Developed through a collaborative process that engaged a cross-section of stakeholders, the plan addresses Arizona's most pressing workforce challenges with precision and foresight. Within this framework, digital equity and inclusion emerge as critical goals, recognizing that access to digital tools and skills is no longer a luxury but a necessity for economic participation and competitiveness.

To this end, the Council has outlined strategies that are directly responsive to the digital imperatives of our time. These include the deployment of digital literacy and education programs tailored to the workforce's needs, ensuring that these programs are accessible to all, particularly those with disabilities and other historically underserved groups. Furthermore, the Council advocates for the alignment of state policies to foster the development of digital competencies across training and employment sectors.

The Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) complements the Council's initiatives by partnering with state agencies to offer targeted training opportunities to covered populations. These programs are crafted to address the unique needs of incarcerated individuals, those with disabilities, individuals facing language barriers, and veterans, ensuring that no segment of the population is marginalized in Arizona's digital and workforce evolution.

Arizona's Digital Equity Plan and the Workforce Arizona Council's Strategic Plan are interwoven, each reinforcing the other's objectives. Specifically, Goal 3, Objective 3 ensures workforce development opportunities to prepare for jobs created by the BEAD program. We will work to establish baseline data determining the number of people who have a certification or confirmed skills as related to jobs created by the BEAD program, we will provide support to institutions of higher education or organizations with partnerships to implement training related to these jobs, and the jobs that will play a vital role in the implementation of the BEAD program. For the full list of core activities related to this goal, please see Section 2.3: Strategy and Measurable Objectives.

Together, Governor Hobbs' goals, and Arizona's Digital Equity Plan form a robust strategy aimed at elevating the state's workforce to new heights of innovation, inclusivity, and economic prosperity.

Improving Educational Outcomes

Arizona understands that educational excellence is the cornerstone of a thriving society. The state plan provides equitable access to education, educational resources, and remote learning opportunities for learners of all ages. Furthermore, it recognizes the pivotal role technology plays in modern education. To this end, the plan highlights partners who provide learning, technology tools, resources, and training programs, empowering students, educators, and lifelong learners to excel in digital spaces. By doing so, it lays the foundation for a knowledge-driven economy that benefits all Arizonans.

The Arizona Digital Equity Plan's stated Goals and Objectives align with Governor Hobbs' goal of Improving Educational Outcomes specifically in Goal 3, Objectives 1 and 2, which aim to provide relevant digital literacy and skills training tailored to the needs of people who fall into each covered population. Overall, we aim to increase digital literacy and skills that are in alignment with learners' personal interests and goals, which will encourage adoption and meaningful use of the internet. We hope to accomplish this by strengthening community support through Digital Navigation service utilization.

A second goal set by the Arizona Digital Equity Plan that will support improving educational outcomes is Goal 2, Objective 4. This objective aims to integrate digital literacy upskilling into K-12 Educational Standards and recognize student's accomplishments through the implementation of a statewide Seal of Digital Literacy, which will be placed on student's diplomas and added to their transcripts. Students in Arizona are represented in nearly every covered population, and ensuring they are given opportunities to acquire digital literacy skills will be paramount to their success as they complete school and enter the workforce.

For the full list of core activities related to these goals, please see Section 2.3: Strategy and Measurable Objectives.

Improving Health Outcomes

Broadband is a super social determinant of health and improving health outcomes is integral to personal and community well-being. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan aligns seamlessly with the state's aspirations to enhance health outcomes. It does so by expanding access to health education and telehealth services for physical and mental health, with a particular focus on covered populations and high-need areas. By leveraging digital technologies and local collaboration, the plan ensures that healthcare resources are readily available to all, thereby fostering healthier communities and a brighter future.

The Arizona Digital Equity Plan aims to improve health outcomes specifically through Goal 2, Objective 4 which aims to increase Telehealth Access Points and support Health Navigator services, and Goal 3 which supports Digital Skills training opportunities that are so vital to the success and proliferation of telehealth service. Telehealth Access Points, equipment, individual skills, and Health Navigators on hand to help a patient through a telehealth appointment allow people to access healthcare and resources in spaces where they are comfortable, increasing health outcomes. For the full list of core activities related to this goal, please see Section 2.3: Strategy and Measurable Objectives

Increasing Civic and Social Engagement

For a vibrant democracy, civic and social engagement is vital. Increased broadband access, and adequate digital skills facilitates civic participation and awareness. Through partnerships with nonprofits, outreach campaigns, and virtual community meetings, it fosters a culture of inclusivity and active citizenship. Additionally, the plan provides online resources for civic education, equipping citizens with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions when they cast their votes, thereby strengthening the very foundation of democracy. Increased access to affordable technology that matches the needs of the user, as detailed in Goal 5, Objectives 1 and 2, paired with increase digital literacy skills and access to Digital Navigation services supported by Goal 3, Objectives 1 and 2 will allow for Arizonans across all covered populations to participate in civic and social engagement more fully. Furthermore, Goal 2, Objective 1 aims to make online spaces and content more accessible to a wider range of persons and ensures organizations have tools and resources related to accessibility standards. For the full list of core activities related to these goals, please see Section 2.3: Strategy and Measurable Objectives.

Delivering Essential Services

Access to essential services is a fundamental right, and the Arizona Digital Equity Plan is dedicated to ensuring that these services are accessible to all residents, and all covered populations. The plan aligns with the state's objective to enhance the linkages, accessibility, and navigability of online platforms. Essential services include (water, gas, electricity), banking and financial services, childcare services, parks and recreation management, food and agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, public works, public service announcements, and law enforcement and safety services. Increased broadband access and use enhances delivery of all essential services to all covered populations. See Goal 2, Objective 1 for Arizona's plan to make online spaces more accessible.

2.3. Strategy and Measurable Objectives

Governor Hobbs and the State Broadband Office are committed to ensuring that all Arizonans can participate fully and securely in the digital landscape. The Digital Equity Plan is designed to address the critical areas of:

1. Internet Cost and Stability
2. Inclusivity of Resources
3. Digital Literacy Upskilling Opportunities
4. Privacy and Cybersecurity
5. Device Access

The development of the program's goals and objectives involved a comprehensive methodology. A three- pronged approach was taken to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, which included a listening tour, informal interviews, and targeted surveys. This approach ensured an understanding of the community's needs. Each step aimed to uncover various aspects of digital inequity while capturing a diverse range of perspectives. The findings were used to create goals and objectives to address barriers faced by each covered population. National and state data sets were used to establish baselines and to identify barriers. In addition, we have collaborated with key stakeholders throughout the creation of these goals and will continue to ensure their buy in throughout implementation. Key stakeholders include Community Anchor Institutions, state agencies, local and Tribal governments, non-profits, workforce development programs and organizations serving each covered population.

During the Capacity Grant program, we will also continue to identify baseline data, especially in instances where we may have data that is not tied directly to the covered populations, and we will update the plan as necessary to address our findings.

Goal 1: Increase availability and affordability of reliable, high-speed broadband Internet

Objective 1: Provide universal connectivity to unserved and underserved areas and ensure high-speed internet access is available to every household in Arizona

Covered Populations: All

Governor Hobbs and the state of Arizona are creating a robust broadband infrastructure that will provide reliable, affordable, high-speed internet access to every household in Arizona, regardless of their location, income, or demographic characteristics. This vision includes establishing a competitive broadband grant program in compliance with the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program rules. The program will fund broadband infrastructure development and expansion investments that will ultimately ensure affordable high-speed internet access for all residents, creating a more connected and inclusive state.

At the time of this report, over 5% of households that fall within one or more Covered Population lack fixed broadband availability¹⁰. Through the deployment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and BEAD funding, and the implementation of the strategies outlined in Arizona's Five-Year Action Plan and BEAD Volumes 1 and 2, we aim to connect the unserved and underserved households in Arizona to high-speed broadband internet.

For the purposes of this report, we chose to expand the definition of Incarcerated Individuals to include both those who are formally incarcerated, currently incarcerated, and those who have completed or are in the midst of the reentry process. In this way, we hope to create continuity of opportunities and provision of resources to ensure success.

As indicated in the BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 1, Arizona classifies corrections facilities as Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs). In the event that there is BEAD funding available after allocating funds to all unserved and underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs), the State Broadband Office plans to work with the Arizona Department of Corrections to increase opportunities for affordable high-speed internet in state prisons, so that incarcerated individuals can benefit from the access in similar ways to those who are not incarcerated. Access to high-speed internet, and the subsequent increased access to educational opportunities, social connection, et cetera, is a super social determinate of overall health and success and should be considered integral to successful reintegration after incarceration. If incarcerated individuals have this access, they'll be better equipped for success upon reentry. Further studies linking access to

¹⁰ Digital Equity Act Population Viewer, <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42>

high-speed broadband, and the success of reentry can be found on Brookings Institute¹¹, and in local and national programs such as the Televerde Foundation¹².

KPIs and Targets:

1. KPI: The number of unserved and underserved households that fall within one or more Covered Population that have access to highspeed broadband internet

Baseline Data: Over 378,000 households that fall in one or more covered population currently lack access to high-speed broadband internet.¹³ Arizona was awarded \$993.1 million in federal funding to build infrastructure and expand internet access in rural and historically underserved communities¹⁴.

Near-Term Target: Award BEAD allocations based on programmatic requirements to eligible subgrantees by 2026. Number of eligible households to be determined during the Capacity grant period based on best available data.

Long-Term Target: Ensure universal access to high-speed internet for households within Covered Populations by assessing the effectiveness of BEAD and ARPA build outs by 2030.

Implementation Strategies:

- Identify areas in the state where high-speed internet access does not meet the BEAD minimum broadband requirement of 100/20 Mbps.
- Coordinate with all levels of government and utility providers to streamline permitting and right of way processes.
- Develop and execute a data driven grant program that invests in new broadband infrastructure to meet BEAD minimum broadband standards

Objective 2: Increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program, or its successor

Covered Populations: All

Over half a million Arizonans currently rely on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to get their families online. Internet connectivity is not only essential for engaging fully in an increasingly digital economy, it is a basic human need. Of over one million eligible Arizona families, just over 500,000 are enrolled in ACP¹⁵.

Increasing the number of covered households who are utilizing this subsidy is one way to address the barrier of affordability of service. The ACP is a critical tool to achieve digital equity in Arizona and sees it as a cornerstone of this work. In addition, Arizona will implement a Digital Equity Specialist strategy to

¹¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-prisoner-reentry/>

¹² <https://www.televerdefoundation.org/>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ <https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizona-broadband-equity-access-deployment-program/the-challenge-process/>

¹⁵ From "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker- Enrollment by State"" by Universal Service Administrative Co. ,2023 <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/#enrollment-by-state>

further support digital equity and internet affordability. Please see Goal 2, Objective 2 for more details on Arizona’s vision for this key role.

However, with the uncertain future of the Affordable Connectivity Program, Arizona recognizes the need to address affordability without reliance on ACP. If continued funding for the ACP benefit is not provided, we will shift our focus to awareness of other low-cost options. The list of Low-Cost Internet Plans and Offers in Arizona maintained Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records staff on the Connect Arizona website, for example, is a resource Digital Navigators and others working directly with people currently eligible to receive the ACP benefit.

Equitable access is not just about having internet at home, but rather it being freely accessible in communities and ensuring that people who fall into the covered populations know about available resources. We will support the reach and impact of Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) that provide free access to their communities. CAIs also often are integral to providing digital literacy upskilling opportunities, and other support systems, so recognizing them as locations providing access to free internet for those who may have very limited options is key. For tribes this could be especially impactful, as many have tribal libraries, community centers, and chapter houses that serve as information hubs.

For the purposes of this report, we chose to expand the definition of Incarcerated Individuals to include both those who are formally incarcerated, currently incarcerated, and those who have completed or are in the midst of the reentry process. We recognize that cost is a concern for incarcerated individuals, and the above noted strategies do not address affordability with that covered population. We will, however, endeavor to expand relationships with key stakeholders in the Department of Corrections and encourage them to consider the positive correlations between access to high-speed internet, rehabilitation, and successful reentry, and share ACP (or its successor) related information via reentry programs.

KPI’s and Targets

1. KPI: Number of eligible households enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program, or its successor, by covered population

Baseline Data: ~515,000 Arizona Households Enrolled in ACP and ~635,000 Eligible but not Enrolled¹⁶ as of the writing of this report

Near-Term Target: By 2026, increase enrollment in ACP, or its successor, by 50,000 covered households.

Long-Term Target: By 2028, 40% of all eligible households are enrolled

Please note, as of the writing of this report, ACP is not currently funded past April 2024. If ACP funding is not renewed by the deadline, but then it is reinstated later, requiring re-enrollment, we reserve the right to shift the targets to reflect:

Near-Term Target: By 2028, re-enroll 300,000 eligible households in ACP, or its successor

Long-Term Target: By 2030, regain at least the 2024 baselines for enrollment in ACP, or its successor

¹⁶ Ibid

Implementation Strategies

- Increase support for Digital Navigators, and leverage them to support enrollment in ACP or its successor
- Increase collaboration with ISPs providing ACP, and encourage those not currently offering ACP to participate in the program, or its successor
- Encourage ISPs to assess and track enrollment data in ACP or its successor by covered population
- Increase awareness of ACP (or successor programs) through targeted campaigns and collaborations.
- If ACP is no longer an option, we will continue to increase awareness of all low-cost options
- Increase awareness of CAIs that offer free access to high-speed internet to their communities

Objective 3: Launch and increase enrollment in BEAD-compliant low-cost plans.

Covered Populations: Individuals in covered households

As a requirement of Arizona's BEAD Program, subgrantees are required to offer a low-cost plan to ensure that Arizonans have affordable options available, in addition to ACP. To align the Digital Equity Plan with the groundwork established in the BEAD requirements, we will continue to ensure the availability of low-cost high speed internet options.

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of homes subscribed to a low- cost programs provided by a BEAD awardee

Baseline: 0 households currently subscribed to a BEAD-compliant low-cost plan, will be determined after BEAD subgrantees enroll consumers in internet plans

Near-term Target: By 2025, work with BEAD team and stakeholders to develop assessment tool for BEAD-compliant low-cost plan and list on Connect Arizona

Long-term Target: Increase eligible household enrollment by 20% by 2028

Implementation Strategies

- Ensure low-cost plans are represented on Low-Cost Internet Plans and Offers in Arizona list, maintained by Connect Arizona
- Inform local and Tribal Digital Navigators of low-cost plan
- Prioritize outreach in areas with high volume of covered populations

Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services

Digital inclusivity aims to bring the benefits of technology to all Arizonans by ensuring community-based, culturally responsive solutions, with an emphasis on accessibility for people with disabilities. We plan to create these solutions in concert with local government and

Tribal designated points of contact across the state. This goal specifically supports individuals with a disability, aging individuals, individuals with language barriers, and members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

Objective 1: Make online spaces and content more accessible to a wider range of persons.

Covered Populations: Individuals with a disability, individuals with a language barrier, All (excluding incarcerated individuals, due to limits placed on resource availability within correctional facilities)

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of Partnerships Developed

Baseline Data: To be determined in year one of the Capacity Grant. Initiate a comprehensive review to identify and document existing partnerships and current levels of digital accessibility.

Near-Term Target: By 2026, Establish partnerships with one (1) state agency as well as at least three (3) key nonprofits and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) working with persons with disabilities and persons with a language barrier to promote the adoption of inclusive digital practices.

Long-Term Target: By 2028, Ensure all organizations and state agencies have access to tools and resources needed to adhere to these accessibility standards by sharing information through working groups, and council meetings, as well as on the ACA State Broadband Office website, and any other platform deemed appropriate.

Implementation Strategies

- Collaborate with Experts and Advocacy Groups; form a task force with accessibility experts and disability advocates to identify and integrate best practices for digital accessibility.
- Partner with ADOA-ASET: Develop guidelines and training programs in partnership with the Arizona Department of Administration/Arizona Strategic Enterprise Technology) ADOA-ASET to improve understanding of accessibility needs and standards in public state offices and organizations receiving state funding.
- Develop a toolkit defining accessibility standards and providing support and resources for state agencies to implement accessible functionality and language translations within their websites, where appropriate. For example, providing guidance on offering online bill payment options.

Objective 2: Establish Local and Tribal designated Digital Equity Specialists

Covered Populations: All

The state is fortunate to have professionals positioned throughout local and tribal communities who have years of knowledge and experience and have been serving our community for decades. The Arizona Commerce Authority hopes to work with local and Tribal governments to create a new cohort of Digital Equity Specialists across the state. This cohort will bring together points of contact to work closely with new and existing stakeholders to ensure continued alignment in the work.

These Digital Equity Specialists, as designated by their county or Tribe, will complete a training or certification program and gain a deep understanding of the activities required for Digital Equity Plan

implementation in their respective communities. Examples of such training include, but are not limited to, the Digital Inclusion Leadership Certificate from Arizona State University and the Marconi Society, or the EducationSuperhighway’s ACP Cohort model, or the Tohono O’odham Community College’s program, Hewel Wepegi Ma:cidag, wog (“Learning the Internet Road.”)

Supported by the ACA’s Digital Equity Program Manager, this cohort will act as points of contact for on-going engagement and collaboration, work with Digital Navigators in their communities, help identify additional resources and programs that support Digital Equity and help ACA create a continuous feedback loop as we move through the implementation of the plan. Because the aim of this designation is to encourage and foster alignment between local and state work, we believe it is accurate to say these Digital Equity Specialists are situated to assist all covered populations through partnerships held and fostered by Digital Navigator services across the state. For further information on how Digital Navigators serve people within each covered population, please see Goal 3, Objectives 1 and 2.

KPI’s and Targets

1. KPI: Number of Digital Equity Specialists with certifications or training

Baseline: 0 Local or Tribal Digital Equity Specialists in the state cohort

Near-term Target: Work with local and Tribal governments to determine Digital Equity Specialists in every county and at least five (5) Digital Equity Specialists for tribes by 2026

Long-term target: Increase number of Local and Tribal Digital Equity Specialists with specified training or a certification by 2027. Number of Local and Tribal Digital Equity Specialists needed will be determined during the Capacity Grant period.

Implementation Strategies

- Work with local and tribal governments or a delegate of their choosing to identify a Digital Equity Specialists
- Create cohorts of Digital Equity Specialists and create regular cadence of meetings to coordinate with State Broadband Office
- Identify possible certifications or trainings for Digital Equity Specialists
- Support Digital Equity Specialists completing certification or training

Objective 3: Support Local and Tribal capacity for Digital Equity Planning

Covered Populations: Rural inhabitants, and All

We aim to support local and Tribal capacity for tailored Digital Equity planning, ensuring each county and tribe has access to training opportunities and resources needed to fully leverage the work at a local level. The objective will ensure any future Digital Equity Plans address the needs of all (8) eight covered populations in those communities.

While a number of Digital Equity Plans and feasibility studies exist across the state, supporting the planning activities will ensure local concerns continue to be integrated throughout the statewide plan implementation. Currently two counties have a formalized Digital Equity Plan (Pima and Maricopa Counties, our two urban counties).

This objective is also aimed at the cultural and local responsiveness of current and future local plans. While there is no one-size-fits-all Digital Equity plan for local communities or the eight (8) covered populations, the overall objective is to support local, tribal, and community-led consultations and planning activities to devise a Digital Equity Plan.

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of local and Tribal Digital Equity Plans

Baseline: Two (2) local plans (Maricopa County, Pima County)

Near-Term Target: Increase number of local and Tribal Digital Equity Plans supported by the Digital Equity Capacity program to a total of four (4) by 2026

Long-Term Target: Increase number of local and Tribal Digital Equity Plans supported by the Digital Equity Capacity program to a total of six (6) by 2030

Implementation Strategies

- Leverage Maricopa and Pima County's expertise in creating local Digital Equity plans
- Provide tribes, counties, or local communities assistance in creating their own digital equity plans
- Create an online dashboard that depicts local and Tribal digital equity resources
- Position tribes, counties, or local communities for subsequent digital equity success and grant opportunities

Objective 4: Increase Telehealth Access Points and Support Health Navigator Services

Covered Populations: Rural Inhabitants, Aging individuals, Individuals with a Disability, Individuals with a language barrier

A Telehealth Access Point (TAP) is a dedicated public space for individuals to access a telehealth appointment. A partnership with municipalities, Community Anchor Institutions and local healthcare providers, these spaces consist of an adequate internet connection, a device with working camera, speaker and microphone, as well as privacy considerations in the form of a dedicated room or kiosk where the telehealth visit can be conducted. TAPs may also have support staff, a Digital Health Navigator, to assist an individual through a telehealth appointment if needed.¹⁷

Digital Health Navigation differs from the more general Digital Navigation services in that Digital Health Navigators are individuals who address the whole digital inclusion process — connectivity, devices, and digital skills — to support community members and provide access to healthcare. The Digital Health Navigator model draws from volunteers, librarians, social services or healthcare staff who offer remote and in-person guidance¹⁸ and are reflective of local and tribal community demographics.

¹⁷ From "Digital Navigation Toolkit" by Telehealth Resource Centers, 2023 <https://southwesttrc.org/resources/dhn>

¹⁸ From "Is the Digital Divide the Newest Social Determinant of Health?" by Telehealth Resource Centers, 2023 <https://southwesttrc.org/resources/dhn>

Public libraries are well positioned to assist with telehealth services in their communities because they tend to have private meeting space, high-speed internet, and the ability to support the lending of equipment and materials.

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of TAPS recorded and number of Digital Health Navigators serving Arizona.

Baseline: Three (3) current Digital Health Navigators who are a part the Digital Equity Institute navigator team housed in ASU's Experience Center; three (3) mapped TAPS, at the time of writing this report

Near-Term Target: Identify locations that would be considered Telehealth Access Points as defined by the State of Arizona; work with local and Tribal governments to assess the local need for Digital Health Navigators, and ensure that every established TAP has access to a Digital Health Navigator, by 2027

Long-Term Target: Increase number of TAPs and Digital Health Navigators by 2030, ensuring access to a TAP and Digital Health Navigators for every county and tribe. Long-Term target number of TAPs and Digital Health Navigators to be determined during the Capacity Grant period.

Implementation Strategies

- Provide outreach and education campaigns in tribal and local communities to increase awareness of TAPs and Digital Health Navigators.
- Provide support to local partners to establish TAPs and Digital Health Navigators, including Spanish bilingual Digital Health Navigators.

Goal 3: Enhance Digital Literacy and Skills Training, Tailored to Covered Populations

Objective 1: Increase Digital Literacy and Skills Training Opportunities

Covered Populations: Incarcerated Individuals, ALL

Increasing digital literacy skills in alignment with learners' personal objectives is critical for encouraging adoption and meaningful use of the internet. Individuals are more inclined to maintain and expand their skills when they perceive a relevance to their daily lives and interests.

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of training opportunities across covered populations that completed informal or formal digital skills training or digital skills learning platforms

Baseline: To be determined in partnership with stakeholders, during the Capacity Grant period of performance

Near-Term Target: By 2026, increase number of training opportunities offered across covered populations by 10%

Long-Term Target: By 2028, increase number of training opportunities offered across covered populations by 30%

Implementation Strategies

- Conduct a gap analysis of digital literacy skills training opportunities targeted to the covered populations
- Work with existing Digital Navigator programs to assess digital literacy skills and monitor growth through repeated interaction and assessment
- Partner with Arizona Department of Corrections (ADOC) to ensure programs are provided to incarcerated individuals. Develop a “train the trainer” program to increase support to organizations serving individuals across covered populations that provide informal and formal digital skills training.
- Increase awareness of digital skills learning platforms and resources

Objective 2: Strengthen Community Support Through Digital Navigation Service Utilization

Covered Populations, ALL

Key partners who provide targeted digital literacy skill building to covered populations have been identified in the Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population (section 3.1.1). This inventory can serve as a resource list for Digital Navigators to use when connecting Arizonans with resources and leveraging the work of community partners and state agencies.

KPI’s and Targets

1. KPI: Number of People Assisted by Digital Navigator Services

Baseline: To be determined during Digital Equity Capacity grant program

Near-Term Target: By 2025 expand Digital Navigator services to reach an additional 20,000 people served annually, focusing on covered populations.

Long-Term Target: By 2030, establish a comprehensive, sustainable network of Digital Navigator services, achieving widespread adoption and high satisfaction rates across all targeted demographics. Sustained goal of 20,000 people served statewide by the network of Digital Navigators. Please note, each “case” reported as closed by a Digital Navigator shall count as a “person served” even if these are not unique individuals. Digital Navigation is built on the tenant of sustained, repeated interaction with trusted individuals (the Navigators) so it would not benefit the service to only count unique people served.

Implementation Strategies

- Increase awareness of Digital Navigator programs around the state.
- Increase capacity of Digital Navigator and skill building programs
- Facilitate a Digital Navigator network to incorporate targeted resources available to people across covered populations and craft measurement tools, such as Digital Navigator intake forms
- Ensure digital skills learning platforms and resources are available in multiple languages and formats as reflected by individuals across covered populations

Objective 3: Ensure Workforce Development opportunities for people within the covered populations to prepare for jobs created by the BEAD program

Covered Populations: ALL

Throughout 2023, Arizona worked to prepare the state for jobs created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). For example, in March 2023, the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity launched a pilot program with Arizona Western Community College to offer a first-of-its-kind, Broadband Fiber Optic Training program to prepare graduates for entry-level positions as Broadband Fiber Optics Technicians. Each of the 96 individuals that completed the program earned a Broadband Fiber Optics Technician certificate that prepared them for a career as an entry-level telecommunications technician specializing in fiber optics.

In November 2023, the BuildItAZ Apprenticeship Initiative was launched. This initiative represents Arizona's latest workforce advancement, connecting workers with the skills and know-how needed for jobs in the state's construction and trades industry with the goal of doubling the number of construction and trades registered apprentices.

It is anticipated that the BEAD Program will create approximately 3,000 jobs in Arizona. We will work with institutions of higher education that provide certifications or skills training related to these positions to increase awareness within the covered populations. We will use the examples above to help institutions of higher education create best practices for similar or expanded programs and establish metrics for data analysis.

We also recognize the importance of there being training opportunities as well as jobs in various geographic areas of the state, so that people who are training for and accepting these positions do not have to leave their hometowns, or families, just to benefit from these opportunities. We hope to work with institutions of higher education, and other organizations who provide training, to ensure there are programs located in all parts of the state.

An example of this effort can be seen in action at Arizona Western College in Yuma, Arizona, where there are two Broadband-related certificate programs¹⁹:

- **The Broadband Fiber Optics Technician & Apprenticeship Certificate** prepares the student for a career as an entry-level telecommunications technician specializing in fiber optics. Students learn to install, terminate, test, and troubleshoot single-mode and multimode fiber optic cabling systems in a variety of building foundations and with on-the-job experience through an apprenticeship.
- **The Broadband Fiber Optics Technician Certificate** prepares the student for a career as an entry-level telecommunications technician specializing in fiber optics. Students will learn to install, terminate, test, and troubleshoot single-mode and multimode fiber optic cabling systems in a variety of building foundations.

Ensuring workforce development opportunities exist where there is a workforce need is key. As of the writing of this report, over 4,500 households in Yuma County are currently unable to access at least 25/3 high speed internet connections. Programs such as those at Arizona Western College will help bridge the gap in skills needed by the workforce and keep the resources locally centered.

KPI's and Targets

¹⁹ <https://www.azwestern.edu/degrees-and-certificates/broadband-fiber-optics>

1. KPI: Number of training programs that provide confirmed skills as related to jobs in the telecommunications industry. Training programs may be offered through institutions of higher education, and trade schools, as appropriate.

Baseline: To be determined during Capacity Grant period, in coordination with institutions of higher education

Near-Term Target: By 2026, aim to have 25% of higher education institutions and organizations in Arizona providing access to training opportunities for covered populations, in the communications industry

Long-Term Target: By 2027, aim to have 50% of higher education institutions and organizations in additional counties providing access to training opportunities for covered populations, in the communications industry

Implementation Strategies

- Conduct a gap analysis of higher education institutions currently providing training opportunities to covered populations, in coordination with BEAD Program team workforce planning
- Support institutions of higher education, State agencies, and organizations to implement training
- Provide workforce development opportunities to individuals who will play a vital role in the implementation of the BEAD program.
- Increase awareness of workforce development opportunities with targeted outreach to covered populations
- Coordinate with Arizona@Work and BuildItAZ Apprenticeship initiative
- Coordinate with local workforce boards and the Workforce Arizona Council, established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Objective 4: Create State Seal of Digital Literacy for high school students

Covered Populations: ALL

Ensuring that students are given opportunities to acquire digital literacy skills will be paramount to their success as they complete school and enter the workforce. We intend to create a statewide Seal of Digital Literacy similar to Arizona Department of Education's Seal of Personal Finance to recognize high school students who achieve a high level of proficiency in Digital Literacy. The seal will be placed on the student's diploma and a note will be added to student's transcripts. Students throughout Arizona are represented within the covered populations. They themselves may be rural inhabitants, may come from low-income households, may be justice-impacted, may have language barriers, or live with someone who does, may be disabled, may live with family members who are aging, or are veterans, or are members of a racial or ethnic minority. Ensuring students have access to digital literacy skills training directly will create a future where fewer Arizonans are facing barriers to digital equity and are poised for successful entrance into an increasingly digital world.

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of students who complete steps necessary to receive the Seal of Digital Literacy

Baseline: 0 Students have completed this program

Near-Term Target: Work with the Department of Education to develop new Seal of Digital Literacy by the start of the 2026 school year.

Long-Term Target: By 2030, at least 400 students per year (sustained) will earn the Seal of Digital Literacy.

Implementation Strategies

- Work with the Arizona Department of Education to identify parameters and metrics for the State Digital Literacy Seal
- Work with the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADOC) to provide programming in prisons and track number of incarcerated participants pursuing high school degrees in juvenile correction facilities or incarcerated adult learners working to complete General Education Development (GED)
- Increase awareness of this program across the state, especially in school districts that serve families that fall into one of the covered populations

Goal 4: Enhance Safety and Security of Arizona's Digital Spaces

Objective 1: Develop a statewide online safety campaign for individuals of all ages

Covered Populations: ALL

Online safety and cybersecurity emerged as a critical need for Arizonans. A statewide online safety campaign plays a crucial role in educating and protecting individuals and communities from the increasing risks associated with internet usage. By partnering with Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) and conducting regular training and workshops, targeting members of the covered populations, the cybersecurity strategy aims to raise awareness of online safety and cybersecurity best practices.

KPI's and Targets

1. KPI: Number of online safety trainings or cybersecurity training opportunities by covered population

Baseline: 0 workshops held in partnership with CAIs

Near-Term Target: Conduct a gap analysis to identify availability of online safety training or cybersecurity workshops for covered populations by 2026

Long-Term Target: By 2030, establish a comprehensive statewide online safety campaign, fully integrated into community networks and CAIs, that demonstrably improves online safety practices and cybersecurity awareness across all covered populations/target demographics

Implementation Strategies

- Increase awareness and use of online safety training and cybersecurity resources
- Partner with AZDOHS to conduct online safety and cybersecurity training for Community Anchor Institutions and community members.

- Ensure increased awareness campaign is conducted with intentional contact with Tribal communities and government through in-person meetings with leadership, administration, and community members.
- Share information through multiple channels such as AM/FM radio, billboards, fliers, and announcements at other public forums.
- Conduct targeted outreach to each covered population during the comprehensive statewide safety campaign, ensuring that the state is working with partner organizations who directly serve each covered population. Please see the Asset Inventory for a list of potential partners by covered population.

Goal 5: Ensure Arizonans Have an Affordable Device That Meets Their Unique Needs

Objective 1: Increase the availability and affordability of internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user

Covered Populations: ALL

Among all covered populations, the cost of digital devices emerged as a barrier to adoption and use of the internet. Many factors go into assessing appropriateness of devices; some individuals may face additional cost barriers such as additional cost for adaptive technologies. We aim to develop Devices Guides that evaluate features for specific needs of covered populations, in particular: Aging Individuals, Individuals with disabilities, and Individuals with a language barrier. Awareness of where appropriate devices can be found will be addressed through identifying local centers for distribution, through a “Lend, Purchase, or Earn” model. For example, we will note that devices can be borrowed free of charge from many of our public libraries, purchased through traditional retailers, or earned through educational programs such as AZ StRUT’s [Techie Camps](#). We also aim to increase awareness of access to technical support by sharing resources about Digital Navigator services that serve people within the covered populations across the state. These services are free to the end-user, and so this also addresses the affordability of technical support.

KPI’s and Targets

1. KPI: Number of local centers for device lending, purchasing or earning (for example, locations that provide a learning opportunity that culminates with a learner getting a device to keep.)

Baseline: To be determined during the Capacity Grant process

Near-Term Target: By 2025, ensure current local centers are reflected in the Asset Inventory, specifying type of access (lent, purchased, earned) and establish cadence for updating Asset Inventory

Long-Term Target: Map all local centers that provide access to devices (either through lending, purchase or to be earned) and establish cadence for updating the map, by 2026.

2. KPI: Number of Device Guides available for covered populations

Baseline: 0 Device Guides exist

Near Term Target: By 2026, create one (1) Device Guides for covered populations and share with local centers

Long-Term Target: By 2028, create three (3) Device Guides for covered populations and share with local centers

Implementation Strategies

- Determine criteria for local centers, including targeted services to each covered population, and establish the benchmark for affordability
- Map local centers of these resources across the state and share via county dashboards.
- Use various communication channels, including social media, community events, and local media.
- Coordinate with organizations that provide devices to user, especially those focused on covered populations, including re-entry resources for incarcerated individuals
- Highlight the benefits of refurbishing devices, emphasizing their affordability, reduced environmental impact, and alignment with various user needs.

2.4. The Planning Process

Listening to the Community: An Ecosystem Building Approach

Through a holistic and inclusive approach that combines robust research, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven insights, this Digital Equity Plan is Arizona's commitment to building an inclusive digital future.

Recognizing the importance of firsthand, lived experiences and insights, we embarked on a comprehensive listening session tour, organizing both in-person and virtual sessions. Through these interactive sessions, breakout groups engaged in dialogues about their communities, their neighbors and their experiences.

Each of the forty-eight sessions was recorded and transcribed. This approach allowed us to identify recurring themes, challenges, and potential solutions, all of which have been integrated into our statewide plan. By casting a wide net and inviting a diverse group of participants – from those who live the challenges of digital inequity daily, to educators, practitioners, and local leaders – we ensured a holistic understanding of the barriers that hinder full and meaningful digital participation.

Seeking Permission and Identifying Leaders

Our approach was to connect with individuals recognized as leaders within their communities. To identify these leaders, we reached out to various local entities, including social service providers, libraries, elected officials, civic services organizations, housing authorities, educational institutions, and popular community gathering spots.

Understanding Community Communication

Once connected with community leaders, we inquired about the primary modes of communication within their communities. These leaders directed us to community touchpoints that resonated most with their communities. We learned that many communities have unique ways of disseminating information.

Active Listening and Understanding Infrastructure

In each community, we aimed to understand how communities receive, share, and connect with digital information. Our inquiries revolved around practical scenarios, such as how communities react when power outages occur due to windy conditions or how they communicate when floods render bridges inaccessible.

Weaving the Tapestry of Community Insights

After engaging with each community, we analyzed the transcripts from our listening sessions to identify common themes and experiences that bridged communities. This analysis was designed to demonstrate a network of shared experiences across Arizona. This interconnected web enables communities, whether neighboring or miles apart, to share experiences, digital information, fostering a sense of unity and mutual understanding.

By following this methodical approach, we ensured that every community's voice was heard, respected, and integrated into our statewide plan for achieving digital equity across Arizona.

Listening Sessions

Our ecosystem-building methodology offers a blueprint for fostering robust, interconnected human ecosystems within Arizona communities. This approach is not just about data collection; it's about understanding the intricate tapestry of factors that shape our communities, from economic and socio-political dynamics to technological advancements and cultural heritage as shared through lived experience. At its core, this methodology emphasizes that thriving communities are built on collaboration, the availability of resources, strategic partnerships, safety, scalability, and the ability to weave together diverse elements into a cohesive whole.

To ensure the successful implementation of this Ecosystem Framework, we:

- **Set Clear Objectives:** We began by defining the desired outcomes.
- **Engaged Stakeholders:** We secured buy-in from relevant stakeholders and community anchors ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.
- **Fostered Collaboration:** We coordinated efforts across all 15 counties - promoting deep listening and shared purpose.
- **Established a Blueprint:** We worked toward capturing stories that provide a roadmap for community digital development.
- **Scaled Thoughtfully:** We worked toward developing strategies that allow for the expansion of successful initiatives and can be integrated locally.
- **Documented Progress:** We created this report, capturing insights, achievements, and future recommendations for Arizona.

Arizona's Digital Equity Plan is guided by the needs of the community, as expressed by its local members. The ecosystem construction approach accompanied other data collection processes. By

constructing an ecosystem that looks 5-years into the future and imagines the desired outcome, a plan in which no one is missed, communities are connected, and learning is shared, is crafted.

Community Roundtable Conversations

Since May 2023, the Arizona Commerce Authority State Broadband Office has hosted seven virtual Community Roundtable Conversations. The ACA brought together stakeholders from around Arizona to facilitate online conversations about the state of digital equity in Arizona. At each session, attendees were updated on planning progress and given an opportunity to provide feedback, ask questions, and make recommendations on digital equity planning activities.

Synchronizing Activity

To ensure maximum impact and efficiency, our Ecosystem structure was synchronized with both the survey and interview capture. At every juncture of our tour, the Listening Session Team championed the significance of our surveys and highlighted opportunities for in-depth interviews. By providing tailored surveys for both Community Members and Community Anchors, and complementing them with in-depth interview opportunities, we foster participation tailored to individual preferences. This approach ensures a diversity of perspectives are incorporated into the plan, promoting alignment across all planning activities.

Surveying the Community

The team developed a comprehensive survey examining digital access across the state of Arizona. To create survey items, the team examined data collection documents from online sources that included state reports, digital equity documents, and other open-source materials regarding digital use, access, and education. The team fine-tuned the community member and community anchor survey instruments through collaboration with the team and through reviews by subject matter experts.

Both the community member survey and the community anchor institution survey query the respondents' location (town and county), age group, and if the respondent or the respondents' organization serves any of the following populations:

- Individuals who live in covered households (low income)
- Aging Individuals (Over age 60)
- Individuals who are veterans
- Individuals with a disability
- Individuals with a language barrier
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
- Member of a Tribal Nation
- Incarcerated individuals, other than those who are in a Federal correctional facility

All respondents were also asked questions that fall within the three categories of digital equity, (1) internet access; (2) availability and use of devices; and (3) digital literacy. The fifteen-minute survey was disseminated at listening sessions throughout the state of Arizona. Participants could scan a QR code, follow a link, or complete a paper/pencil version of the survey in English or Spanish. The survey was also translated into: Arabic, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Navajo, Apache, and Chinese

(common) to increase response rates, recruitment efforts also include emails, in person distribution at community gatherings, and social media posts. Both the Community Member and Community Anchor Institution surveys can be reviewed in Section BLANK of the Appendix

Public Comment Phase

A crucial step in Arizona’s digital equity planning process is the public comment phase. During this phase members of the public had the opportunity to review the Plan and provide feedback before it was finalized. We sought out and encouraged participation in the public comment phase by hosting targeted webinars for each covered population and the organizations across the state that serve these groups, as well as stakeholders representing Community Anchor Institutions, local and county governments, Tribal Nations, non-profits and workforce development entities. We also engaged with various stakeholder groups (such as AZBSN and ADIN) to discuss the public comment process and encourage participation. Lastly, we also provided flyers and information to our various partners across the state to help share the information about the public comment period directly with our communities. For example, the Arizona State Library helped us share the flyer to each of the over 230 public libraries in Arizona and encouraged them to post the flyer and share it with their patrons.

By opening the plan to public comment, we aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- **Inclusivity:** The more feedback, the more the Plan reflects the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the diverse community it is intended to serve. The Arizona Commerce Authority recognizes the need to make the Digital Equity Plan available in multiple languages, and formats; for the initial public comment period, this was not possible. We will ensure that the Plan is made available in multiple languages and formats and will be shared widely on the upcoming engagement tour. We recognize the Digital Equity Plan will be a dynamic document that responds to any additional feedback or comments we receive throughout the implementation process.
- **Improved Plan Quality:** Public input is valuable and can help identify any unintentionally overlooked issues and any opportunities for improvement.
- **Collaboration:** Engaging the community in the feedback process fosters collaboration. It allows us to tap into the collective wisdom of the community and allows for a higher change of successful implementation.
- **Community Ownership:** When the community has a say in the plan, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for its success.

During the Digital Equity Plan public comment period, the Arizona Commerce Authority received a total of 43 comments from a range of engaged Arizonans including private citizens, non-profit organizations, Community Anchor Institutions, state agencies, and institutions of higher education. The robust and thorough comments ranged from suggestions on ways to improve the Goals and Objectives, recommendations on the accuracy and inclusivity of language, help correcting formatting errors and updates to our Asset Inventory. The Digital Equity Team evaluated each comment and updated the contents of the Digital Equity Plan as needed. Below is an anonymized record of each public comment made, and the related actions taken in response.

Commentor ID	Relevant Section of the Plan	Actions Taken by State in Response
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1	Goals	Expanded connections between Governor’s Goals and the Digital Equity Plan
2	County Reports	Fixed, updated the PDF 1/2/2024
3	Needs Assessment	No action needed
4	General Comments/Entire Plan	Fixed error in County Reports, and data as needed
5	General Comments/Entire Plan	No action needed
6	Asset Inventory	Asset Inventory updated
7	General Comments, Goals	No action needed
8	General Comments, Goals	We plan to add this information to the Website Accessibility Toolkit to be created during implementation
9	Executive Summary	No action needed
10	Asset Inventory	No action needed, organization does not provide Digital Equity programming or resources at this time
11	Asset Inventory, Goals	Updated the narrative assets section
12	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated the narrative and asset listings
13	General Comments/Entire Plan	Integrated language and suggestions as appropriate
14	Introduction and Arizona’s Vision for Digital Equity	No action needed
15	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated goals and language as needed
16	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated goals and language as needed
17	General Comments	Language and considerations updated throughout, Goals and Strategies updated
18	Goals	Updated language as needed
19	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated relevant implementation strategies, and Asset Inventory
20	Goals	No action needed
21	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated relevant language, Goals and Asset Inventory entries and/or descriptions
22	General Comments/Entire Plan	No action needed
23	Asset Inventory	Updated Asset Inventory
24	Goals, Strategies and Implementation	Updated language in Goals regarding ACP and Affordability, and we plan to use additional language and information when we approach the Counties and Tribes to establish the Digital Equity Specialist Points of Contact in communities across the state
25	Goals	Updated goals and language as needed
26	General Comments, Adoption of Internet	No action needed
27	Goals	Updated language as needed

28	Coconino County Profile	Updated language as needed
29	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated Goals and language as needed
30	General Comments/Entire Plan	No action needed
31	General Comments/Entire Plan	No action needed
32	General Comments/Entire Plan	No action needed
33	General Comments/Entire Plan	Added recommendations to alignment of Governor's Goals and the Digital Equity Plan
34	General Comments/Entire Plan	AZBSN 2020 Strategic Plan added to existing Digital Equity Plans
35	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated language as needed
36	General Comments/Entire Plan	Updated language as needed
37	Goals	Updated language as needed
38	General Comments, Engagement	Updated language as needed, included Public Library-specific documentation in the plan.
39	General Comments, Engagement	Updated language as needed
40	General Comments	Updated Goals and language as needed
41	General Comments	No action needed. Will apply some feedback to Capacity Grant guidelines as needed
42	General Comments	No action needed
43	Public Comment Period	Posted Public Comment timeline on website

If no action was taken as a result of the comment, the following response was sent:

Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona's Digital Equity Plan.

We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website:

<https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/>

We encourage you to follow that page for updates.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.

In instances where action was taken, or changes were made, those changes were detailed in the communication:

Commentor ID	Emailed Response
1	Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona's Digital Equity Plan. Based on your feedback, we have updated the plan in the following way(s):

	<p>Expanded connections between Governor’s Goals and the Digital Equity Plan</p> <p>We hope this change enforces the alignment, and we look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself.</p> <p>Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizona-digital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
2	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>As we shared, we fixed the County Reports based on your feedback, and reposted them for everyone’s benefit.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
3	No action needed
4	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, as we’ve shared, we updated the document to include the missing County Report. We also updated the data points you mentioned throughout.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
5	No action needed
6	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated the Asset Inventory and descriptions to include the AZ Cyber Initiative.</p>

	<p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
7	No action needed
8	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>We believe the best way to ensure those who need it most receive the information is to include the feedback you provided in the Website Accessibility Toolkit we plan to create and distribute during the implementation phase of this work.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/ We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
9	No action needed
10	No action needed, organization does not provide Digital Equity programming or resources at this time
11	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, the Asset Inventory was updated to better reflect the description of Literacy Connects and your work.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
12	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, the narrative and Asset Inventories were updated as appropriate.</p>

	<p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
13	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback we updated the narrative, integrating your recommended language and suggestions as appropriate.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
14	No action needed
15 & 16	<p>[Email response combined, these two comments were from the same stakeholder]</p> <p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated the Goals and other language as appropriate.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
17	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan, and especially revised the goals and strategies.</p>

	<p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
18	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language (especially in the goals) as needed.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
19	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated the relevant implementation strategies and the language in the Asset Inventory as you suggested.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
20	No action needed
21	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan, the Goals and also the Asset Inventory entries and/or descriptions.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p>

	<p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
22	<p>No action needed</p>
23	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated the Asset Inventory to reflect the changes you suggested.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
24	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language in Goals regarding ACP and Affordability. We also plan to use additional language and information when we approach the Counties and Tribes to establish the Digital Equity Specialist Points of Contact in communities across the state.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
25	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment periodfor Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated the language in our goals, and throughout the plan as needed.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p>

	If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.
26	No action needed
27	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan, and our goals to reflect concerns you raised.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
28	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan, especially the Coconino County Profile.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
29	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan. We also updated the goals to better align with concerns you raised.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
30	No action needed
31	No action needed
32	No action needed

<p>33</p>	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we added recommendations to the alignment of the Governor’s Goals, and the goals laid out in the Digital Equity Plan. We also reviewed language throughout the plan.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
<p>34</p>	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we added the 2020 Strategic Plan to the list of existing Digital Equity Plans, and updated language throughout the plan.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
<p>35</p>	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan to better reflect the experience and barriers faced by aging populations.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
<p>36</p>	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language as needed throughout the plan to better reflect the experiences of people in Payson.</p>

	<p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
37	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan. We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
38	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we updated language throughout the plan. We are also grateful for the State Library’s contribution to the narrative, and Asset Inventory regarding the important role of libraries across Arizona.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
39	<p>I hope this email finds you all well. I am writing to thank you Mr. Taylor for submitting a public comment for the Arizona Digital Equity Plan. We are excited that Hopi, at some level, has been engaged throughout the process and has participated in several outreach events including listening sessions, roundtable discussions, and most recently, the Internet for All Broadband Summit. I personally want to thank you for taking time out of your schedule to travel to Phoenix and share your thoughts for expanding broadband on Hopi. I also want to make sure that as we move forward through the next phases of both these programs, that we can do a better job informing the Hopi Senom as you’ve requested.</p>

	<p>We are excited to hear that you would like to see the State Broadband Team travel to Hopi and present to the tribal council. Our office takes this invitation seriously and we would love to talk about next steps as to how we could make that happen. I agree that Hopi is unique within its geographic location and having its tribal land lie within the Navajo reservation is especially unique, and challenging. We hear your plea to come to Hopi and listen to first-hand accounts of the challenges faced by the villages, its members and the tribal council.</p> <p>We are encouraged that Hopi stands ready to fully engage and take advantage of this historic opportunity to bring advanced technology and high-speed internet to the most rural tribal communities. The comment about having your own Hopi Digital Navigators aligns with the overall vision, goals, and objectives stated in our digital equity plan to train individuals in these roles that are reflective of their communities. It's our belief that tribal communities know their people and know how best to serve them, especially if there are language and/or physical barriers to learning how to safely navigate the digital world.</p> <p>Finally, affordability and accessibility are two of the cornerstones of the Arizona Digital Equity Plan, and we agree wholeheartedly that getting the infrastructure with BEAD funding is only the first step. The next step is to be solution-minded and find ways to make the internet safe, affordable, reliable, and sustainable for every household choosing to have internet in their home/village. These are big challenges, but we know the tribes have the resolve and resiliency to participate in these important conversations! We have added similar solutions in our draft of the State Digital Equity Plan but we will go back and revise some of the language to express that more fully. We also believe that Community Anchor Institutions such as tribal libraries, schools, even some community centers can be important access points for those tribal members wanting to use internet-enabled devices and access services, like telehealth visits.</p> <p>Askwali, thank you again for submitting your comment to the State Digital Equity Plan. I will personally follow up with the Chairman's office to see how we might be able to present an overview of the BEAD and Digital Equity plans to the tribal council. My guess is we would need to request getting a spot on the agenda, and we're happy to do that. As the delegated authority by Chairman Nuvangyaoma, we take your request seriously and will do whatever we need to do to accommodate such a request to visit Hopi.</p> <p>Please, as always, do not ever hesitate to call me or request additional information – I'm here to serve our tribal communities in a way that fosters trust, collaboration, and transparency. I will always do my best to make sure your voices and concerns are heard. I also noticed the AZ Commerce Authority broadband ads began running in the Hopi Tutuveni! I hope they help raise awareness for the work we're all doing to expand universal broadband to all four corners of the state.</p>
40	Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona's Digital Equity Plan.

	<p>Based on your feedback, we updated language as needed throughout the plan, and in the description of the state’s overarching Digital Equity Goals.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
41	<p>Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>Based on your feedback, we evaluated language throughout the plan. We also hope to incorporate your suggestions and some of the language into the forthcoming Capacity Grant Guidelines.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>
42	No action needed
43	<p>Thank you again for taking the time to provide your feedback during the Public Comment period for Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan.</p> <p>As we indicated at the time, we added a timeline for the Public Comment Period to our website based on your feedback.</p> <p>We look forward to continued partnership with stakeholders such as yourself. Once the plan is approved, it will be posted on our website: https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizonadigital-equity-plan/</p> <p>We encourage you to follow that page for updates.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or any member of the team.</p>

3. Current State of Digital Equity: Barriers and Assets

3.1. Asset Inventory

To create an effective digital equity plan for Arizona, a targeted analysis of existing resources, challenges, and opportunities was conducted. Through this approach we uncover opportunities and discover where additional support is needed, particularly for existing programs that serve vulnerable communities. The Stakeholder Asset and Resource Map results from a multi-pronged capture approach that included:

1. Questions on the community anchor institution surveys
2. Personal interviews with community members and community anchor institutions to identify local organizations serving their community in the digital space
3. Online research at both the county and city levels to ensure the compilation of a comprehensive list
4. Virtual listening sessions specifically focused on disabled individuals, aging individuals, incarcerated populations, and veterans.

Arizona's Stakeholder Asset and Resource Map is an invaluable tool for fostering collaboration and driving meaningful change. As a resource, the map fosters capacity building, knowledge-sharing, coordination, and collective action. Moreover, it shows the breadth and depth of expertise and services available throughout Arizona. The table format is used to organize and make information about programs and services easily accessible. Each stakeholder is listed in rows, and different columns represent specific characteristics or services provided by the stakeholders, such as offering free internet, providing digital literacy training, or offering free technical support. By structuring the information in a table format, it becomes easier to compare and analyze the various stakeholders and their specific capabilities. Moreover, this method of organization allows for a clear and concise representation of the stakeholders' assets and resources related to digital inclusion. When combined with Community Anchor Institution mapping, the asset inventory becomes a very useful tool.

The map is intended to be a starting point. Additional organizations will be added as identified. The entire Stakeholder Asset and Resource Map can be found in the Appendix.

3.1.1. Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population

Life is multifaceted, and so is human identity. People do not experience life through a singular lens or a single aspect of their identity. Instead, our identities are composed of multiple, intersecting facets that influence our experiences, perspectives, and interactions with the world. This concept is known as intersectionality.

For instance, consider a veteran living in rural Arizona, who has a disability. Her experiences are shaped not just by her gender, disability, or race, but by the combination of these identities. She may face challenges and biases that are distinct from those experienced by a white woman or a man of color. Her identity is at the crossroads of multiple societal constructs, each with its own set of challenges and privileges.

Given the complexity of human identity, it's rare for organizations to cater exclusively to one specific group. Most organizations, especially those aiming for inclusivity and broad impact, recognize the intersectionality of identity and strive to serve a diverse range of individuals. As such, the organizations we identified are best understood as serving multiple covered populations, acknowledging the rich tapestry of identities that make up our communities.

Asset Inventory and Resource Map

Key:

Symbol	Covered Population	Description
	Covered Households	Individuals who live in households with incomes below 150% of the poverty threshold
	Individual with a Disability	Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity
	Incarcerated Individuals	Inmates confined or recently released from a prison or jail, other than those in a federal correction facility
	Rural Residents	Any town with less than 50,000 residents and not an urbanized areas next to a town with 50,000 or more residents
	Aging Individuals	Individuals aged 60 years and older
	Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group	Individuals who are Black, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
	Veterans	Individuals who served in the active military, navy, or air service and were honorably discharged or released
	Individual with a language barrier	Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners with a low level of literacy
	*Tribal communities are included in the NTIA's definition of covered populations under Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group. However, all tribes are sovereign entities that govern themselves and we acknowledge the nature of the government-to-government relationship between the state of Arizona and the 22 tribes. To represent the organizations that serve tribes, we have added an additional symbol for tribal community-serving.	

Below are those organizations identified through survey results and interviews working to close the digital divide. A full list of Arizona stakeholders and assets can be found in the Appendix. Additional organizations will be added as identified.

AARP: 

AARP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for older adults. AARP has undertaken several initiatives to promote digital equity among older adults including research and awareness, education and training, and policy advocacy. AARP's Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) program from Senior Planet is best-practice for helping older adults learn to use and leverage technology.

Ability360: 

Ability360 is a nonprofit dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities to lead independent lives. They offer a range of services, from advocacy and independent living programs to fitness and employment support. They focus on promoting autonomy, inclusion, and equal opportunity and provide people with disabilities with the tools, resources, and support needed to thrive in all aspects of life.

American Friends Service Committee – Arizona (AFSC-AZ): 

AFSC-AZ is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting social justice in Arizona. AFSC-AZ serves marginalized communities, including immigrants, refugees, those affected by the criminal justice system, and people facing poverty and discrimination. The organization's work in digital equity includes advocating for policies and initiatives to bridge the digital divide, expanding affordable internet access, providing digital literacy training, and upholding the rights of underserved communities in the digital sphere.

Arizona@Work: 

Arizona@Work is a network of organizations providing comprehensive workforce development services, job placement, and career guidance. They collaborate with employers and job seekers to facilitate employment opportunities and support individuals in their career advancement.

Arizona Chamber of Commerce: 

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry advocates for policies and programs that promote economic growth and workforce development in the state. They collaborate with businesses, government agencies, and community organizations to create a favorable business environment and drive economic prosperity.

Arizona Commerce Authority: 

The Arizona Commerce Authority facilitates workforce development initiatives, fosters economic growth, and supports entrepreneurship and innovation in the state. They work to attract businesses, promote job creation, and drive economic development across various sectors.

Arizona Community Action Association: 

The Arizona Community Action Association supports various community programs, including those focused on workforce development, financial education, and digital inclusion. They work to empower individuals and families, promoting self-sufficiency and community well-being.

Arizona Community Foundation: 

The Arizona Community Foundation supports various community initiatives, including funding programs related to digital inclusion, workforce development, and telehealth. They provide resources and grants to organizations working towards community development and empowerment.

Arizona Department of Corrections: 

The Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry is responsible for the incarceration and rehabilitation of convicted felons in the state of Arizona. It operates various correctional facilities, oversees parole and community supervision, and implements programs aimed at preparing inmates for successful reintegration into society.

Arizona Department of Economic Security: 

The Arizona Department of Economic Security provides a range of services, from workforce development and job placement to specialized programs catering to diverse needs. These include Aging and Adult Services, Benefits and Medical Eligibility assessments, Employment and Rehabilitation Services, support for individuals with Developmental Disabilities, and Child Support Services. Through these multifaceted offerings, the department strives to empower individuals and families, fostering self-sufficiency and community well-being.

Arizona Department of Education: 

The Arizona Department of Education promotes digital literacy and offers resources to educators and students to enhance technology integration in schools. Their initiatives aim to equip students of all ages, from young learners to adults (16 years or older, who are not enrolled in K-12 schools), with the necessary digital skills for academic success and future workforce readiness. The Arizona Department of Education works to advance technology capacity across students of all age groups through the Information Technology unit and Adult Education Services (AES). ADE also provides certifications for high school students such as the Seal of Financial Literacy.

Arizona Department of Health Services: 

The Arizona Department of Health Services supports telehealth initiatives and provides resources to healthcare providers and patients for remote healthcare services. Their programs aim to improve healthcare access and quality through the integration of technology.

Arizona Department of Homeland Security: 

The Arizona Department of Homeland Security provides cybersecurity services at no-cost to State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments (SLTTs) and K-12 school districts through the Statewide Cyber Readiness Program. Services and products include Advanced Endpoint Protection, Security Awareness Training and Anti-Phishing, Converged Endpoint Management, Multi-Factor Authentication, and Web Application Firewall.

Arizona Department of Housing: 

The Arizona Department of Housing offers financial literacy training and resources to help individuals and families achieve housing stability and financial well-being. Their programs aim to empower individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed housing and financial decisions.

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS): 

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System supports telehealth initiatives by providing resources and reimbursement for healthcare providers offering remote healthcare services to patients. Their programs aim to increase access to quality healthcare through innovative technology solutions.

Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: 

The Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce supports workforce development and business growth among Hispanic-owned businesses, including technology-related initiatives. They provide resources, networking opportunities, and advocacy for the Hispanic business community.

Arizona IT/Cyber Career Network: 

The Arizona IT/Cyber Career Network is a resource for technology and cybersecurity exploration in Arizona. The initiative provides job seekers and students with universal access to technology and cybersecurity career development resources, including access to hiring employers, community resources, and education and training programs. The Arizona IT/Cyber Career Network is made possible by the partnership between the Arizona Technology Council, Maricopa IDA, and the Partnership of Economic Innovation (PEI).

Arizona Public Libraries: 

Arizona's 230+ Public Libraries are statewide institutions that provide various resources and services to the public. They offer free computer access, digital device and navigation training, and some provide digital workforce training classes. Public libraries play a vital role in promoting digital literacy and providing access to technology for all residents. Please see the Appendix for a full description of Arizona's public library locations and services.

Arizona Rural Schools Association (ARSA): 

The ARSA supports and advocates for the unique needs of rural schools in Arizona. ARSA promotes digital equity, job training for educators, and community engagement in rural education. They bridge the digital divide by advocating for reliable internet access and equal opportunities to technology. ARSA provides job training programs and resources to empower educators with technology integration skills. Through community collaborations, ARSA strengthens the connection between schools and the local population, enhancing education quality and creating thriving learning environments for rural students.

Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records:



The Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records, a division of the Secretary of State, is committed to providing Arizonans access to information about their government, their state, and their world by offering content in a variety of formats, preserving Arizona’s history for future generations, and empowering local institutions to engage their communities in learning. The State Library values accessibility, preservation, customer service, community engagement, and collaboration.

With support from federal and state funding, many services are provided to Arizona residents through the branches:

- **Archives and Records Management** collects, preserves, and makes available to the public and all branches of government, permanent public records, historical manuscripts, photographs, and other materials that contribute to the understanding of Arizona history. It also helps public bodies manage the entire lifecycle of records, paper and born-digital.
- **Arizona Talking Book Library** provides books, newspapers, magazines, and other library resources in multiple formats to meet the needs of eligible users at no cost.
- **Library, Archives & Public Records Administration** preserves Arizona and provides access to empower all Arizonans now and in the future; expands the State Library’s impact through grants, e-rate support, and partnerships; makes informed decisions to provide stewardship and service to Arizona; and grows leaders and innovators who embrace changes that lead to superior service.
- **Library Development** empowers Arizona libraries to offer excellent customer service through consulting, grant funding, resources, and training. Team members specializing in Digital Inclusion, Tribal Libraries, Continuing Education, and Youth & Adult Services customize support for libraries to meet changing local needs and increase capacity for them to offer digital services.
- **State of Arizona Research Library** connects Arizonans and people around the world to unique Arizona materials, including books, newspapers, periodicals, and maps available in print and online in the Digital Arizona Library.

Arizona State University:



Arizona State University works to advance digital equity in Arizona. The university offers a range of programs including workforce development, financial and digital literacy, disability services, career services, and research initiatives related to technology and innovation. ASU’s robust community outreach programs, research collaborations, and innovative partnerships, seek to address the barriers faced by underserved communities including challenges related to accessing and utilizing technologies.

Through a partnership between Enterprise Technology and Watts College, ASU is providing internet connectivity and literacy training to the community. ASU's W.P. Carey school leads a financial literacy program for students and their families. ASU also provides hotspot giveaways, digital skill building and cybersecurity and a range of free upskilling programs. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute provides learning experiences and a community where adults ages 50 or better engage in non-credit, university-quality programs, member-driven experiences, campus-based learning opportunities, and community partnerships. ASU is also home to the Digital Inclusion Leadership Certification, built in partnership with Marconi Society.

Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP): 

The Arizona Technology Access Program, in partnership with Achieve Human Services and RefurbIT, offers free or low-cost technology devices and items needed for disabled Arizonans to participate in the digital world. Their services include free or low-cost technology and medical devices, low-interest technology loans, user training and demonstrations, loaner programs, and digital workforce training. AzTAP serves the entire state of Arizona from its Phoenix-based program.

Arizona Technology Council (ATC): 

The Arizona Technology Council focuses on promoting technology innovation and workforce development, supporting businesses and startups in the technology sector. ATC provides resources, networking opportunities, and advocacy for technology-related initiatives.

Arizona Technology in Education Association (AZTEA): 

AZTEA is focused on promoting the effective use of technology in education throughout the state of Arizona. AZTEA works toward fostering digital equity, providing job training, and engaging in community efforts. AZTEA strives to prepare students for success in a digital world through collaborations with schools, districts, and community organizations to promote the use of technology in education.

Arizona Telemedicine Program: 

The Arizona Telemedicine Program promotes telehealth services by facilitating access to healthcare providers, telemedicine networks, and training programs. They play a crucial role in advancing healthcare delivery through the use of technology and remote healthcare services.

Arizona Western College: 

Arizona Western College has initiatives in place to promote digital equity and workforce training. They offer computer access to students and provide resources for digital skill development. Additionally, the

college collaborates with local businesses and organizations to create workforce training programs aligned with industry needs.

ASU Local: 

ASU Local is a regional initiative of Arizona State University (ASU) aimed at promoting digital literacy, workforce development, and community engagement. Through various programs and partnerships, ASU Local offers digital skills training, career counseling, and employment placement services to individuals across the state. ASU Local leverages the university's resources and expertise to empower individuals, foster economic growth, and drive innovation in local communities.

AT&T: 

AT&T has been involved in numerous initiatives related to digital equity. Through its "AT&T Connect All" program, the company aims to bridge the digital divide by providing affordable internet access and devices to underserved communities. AT&T also offers workforce training programs and supports STEM education initiatives

AZ Cyber Initiative: 

The AZ Cyber Initiative is a non-profit dedicated to unlocking opportunities for young people who are interested in cyber and emergent technology. They collaborate with workforce partners across the state to offer programs that provide career-connected and work-based learning experiences, leading to quality digital jobs that help young people achieve their dreams. Their mission is to provide young people in Arizona with the inspiration and skills needed to discover and pursue a meaningful, household-sustaining career in the digital economy

AZ-1: 

AZ-1 (pronounced "as one") is a web portal of curated broadband and digital inclusion resources to provide a centralized location for the state to come together "as one" in addressing the digital divide. The creation of AZ-1 was made possible through federal funds and a partnership between Maricopa County and Arizona State University.

AZ StRUT: 

Arizona Students Recycling Used Technology, otherwise known as AZ StRUT, provides A+ certification training to students across the state. They aim to improve the competitiveness of Arizona's technical workforce by supporting applied learning in our educational systems through scholarships and donate electronics & technology, providing refurbished equipment to education and community non-profit organizations, promoting diversity through technical education and work experience, and disposing of electronic waste responsibly.

Boys and Girls Clubs: 

The Boys and Girls Club has a strong presence in communities across Arizona. They provide comprehensive support to young people, including digital literacy training and workforce development programs. Through their clubs and after-school programs, the Boys and Girls Club offers access to technology resources, mentors, and educational opportunities that equip youth with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the digital age.

Chicanos Por la Causa: 

Chicanos Por la Causa is a statewide organization that provides digital literacy, workforce development, and community empowerment programs. CPLC provides digital and financial literacy training and access to technology resources. Through their workforce programs, CPLC provides job training, career counseling, and employment placement services to empower individuals and promote community development.

Connect Arizona: 

Connect Arizona is supported by the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records, a division of the Secretary of State, with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Connect Arizona provides bi-lingual one-on-one phone tech support and digital literacy training through repeat interactions with Digital Navigators. Connect Arizona also offers support finding and accessing digital literacy classes, refurbished computers, and local resources. The program aims to foster digital inclusion across Arizona.

Common Sense Media: 

Common Sense Media is a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting parents, educators, and young people in navigating the digital landscape. While they offer unbiased reviews and advice on media content, a significant part of their mission centers on promoting digital literacy and citizenship. They provide educational resources and programs to foster responsible online behavior, ensuring that children and families are equipped with the tools and knowledge for a safe and enriching digital experience.

Cox Communications: 

Cox is committed to promoting digital equity through various programs and initiatives. One of their notable programs is Connect2Compete, which aims to bridge the digital divide by offering affordable internet access and devices to low-income families with school-aged children. Connect2Compete provides discounted internet service plans, digital literacy training, and access to affordable devices, ensuring that students have the tools and connectivity they need to succeed academically. Cox is a provider of the Affordable Connectivity Program and also works in collaboration with community organizations on STEM programs and engages in robust community outreach.

Department of Veterans Services: 

The Department of Veterans Services recognizes the digital needs of veterans and aims to provide services and resources that promote digital equity, digital literacy, and accessibility. While their primary mission is to support veterans in various ways, they also play a role in helping veterans navigate the digital landscape and access the resources they need to enhance their quality of life.

Digital Connect Initiative: 

Digital Connect is an initiative of Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. They aim to bridge the digital divide in the Gila River Indian Community and Indigenous communities everywhere. Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. created DCI in recognition of the need to promote digital inclusion, leverage broadband connectivity for community and economic advancement, and embrace modern technology as a resource for heritage preservation in the digital age.

Digital Equity Institute: 

The Digital Equity Institute (DEI) provides a range of digital equity ecosystem supports including age and stage-appropriate digital skill building, digital and financial literacy training, and 21st-century workforce development. Navigators offer a robust in-person, hybrid, and virtual Digital Navigator program, and provide Digital Navigator and digital health navigator training. Additionally, DEI offers telehealth system design and support services and provides device distribution and online safety training. DEI Tech Hives are spaces where community meets technology. Hives culturally responsive community spaces designed to increase a sense of belonging in the digital world while improving use, adoption, and affinity for technology. DEI also provides comprehensive impact evaluation.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV): 

Disabled American Veterans is actively engaged in promoting digital equity and literacy among disabled veterans. They work to ensure that digital resources are accessible to all, and they offer technical support to help veterans overcome digital challenges. These services empower disabled veterans to connect with the digital world, access essential information and services, and improve their quality of life.

EveryoneOn Arizona: 

EveryoneOn Arizona is a statewide organization that supports the sign-up process for the Affordable Connectivity Program. They assist individuals and families in applying for affordable internet plans, ensuring that everyone has access to essential online resources and opportunities.

Future Stars, Inc: 

Future Stars, Inc is an asset to the state in providing STEM program for youth in throughout the state and refurbished devices to schools, students and families to get/stay connected. Future Stars has been providing a nine-month STEM program for youth for the last nine years and providing devices for the last four years.

Geeks 2 You:



Geeks 2 You is a statewide organization that provides free tech support services. They offer computer repairs, virus removal, and software troubleshooting to ensure that individuals have access to reliable and functioning technology.

Girl Scouts:



The Girl Scouts organization plays a vital role in empowering girls and young women across Arizona. In addition to their leadership and character-building programs, the Girl Scouts offer digital literacy training and skill-building activities, as well as opportunities for girls who have incarcerated parents, or other barriers, to fully participate in Girl Scouting. Through engaging workshops, badge programs, and partnerships with technology organizations, they equip girls with essential digital skills, promote creativity and innovation, and inspire future leaders in the digital realm. There are two Councils serving Arizona: the Arizona Cactus-Pine Council and the Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona.

Goodwill:



Goodwill is a statewide organization that offers workforce development programs, job training, and employment placement services. Their focus is on assisting individuals with barriers to employment, providing them with the necessary skills and resources to secure meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities.

Greater Phoenix Economic Council:m



The Greater Phoenix Economic Council promotes economic growth and attracts businesses to the region by providing resources, networking opportunities, and workforce development initiatives. They strive to create a vibrant business ecosystem and drive economic prosperity in the Greater Phoenix area.

Literacy Connects:



Literacy Connects is non-profit, community-based literacy organization providing digital literacy, workforce development, English language and basic skills training to adults in Pima County and Southern Arizona. By empowering individuals with basic skills, Literacy Connects aims to promote equity and inclusion in the digital world.

Local First:



Local First initiatives promote economic and community development with a focus on workforce development. In rural areas of Arizona, they offer various programs and resources to empower rural communities, foster entrepreneurship, and enhance quality of life. AZNavigator, a Local First Arizona Coalition, is a team of 10 organizations working together across Arizona to improve quality and access to

small business support services. From startups to established businesses, the team of experts can help stabilize, reinvent, or scale your company.

Maricopa Community Colleges: 

Maricopa Community Colleges provide digital literacy training and workforce development programs, including certifications and vocational training. They offer educational opportunities to enhance career prospects and meet the evolving needs of the job market.

Native American Connections: 

Native American Connections provides workforce development programs and resources to empower Native American individuals and communities. They offer culturally sensitive services and support systems to enhance educational and employment opportunities for Native Americans.

Northern Arizona University: 

Northern Arizona University is an important partner in achieving digital equity. NAU provides workforce development programs, cybersecurity, a range of skills training and future of work focused career services. Their in-person and online education opportunities meet the needs of diverse learners and support career advancement. NAU is a trusted anchor institution whose work extends beyond the borders of Coconino County and throughout northern Arizona.

Phoenix Public Housing: 

The City of Phoenix Public Housing Digital Inclusion Program offers subsidized internet plans in collaboration with local providers, ensuring that low-income residents can access high-speed internet at a fraction of the cost. Additionally, the program equips participants with free or low-cost computer hardware, such as laptops or tablets, and provides hands-on training in digital literacy, including online safety, software proficiency, and job search skills, enabling them to harness the full potential of the digital world and pursue economic opportunities.

Pima Community College: 

PCC offers a wide range of academic programs, from certificate courses to associate degrees. With a commitment to educational excellence and community engagement, Pima Community College provides accessible, affordable, and high-quality education opportunities. The institution plays a pivotal role in workforce development, lifelong learning, and in helping students achieve their academic and career aspirations.

RefurbIT: 

RefurbIT is an initiative of the ACHIEVE Enterprise Services, a full-service electronic recycling center that is an industry leader in converting obsolete computer electronics into reusable and refurbished products

and provides refurbished IT equipment at discounted prices. RefurbIT serves Yuma, San Luis, Somerton, Wellton, Gadsden, Parker, Quartzsite, Kingman, Lake Havasu City, Bullhead City, Casa Grande, and Maricopa.

Rural Arizona Development Council: 

The Rural Arizona Development Council supports rural development initiatives and addresses the unique challenges faced by rural communities in Arizona. They promote economic growth, community development, and the well-being of rural residents.

SAAVI: 

SAAVI (Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired) is a non-profit organization with offices in Tucson and Phoenix. SAAVI first began in 1964 as a social club for visually impaired individuals and has since grown into a statewide agency serving thousands of blind children, adults and seniors. SAAVI focuses on education and job skills training specifically for the visually impaired, offering programs that enable participants to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Sahuarita Food Bank: 

Sahuarita Food Bank is a community staple in southern Arizona. The Food Bank and family resource center provide local families with food services, financial and digital literacy training, coding and robotics classes, online safety training, Digital Navigator support, job search support and more. With a volunteer corps of more than 250 people, the Food Bank is one of the most trusted community anchors in the region. The organization recently launched project AZUL, a mobile digital literacy and skills training unit that brings service and support directly to rural communities.

SciTech Institute: 

The SciTech Institute is an organization that focuses on promoting science and technology education and engagement across the state of Arizona. It offers various programs, events, and resources to inspire and educate students, educators, and the community about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields.

Southwest Human Development: 

Southwest Human Development provides early childhood education programs that incorporate digital literacy training for parents and caregivers. They offer resources and support to ensure that young children and their families are equipped with digital skills for lifelong learning.

Sun Corridor Network: 

Sun Corridor Network is a nonprofit organization focused on providing high-speed internet access and infrastructure to support economic development in Arizona. They work with community anchor

institutions, including schools and libraries, to enhance broadband connectivity and bridge the digital divide in rural, remote, urban underserved areas.

Televerde Foundation: 

Televerde Foundation’s mission is to provide currently and formerly incarcerated women with the personal and professional development programs necessary to successfully join and advance in the global workforce. Their approach inspires creativity, imagination, self-confidence, and social skills while addressing issues that cause recidivism. They enable women to break the generational cycle of poverty and incarceration by becoming positive role models to change the lives of future generations and build stronger communities.

T-Mobile: 

T-Mobile has taken steps to address digital equity through its "Project 10 Million," which offers free internet access and mobile devices to eligible students and their families. The program aims to bridge the homework gap and provide equitable access to educational resources.

Tucson Connected: 

A collective public/private campaign aimed at eliminating the gap between Tucsonans who have access to telecommunications – and the educational, economic, and social advantages connectivity brings – and those who do not. A project fund of the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, the coalition for Tucson Connected works together to deliver strategies that reduce and eliminate historical barriers to technology access and use.

University of Arizona: 

The University of Arizona is an integral partner in Arizona’s mission to become digitally equitable. UA offers a full range of education and workforce programs. They are deeply embedded in their community through in person and online education opportunities. They provide tech support, telehealth service, and resources to support career growth and lifelong learning.

Verizon: 

Verizon actively contributes to digital equity efforts through initiatives like the Verizon Innovative Learning program. This program provides free technology, internet access, and immersive STEM education to underserved communities and under-resourced schools across Arizona. Through the program Verizon equips students, teachers, and communities with devices, they help foster digital skills, improve educational outcomes, and promote equitable access to technology. Through the Small Business Digital Ready plan Verizon provides a free, personalized online experience that provides quick online courses, expert coaching, peer networking, and grant opportunities for small businesses. Through a partnership with the National 4-H Council they provide digital skills training to adults in rural communities.

We Care Tucson:



We Care Tucson provides individuals with access to information technology, medical equipment, and supplies. Through the restoration of donated computers and reusable medical devices, including the responsible recycling of non-functional components, we strive to cultivate an equitable and sustainable community in Southern Arizona.

YMCA:



The YMCA operates with the mission to empower individuals, strengthen communities, and promote social responsibility. In addition to its wide range of programs and services, the YMCA actively engages in efforts related to digital equity, job training, and community development to create a more equitable society. They provide access to technology and digital resources to underserved communities and offer various programs and resources to equip individuals with the skills needed to thrive in the workforce.

YWCA:



The YWCA is committed to empowering women, eliminating racism, and promoting social justice. The YWCA provides digital literacy and workforce development programs to individuals of all backgrounds. They provide training and resources to enhance digital skills, promote career advancement, and foster economic self-sufficiency. The YWCA's holistic approach ensures that women and their families have the tools and support needed to thrive in an increasingly digital society.

3.1.2. Existing Digital Equity Plans

Cataloging existing digital equity plans is a critical step towards achieving full and meaningful digital participation. By understanding work that is planned and already underway throughout the state we identify opportunities to maximize funding, increase efficiency, and accelerate progress towards goals. Arizona Commerce Authority, collaborated with local municipalities, counties, and Tribal governments to identify and analyze existing digital equity plans. Each plan was assessed to identify gaps, opportunities, and best practices. These local and Tribal plans served as foundational elements for a statewide strategy, ensuring that our approach is both inclusive and contextually relevant. The list below is based on feedback provided to the Arizona Commerce Authority by regional entities. Additional resources will be added as they are identified.

Arizona Broadband Strategic Plan

The 2018 Arizona Statewide Broadband Strategic Plan is a comprehensive report that analyzes the state of broadband in Arizona and outlines a strategic plan for improving access and connectivity throughout the state. The report emphasizes the importance of digital equity and the need to provide equal, affordable, and reliable broadband access to all citizens, including those in underserved and remote

locations. The plan identifies several initiatives to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and boost America's capabilities in education, health care, and homeland security. While identifying unique challenges to digital equity on tribal lands in Arizona, the report does not provide specific steps for improving broadband access on tribal lands in Arizona. With the Arizona Digital Equity Plan's inclusion of barriers specifically faced by members of tribal communities, we hope to lay the foundation for this work.

Arizona Digital Access Strategy Report

This 2020 report was submitted on behalf of the more than 60 public and private digital access advocates participating in the statewide Arizona COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force led by the Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network (AZBSN). This report was written for public and private policy and decision-makers representing State and Local Government, Business and Industry, Rural Communities, Economic Development, Education, Health Services, Public Safety, Libraries, Nonprofit Organizations, Telecommunications and Technology Companies and anyone who had the responsibility and authority to serve all Arizona citizens and to ensure their safety and quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic, but its recommendations hold true today.

Benefits of Expanding Broadband Infrastructure in Apache County

This report highlights the economic benefits of expanding broadband infrastructure in Apache County, with case studies and key observations showing how broadband can help improve economic conditions in the region. The report emphasizes the importance of broadband as an economic foundation item and essential to day-to-day communication and recommends a comprehensive economic development strategy that includes programs and policies to expand access to broadband services, advance workforce development initiatives, and enhance transportation infrastructure. However, the report does not address the issue of digital equity and the potential impact of broadband expansion on underserved communities in Apache County. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan's County Profile section, which includes recommendations for Apache County, aims to address county-specific needs going forward.

Central Arizona Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

This report by Central Arizona Governments and its partners outlines the regional values, philosophy, and goals of the Central Arizona Governments Economic Development District. The report emphasizes the importance of economic resilience and identifies several key factors that contribute to it, including workforce development, infrastructure, broadband, housing, transportation, and water management. The report highlights the need for digital equity and broadband density as a crucial factor in economic performance, but it also acknowledges that the CAG region lags significantly behind the U.S. in this area. While the report outlines several initiatives to address this gap, it does not provide a detailed plan for how to achieve digital equity in the region. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan's County Profile section, which includes recommendations for counties in Arizona's central region, aims to address county-specific needs going forward.

Connect Pima

Connect Pima is a strategic plan aimed at expanding and improving digital access in Pima County, with a focus on digital equity. The Plan includes goals for creating infrastructure, implementing digital literacy initiatives, and increasing devices and tools for connectivity. The Plan involves collaboration with local

partners and organizations to distribute affordable or free technology devices to individuals and families with limited resources. The Plan includes specific initiatives to address the needs of underserved communities and a timeline for implementing the plan's goals. The Digital Equity team at the Arizona Commerce Authority will engage with Pima County to ensure the Connect Pima goals are in alignment with the Digital Equity Plan and support the work on a local level. One way the Arizona Digital Equity Plan will provide support for Pima County (and all the counties in Arizona) will be through the creation of Digital Equity Specialists, which will act as local points of contact for the Digital Equity team at the ACA. Please see Goal 2, Objective 2 for more information on the Digital Equity Specialists we plan to support in each county.

Digital Payson

The Digital Payson Working Group is a collective effort was created by the Payson Town Manager in January 2021, and is led by a coalition in Gila County. The goal is to improve digital infrastructure and services in Payson and the surrounding region. The group's mission is to ensure that all residents have access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet, as well as the skills and resources needed to use digital tools effectively. The Digital Payson Working Group has identified several key areas of focus, including strategic planning, community outreach and education, outage tracking and issue reporting, and collaboration platforms.

The Maricopa County Digital Equity Plan

Maricopa County's Digital Equity Plan is a pilot program with dual purposes — to deploy a scalable model for addressing digital inequity in high need areas, and to establish the foundation upon which subsequent government funding could help the county reach every member of a covered population in the county. The plan includes digital literacy training, prioritizing foundational skills, workforce skills, and telehealth access. The plan includes the distribution of network-enabled devices, emphasizing accessibility and a person-fit model. It includes a robust Digital Navigator program designed to support tech support, telehealth, and ACP enrollment. The plan addresses connectivity gaps in underserved areas, targeting symmetrical 100 Mbps internet speeds, upgrading infrastructure, and promoting public sector collaboration. It recognizes the importance of middle-mile infrastructure, aiming to provide open-access fiber connectivity to residents below the poverty line, attracting private sector involvement and supporting modern technologies. Funded through ARPA dollars, the pilot program is a partnership between the County, Digital Equity Institute, Sun Corridor Network, and Arizona State University. The plan does not cover all Maricopa residents, however. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan aims to create opportunities for the covered populations in Maricopa County and will ensure that other organizations working in Maricopa County are supplementing the efforts of the Maricopa County Digital Equity Plan.

NACOG Broadband Strategic Plan

The 2021 Northern Arizona Council of Governments' Broadband Strategic Plan is a comprehensive plan that aims to improve broadband access in Northern Arizona. The plan recognizes the importance of broadband internet capacity for economic recovery and resilience, public safety, and quality of life. The plan proposes the deployment of new broadband infrastructure throughout Northern Arizona to serve the communities, especially in rural areas. The plan also highlights the need for clear communication and coordination about planned broadband projects in the EDD. The plan does not address the issue of

affordability, which is a significant barrier to digital equity. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses affordability in Goal 1, Objectives 3 and 2, specifically.

NACOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The 2020-2025 Northern Arizona Council of Governments Economic Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a collaborative report that aims to promote economic development in Northern Arizona while maintaining the unique character of the region's cities and towns. The report identifies five focus areas, including workforce and education, economic and community health, infrastructure, maximizing available assets and supporting existing businesses, and natural resource assets as an economic driver. One of the target opportunities identified in the report is broadband, as only 34% of rural areas in Arizona have access to services that meet the FCC's benchmark standard for broadband speed. However, there is a gap in the plan regarding how to ensure that all residents in the region have access to reliable and affordable broadband services. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses this through support and coordination with the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, and BEAD Volumes I and II, specifically in Goal 1, through increased availability and enrollment in low-cost internet plans.

NACOG Economic Development District 2021 Recovery & Resilience Plan

The 2021 Northern Arizona Council of Governments' Economic Development District 2021 Recovery & Resilience Plan outlines a vision and mission to create a sustainable regional economy while preserving heritage and natural resources. The report identifies digital equity as a key challenge, with disparities in broadband access magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report proposes the development of a Regional Broadband Strategic Plan to support the expansion of robust broadband options in the region. However, the report does not provide specific details on how this plan will be implemented or how it will address the needs of vulnerable populations, such as low-skilled, low-wage individuals, ex-offender populations, and the long-term unemployed, who are at risk of being left behind in a post-COVID economy.

PAG Smart Communities Regional Issues Statements, Goals and Potential Strategies report

The Pima Association of Governments 2018 report is a comprehensive plan for improving economic vitality and modernizing infrastructure in communities. The plan emphasizes the importance of advancing digital infrastructure to progress in every area of regional prosperity, including education, healthcare, research, business, government, public safety, agriculture, energy, and the environment. The document highlights the need for ultra-high-speed networks, intelligent transportation systems, modernized emergency services communications, and the Internet of Things network.

PAG Advanced Communications Infrastructure Assessment

This assessment discusses the benefits of technology in Pima County, with a particular focus on digital equity. The report highlights the importance of high-speed internet in enhancing opportunities for education, workforce development, and training. However, the report also acknowledges that the Digital Divide is most pronounced in areas that are rural or economically disadvantaged, putting already vulnerable communities at further risk of falling behind. The report recommends digital inclusion efforts to address these issues, with a focus on rural areas of Arizona affected by the divide. While the report provides a comprehensive evaluation of the regional benefits of technology, it does not provide a

detailed plan for implementing digital inclusion efforts or addressing the gaps in the current system. Through local coordination and creating a feedback loop with Digital Equity Specialists (see Goal 2, Objective 2) we will ensure continued alignment and efficacy of the Digital Equity Plan.

PAG Smart Communities: Regional Issues Statements, Goals and Potential Strategies

The PAG Smart Communities overview outlines a shared regional vision for Southern Arizona that focuses on enhancing the region's economic competitiveness in six key areas: water reliability, advanced communications infrastructure, modernized transportation system, strategic talent alignment, resilience of infrastructure, and public-private partnerships. The plan aims to improve the region's mobility, sustainability, and livability through the use of technology, data analytics, and knowledge sharing. While this plan does not directly address digital equity, it does include important elements of digital equity including workforce development and infrastructure. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses digital equity in workforce development specifically in Goal 3, Objective 3.

SEAGO Broadband Feasibility Draft Report: Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties

The 2023 Broadband GAP & Feasibility Report for Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties in Arizona provides a comprehensive analysis of the broadband market, engineering design, and cost in the region. The report highlights the importance of digital equity and the need to address the digital divide in low-income neighborhoods. It recommends identifying the staffing needed to pursue a broadband solution, finding and partnering with ISPs to pursue grants, reviewing local policies that might be a barrier to constructing a broadband network, and tackling other broadband issues like digital literacy. However, the report does not provide a detailed plan for addressing the digital divide, and it does not address the issue of affordability, which is a significant barrier to digital equity. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses affordability in Goal 1, Objectives 2 and 3, specifically.

SEAGO Broadband Feasibility Report: Cochise County

The 2023 The Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) Broadband Feasibility Report for Cochise County, Arizona is a comprehensive analysis of the broadband market in the area, including providers, products, and pricing. The report highlights the importance of digital equity and the need to address the digital divide in the county. The report suggests that affordability is likely to be a big issue in the county, with lower median household income, per capita incomes, and higher levels of poverty indicating a higher likelihood of residents who struggle to afford broadband. The report recommends solutions for closing the digital divide, including finding solutions for closing the computer gap. However, the report does not provide a detailed plan for addressing the affordability issue, which is a significant challenge on the path to digital equity. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses affordability in Goal 1, Objectives 2 and 3, specifically.

SEAGO Broadband Feasibility Report: Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties

The 2023 Broadband GAP & Feasibility Report for Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties in Arizona provides a comprehensive analysis of the broadband market, engineering design, and cost in the region. The report highlights the importance of digital equity and the need to address the digital divide in low-

income neighborhoods. It recommends identifying the staffing needed to pursue a broadband solution, finding and partnering with ISPs to pursue grants, reviewing local policies that might be a barrier to constructing a broadband network, and tackling other broadband issues like digital literacy. However, the report does not provide a detailed plan for addressing the digital divide, and it does not address the issue of affordability, which is a significant barrier to digital equity. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses affordability in Goal 1, Objectives 2 and 3, specifically.

SEAGO Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The 2021 Southeastern Arizona Government Organization's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2021-2025 is a strategic plan aimed at promoting economic growth in the region. The plan identifies infrastructure, including broadband, as a focus area and outlines strategies to support the development and expansion of broadband infrastructure within each of the counties. The plan also seeks to identify and develop quality infrastructure and facilities to stimulate future economic development capacity and opportunity. However, while the plan acknowledges the importance of digital equity, it does not provide specific strategies or actions to address the digital divide and ensure that all residents have access to affordable and reliable broadband services. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan addresses this through support and coordination with the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, and BEAD Volumes I and II, specifically in Goal 1, through increased availability and enrollment in low-cost internet plans.

State of Arizona Cybersecurity Plan

The Cybersecurity Plan represents the State of Arizona's continuous commitment to improving cybersecurity and supporting the State, as well as the cybersecurity practitioners across local jurisdictions. Key components include organizational roles and responsibilities, implementation plans, funding strategies, and various cybersecurity plan elements. These elements address managing, monitoring, and tracking cybersecurity best practices, enhancing preparedness, conducting assessments and mitigation, and implementing multi-factor authentication and enhanced logging. The plan also focuses on eliminating the use of unsupported software and hardware, encrypting data at rest and in transit, and migrating to the .gov internet domain. It includes a wide range of best practices and methodologies, including alignment with NIST principles and supply chain risk management, while promoting safe online services and continuity of operations. The Digital Equity Plan's goals targeting safety online, and ongoing educational opportunities will be greatly influenced by the State of Arizona Cybersecurity Plan, and the ACA will work closely with the Arizona Department of Homeland Security to ensure alignment with future cybersecurity related activities.

3.1.3. Existing Digital Equity Programs

Arizona's Digital Equity Plan is built upon a foundation of existing programs and initiatives that are vital to achieving digital equity. The following stakeholders have already made significant contributions to digital equity and will continue to be vital partners in the state's ongoing efforts. The below assessment is a work in progress. A full list of programs can be found in the Arizona Stakeholder and Asset Inventory in the Appendix. This list is intended to be updated as more programs and stakeholders are identified.

AARP

Through their nationwide OATS (Older Adults Technology Services) program, AARP provides specialized digital skills training tailored for seniors. Senior Planet programs are built around five impact areas: financial security, social engagement, creative expression, health and wellness, and civic participation. All five areas represent opportunities in the lives of older adults where a significant impact can be achieved through the use of technology.

Arizona State University (ASU)

ASU is a leader in advancing digital equity across Arizona. ASU is home to the Maricopa Broadband and Digital Equity Initiative, the largest university-led digital equity initiative in the country. As part of the Maricopa program, ASU leads a statewide broadband mapping activity to help identify areas that are un- and underserved. Through a partnership between Enterprise Technology and Watts College, ASU is providing internet connectivity and literacy training to the community. ASU's W.P. Carey school leads a financial literacy program for students and their families. ASU also provides hotspot giveaways, digital skill building and cybersecurity and a range of free upskilling programs. ASU is also home to the Digital Inclusion Leader training program they built in partnership with Marconi Society.

Arizona's Public Libraries

Arizona's 233 public and tribal libraries have always played an important role in supporting digital equity and inclusion for all portions of the population including aging individuals, individuals who live at or below the Federal Poverty Line, recently incarcerated individuals who are reentering society, veterans and their families, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier such as English Language Learners, or those with low text literacy, individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and individuals who primarily reside in a rural area. Libraries in Arizona seek to serve the entire community and meet people where they are; connecting them with the resources and help they need to live full and engaged lives.

Libraries often provide public access computers, access to the internet and wi-fi, access to electronic resources and databases, along with digital literacy skills training for people of all backgrounds. From the youngest patrons using apps to enhance early literacy skills to senior citizens learning to use devices and connect online, the ability to use technology is critical for full participation in modern society.

More importantly, public library staff often function as technical support and digital skill educators for members of their communities. The services provided are free, allowing patrons to gain access to help without cost being a barrier. Please see the Appendix for more information about Arizona's Public Libraries.

Arizona Telemedicine Program

The Arizona Telemedicine Program is a large, multidisciplinary, university-based program that provides telemedicine services, distance learning, informatics training, and telemedicine technology assessment capabilities to communities throughout Arizona.

Chicanos Por La Causa

CPLC offers workforce development workshops, financial literacy and digital literacy training for the community. CPLC also hosts device distribution and ACP sign up events.

Connect Arizona, a Service of the Library Development Branch of the Arizona State Library

Recent scholarship has called digital literacy and access to affordable, reliable internet a “super social determinant of health,” however, many individuals in Arizona face significant challenges in accessing and utilizing these resources.

Born as an early-pandemic response, Connect Arizona, a service of the Library Development Branch of the State Library, strives to help Arizonans overcome those challenges through a Digital Navigator program.

The Connect Arizona Digital Navigator program is modeled after the National Digital Inclusion Alliance's Digital Navigator model and provides a proven framework to address these challenges effectively. By implementing this model, the State Library is working to help close the Digital Divide and to empower individuals to leverage technology for personal, educational, and professional purposes.

People across the state have access to on-demand technology tutoring, troubleshooting, digital literacy upskilling, help finding affordable internet and devices, and more through this program supported with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Connect Arizona Digital Navigators offer help and educational opportunities to Arizonans virtually, over the phone, and through text and email, enabling services to be provided throughout the state. Since its creation, Connect Arizona has completed over 4,000 tickets, helping people in eleven of Arizona's fifteen counties on a wide range of topics, including many requests for assistance signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Digital Payson

The Digital Payson collaborative is a collective effort to improve digital infrastructure and services in Payson and the surrounding region. The group's mission is to ensure that all residents have access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet, as well as the skills and resources needed to use digital tools effectively. The DPWG has identified several key areas of focus, including strategic planning, community outreach and education, outage tracking and issue reporting, and collaboration platforms.

Connect Pima

A Pima County initiative is aimed at improving broadband access and digital inclusion in Pima County. The initiative is designed to close the digital divide in Pima County by improving the broadband infrastructure across the county, implementing digital literacy initiatives, and increasing access to the devices and tools needed to access the internet.

Maricopa County Broadband Initiative

The Maricopa County Broadband Initiative is a substantial initiative to bridge the digital divide in Maricopa County, Arizona. The program focuses on the needs of the 588,000 county residents living below the poverty line. The program's central objectives include improving digital skills, providing Digital Navigator support, distributing network-enabled devices, and helping people learn to use them safely and meaningfully. The program is designed to create an efficacious model that can be leveraged to inform future efforts.

Digital Equity Institute

A research organization housed within Arizona State University, the Digital Equity Institute (DEI) has a full-service Digital Navigator corps, available to the community, with teams focused on tech support, skill building, and digital health. Teams are trained to support people of all ages and abilities. Support is available in multiple languages over the phone, chat, via a bot, in-person, and at tech hubs called Hives. Hives are located in high-need communities around the Valley and are designed to disrupt historic marginalization by bringing holistic digital inclusion services into places where it is most needed. DEI provides access to age-and-stage relevant digital literacy and skill building from foundational skills to credentials needed to compete in the 21st century workforce. The Institute also provides digital devices that meet the needs of the user, telehealth, ecosystem building, and impact evaluation.

Phoenix Public Housing

The City of Phoenix Public Housing Digital Inclusion Program offers subsidized internet plans in collaboration with local providers, ensuring that low-income residents can access high-speed internet at a fraction of the cost. Additionally, the program equips participants with free or low-cost computer hardware, such as laptops or tablets, and provides hands-on training in digital literacy, including online safety, software proficiency, and job search skills, enabling them to harness the full potential of the digital world and pursue economic opportunities.

Sun Corridor Network

Sun Corridor Network (SCN) is Arizona's research and education network lead. Founded by Arizona's three universities, SCN provides access to unserved and underserved communities. SCN is the lead ISP for the Maricopa Broadband and Digital Equity Initiative. Their work serves as the backbone for connecting community anchor institutions in high need areas across Maricopa County.

Tucson Connected

A collective public/private campaign aimed at eliminating the gap between Tucsonans who have access to telecommunications – and the educational, economic, and social advantages connectivity brings – and those who do not. A project fund of the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, the coalition for Tucson Connected works together to deliver strategies that reduce and eliminate historical barriers to technology access and use.

3.1.4. Broadband Adoption

“Access to high-speed (gigabit) internet in my rural community would enhance peoples' ability to work remotely, which is a significant factor for them. It would also aid in enticing businesses and employers to move here and open facilities, which would further aid the local workforce and economy. Overall, high-speed internet would be a tremendous boon to local commerce and industry.” - Community Member in Yavapai County

According to the latest US Census ACS 5-Year estimates (2017-2021), 88.2% of Arizonans have a broadband subscription, including cellular and satellite broadband services²⁰. Broadband adoption varies widely across the state, ranging from a high of 90.2% of households in Maricopa County to a low of 42.9% of households in Apache County. In comparison, the FCC estimates the percentage of population living where broadband fixed services are available with minimum speeds of 25/3 are 99.3% in Maricopa County and 23.0% in Apache County respectively as of December 31, 2019²¹.

The discrepancies between broadband availability and adoption highlight important barriers to achieving universal coverage, defined as 100/20 broadband service for everyone. In Maricopa County, only 0.7% of the population is not in a 25/3 service area, yet 9.8% of households did not report having a subscription. Possible reasons include subscriptions are not affordable, FCC estimates may not be precise, people may choose to not have broadband, people may have access to the internet without a subscription (e.g. students in dorms, elderly in community living), bias in census data due to mis/under-reporting, and time lags in the data.

Conversely, in Apache County, the data implies the number of households who report having a broadband subscription is 19.9% higher than the FCC estimate of population within a fixed broadband service area. Approximately 8.5% of these respondents have a cellular plan as their only access to broadband. Reasons for this discrepancy include over-reporting of broadband subscriptions, reporting of broadband services that are less than 25/3, non-representative sampling of households particularly among tribal populations, poor ACS response rates for households who do not have the communications to participate in ACS survey (e.g. no internet, no phones).

These data demonstrate that there are different barriers to broadband adoption in urban and rural areas which may be confounded by income, poverty, education, employment, and community functioning.

Building on the existing landscape assessment, which serves as baseline data on internet access and utilization, future work will focus on creating a dynamic framework to measure the meaningful use of the internet in key life sectors such as education, employment, civic engagement, and healthcare. Given that significant portions of the state's population currently lack internet access, this framework will be designed to monitor changes over time against the established baseline, thus allowing for the evaluation of both accessibility and impact. Critically, the definition of "meaningful use" will be derived from community consultations, ensuring that it is contextually relevant and aligned with local needs and priorities.

There are multiple resources available across the state designed to promote, enhance, and support broadband adoption. ACA will continue to build on the asset inventory list to identify all resources available for broadband deployment and digital equity.

Digital Navigator Services, ACP Enrollment and Outreach Campaigns

²⁰ 14 Access Broadband Dashboard. US Census Bureau and NTIA. accessed at <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=233ad09d77e14150be143b9447ed5074>

²¹ From "Fourteenth Broadband Deployment Report" by Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Released January 19, 2021.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records launched the first Digital Navigator service in the state. Connect Arizona was modeled on the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) Digital Navigator model. This program enables librarians from various locations throughout the state to assist community members in locating internet service, building digital literacy skills, and accessing technical support needed to become more efficient and effective internet users. Connect Arizona also sought to collate Digital Equity and Inclusion resources into a central location via their website, making it simpler for Arizonans to locate and gain access to the information and resources necessary to flourish in the digital economy. The Connect Arizona site offers resources for obtaining internet service, such as information about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and participating ISPs, a location map of Wi-Fi hotspots, a list of low-cost internet service plans and providers statewide, and guidance on where to find and buy low-cost, refurbished devices.

Digital Equity Institute's Digital Navigator model includes ACP enrollment support in partnership ASU's Experience Center, and a robust repository of resources for community members. Both Connect Arizona and the Digital Equity Institute's Digital Navigators serve the entire state.

The Navajo County Library District was a recipient of the FCC's ACP Outreach Grant and combines ACP Enrollment and Outreach with the Digital Navigator model, creating a sustainable system of support for residents of Navajo County.

Common Sense Media in partnership with both the City of Phoenix and the Digital Equity Institute have ongoing ACP enrollment campaigns. Community anchor organizations including but not limited to Phoenix Public Housing, Arizona State University, Future Stars, Tempe Health and Human Services, as well as ISP's run targeted ACP enrollment campaigns.

*Additional broadband adoption assets can be found in the Appendix. Assets will be added on a rolling basis as they are identified.

3.1.5. Broadband Affordability

"I've heard community members say, you know, yeah, I know about the affordable care plan for reduced cost Internet. I gave up trying to sign up for that thing months ago, you know, because it is so extensive, and you have to upload documents. And who knows how to do that? Right? So I wanna make sure that we are identifying people that can help within that community." - Community Member in Arizona

Affordability plays a pivotal role in achieving digital equity in Arizona. Ensuring that internet access and digital services are affordable for all residents is essential to bridging the digital divide. Many underserved communities, including low-income households and rural areas, face barriers in accessing the digital resources they need for education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement.

There are several local and federal programs available to qualifying Arizona residents that offer internet service at a reduced cost. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that helps to offset the cost of the internet for low-income households. ACP provides a discount on internet services for individuals living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or those participating in various assistance programs²². These populations are represented in

²² Federal Communications Commission (August 2023), Affordable Connectivity Program. Accessed at <https://www.fcc.gov/acp>

Figure 4 below. To date, there are over 500,000 Arizonans enrolled in ACP²³. A total of 1,145,670 Arizona residents are eligible for the program²⁴. The future of ACP is uncertain and identifying alternative approaches to address affordability is prudent. In the meantime, it is imperative to identify and scale programs that increase awareness of ACP and assist individuals with enrollment.

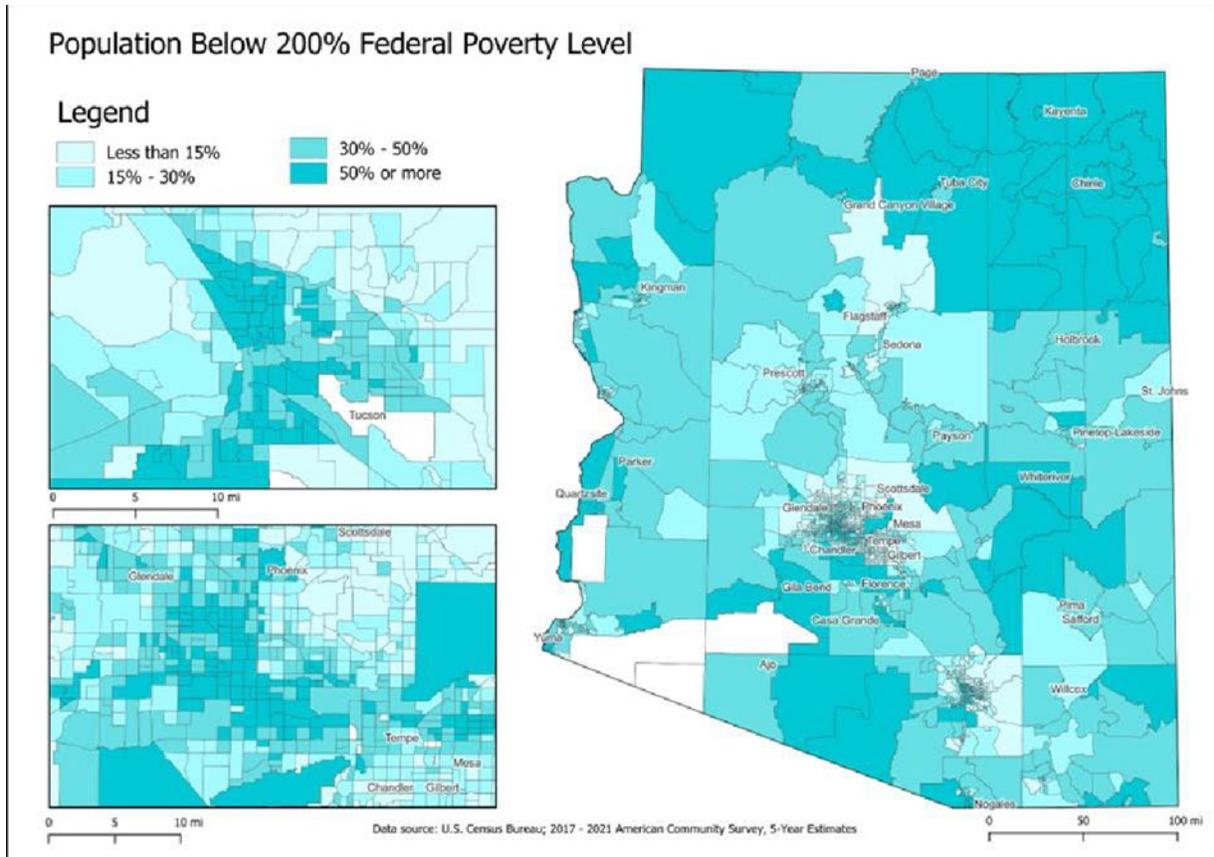


Figure 4: Census estimates of the percentage of households that are below 200% of the poverty level based on household size. The ACP threshold is 200% of the poverty level, so each identified household is eligible for the program.

Broadband Affordability Resources in Arizona

“If it weren't for the ACP FCC program, our family would struggle greatly to afford the internet. The cheapest plan that is offered is not very reliable or fast with the amount of people in my household (5). 5G is limited and slow in our area otherwise. The eligibility guidelines for the ACP FCC program should be expanded if possible, to allow others access to fast, reliable and affordable internet.” - Community Member in Pima County

Achieving digital equity is not possible without programs in place to help with the cost of internet connectivity and the devices needed to engage online. Connect Arizona, a service of the Arizona State

²³ Universal Service Administrative Co. (August 2023), ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker. Accessed at <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/>

²⁴ Information Superhighway (June 2023), Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment Dashboard. Accessed at <https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/no-home-left-offline/acp-data/#dashboard>

Library, Archives & Public Records, maintains a list of Low-Cost Internet Plans and Offers available in Arizona²⁵, which Digital Navigators can leverage to help people find options in their area. Community members can also use this list as a resource when comparing low-cost internet plans on their own. Additional programs will be added to this resource list as they are identified.

In addition to Low-Cost Internet Plans, another resource that addresses affordability is E-Rate. E-Rate is a federal program that offers discounts on telecommunications services and internet access to eligible schools and libraries in the US. The Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records both offer assistance and support for eligible Arizona applicants.

3.2. Needs Assessment

Arizona faces urgent digital equity challenges across all 15 counties and covered populations. Key areas include enhancing digital literacy and skills education, supporting youth and older Arizonans uniquely, and expanding library resources and social service digital engagement opportunities. Older Arizonans need protection from digital pitfalls and tailored educational programs, while veterans require specialized support, especially in Telehealth. Youth need phone-to-computer skills training as well as education and workforce support. Language barriers, particularly among Spanish-speaking and refugee communities, hinder digital access and require a thoughtful partnership. The infrastructure improvements throughout Arizona are crucial, especially in older communities. The incarcerated and recently released individuals' needs are currently underrepresented, pointing to a future focus area. Overall, a human-centric, localized approach is vital for equitable digital access in Arizona.

The areas that will benefit most from broadband infrastructure improvement include:

- Economic and workforce development
- Education
- Telehealth
- Access to devices
- Digitally literate communities
- Civic and social engagement opportunities
- Delivery and access to essential services

Creating a comprehensive needs assessment required a multi-pronged approach to assess the needs of covered populations. To collect these data, we created maps to identify areas where covered populations are located, asked questions through surveys, listening tours, and personal interviews, and analyzed census data along with state and federal data sources. Collectively, this provided specific information about the barriers for each covered population and offered insight into strategies for future digital equity work.

Covered Population Mapping:

The research team identified and collected estimates of the covered populations in Arizona using US Census American Community Survey (ACS) data sets²⁶ and the US Census Decennial Census

²⁵ 21 From Low Cost Internet Plans and Offers in Arizona 2022, <https://connect-arizona.com/get-online/internet-offers>

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates <https://data.census.gov>

Demographic and Household estimates²⁷. The Decennial Census data for covered populations is available only at the county and state levels. The ACS data, alternately, is available at the census tract level providing a higher level of resolution, but it is collected from a five-year rolling estimate - most recently 2017-2021.

Covered population	Statewide percent of population estimate ²⁸
Covered Households Individuals who live in covered households (not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census)	24%
Aging individuals (60 and above)	22%
Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility	0.63%
Veterans	6.6%
Individuals with disabilities	13.4%
Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy	
Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	46%
Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area	14%

Table 2: Covered populations in Arizona by percent of the population

Covered populations are defined by NTIA as those likely to experience elevated challenges in achieving digital equity and accessing services through digital technologies.

The geography of Arizona is diverse, with 15 counties ranging from the largest, Maricopa County with over 4.5 million residents, to the smallest, Greenlee County with just over 9,000 residents. As a result, county-level data alone is not adequate to assess the locations of need for covered populations. Census tract-level information is superior for location-based needs assessments. Census tracts in urban and suburban areas are commonly around one square mile with 1,000 - 3,000 population. Rural tracts are larger in size and include many locales that are not inhabited at all. Figure 4 (above) shows the Arizona population density at the tract level.

Survey Design

The survey process serves as a pivotal mechanism for gathering granular, area-specific data, which is vital for the mapping activity focused on covered populations. This comprehensive data collection

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics <https://data.census.gov>

²⁸ Digital Equity Act Population Viewer. 2023, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id%3Dc5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1702412325667435&usg=AOvVaw3e0KHNFuSXXSciikAQ_o

process ensures that the subsequent maps are both accurate and insightful, offering a nuanced understanding of the digital landscape across various geographic and demographic segments in Arizona.

The data collected through the surveys are directly integrated into the mapping activity, providing layered insights into the state of digital equity in different regions. These highly detailed maps provide stakeholders with a visual representation that complements the survey's findings. By weaving these two components together—survey data and geographic mapping—we create a synergistic tool for dissecting and addressing digital equity issues.

Survey Data Analysis

Analysis highlighted resources, challenges, and barriers to digital equity across the state. Analysis and interpretation of findings were examined through various stakeholder groups and delineated by the state's urban, rural, remote, and Tribal areas with a focus on "covered" and vulnerable populations, including low-income households, racial and ethnic minorities, members of Tribal Nations, the elderly, veterans, non-English speakers, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalized communities. Examination of current resources and barriers trends ensure representative sampling using sound statistical methods.

Analysis further examined the availability, quality, and utilization of digital resources. Electronic and paper surveys were distributed statewide to gather participant perceptions. Semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of groups enabled the collection of evidence informing the availability of resources and gaps in utilization. The landscape assessment provided foundational and baseline data.

The team measured areas experiencing poor outcomes and identified the statistical correlates that could be embedded in programs to improve them. The scale of this problem was such that it could only be successfully addressed if resources were strategically coordinated and evaluated within a framework that had a deep understanding of the factors driving digital access and their relationship to underlying social determinants. In addition to highly curated data, one also needed decision tools based on predictive models and clear visualizations.

Taken together, the data collection process fed two key models: one spatial (GIS), and one network-based. The GIS included data layers at multiple geographic scales (census tract, county). For example, all of the figures for population estimates and covered populations represent the U.S. Census data that provides foundational information about Arizona residents. These data were analyzed along with collected data to create a reliable and accurate landscape assessment of connectivity and barriers across the state.

Survey Participants

Throughout Arizona's Digital Equity Plan, the lived experiences and barriers faced by Arizonans who self-identify as members of one or more of the eight covered populations, as defined by NTIA, are described. These lived experiences informed our goals and measurable objectives as described in Section 2.3. Data was captured via county listening sessions, targeted listening sessions, and through targeted outreach. In partnership with various organizations and stakeholder groups across the state, we also distributed surveys to community members and to Community Anchor Institutions. Participants in the survey self-selected as belonging to one or more of the covered populations. During implementation of the strategies described in this plan, we will continue to collaborate with Arizona Department of

Corrections, and other government agencies, to capture data to further explore the needs of covered populations not as robustly represented in this first collection of data.

Community Member Survey: There were 2,616 responses to the community member survey. Of those, there was representation across each county in Arizona as shown in Table 2. Respondents from each covered population (except covered households) were represented in the survey as shown in Table 3 below. Figure 5 shows the community member breakdown by age groups. The lowest number of respondents was from Arizonans aged 18-24. Participants under the age of 18 were not eligible to take the survey and were not included.

Percentage of Respondents Self-Reporting their Status in a Covered Population (These numbers are not mutually exclusive as people could select multiple categories)									
Overall Number By Covered Population		Older than 60	Veteran	Disability	Language Barrier	Racial/ ethnic minority	Resides in a Rural Area	Member of a tribal nation**	Incarcerated individual
County Name	Community Member Participant Total	721	179	213	96	242	907	185	8
Apache	173	24	11	11	1	28	92	82	0
Cochise	47	17	8	7	1	2	20	0	0
Coconino		64	14	14	0	15	80	4	0
Gila	26	6	1	1	0	0	13	1	0
Graham	98	27	8	8	0	5	54	1	0
Greenlee	14	5	1	6	0	2	8	0	0
La Paz	81	41	8	16	1	7	51	2	2
Maricopa	424	73	12	46	36	62	24	10	3
Mohave	104	19	8	5	0	8	40	0	0
Navajo	222	24	7	12	1	35	100	79	1
Pima	256	35	10	12	19	35	25	1	1
Pinal	82	29	5	3	1	9	26	0	0
Santa Cruz	10	2	0	1	2	0	4	0	0
Yavapai	731	325	84	57	1	28	354	2	0
Yuma	125	25	2	11	26	6	12	2	1

Table 3: Community Member Survey Participation by County

*Income levels were not asked or recorded on the survey; therefore, Covered Households are not represented in Table 3.

**Tribal communities are not included in the NTIA's definition of covered populations. However, opinions from members of this community are vital to achieving digital equity in Arizona.

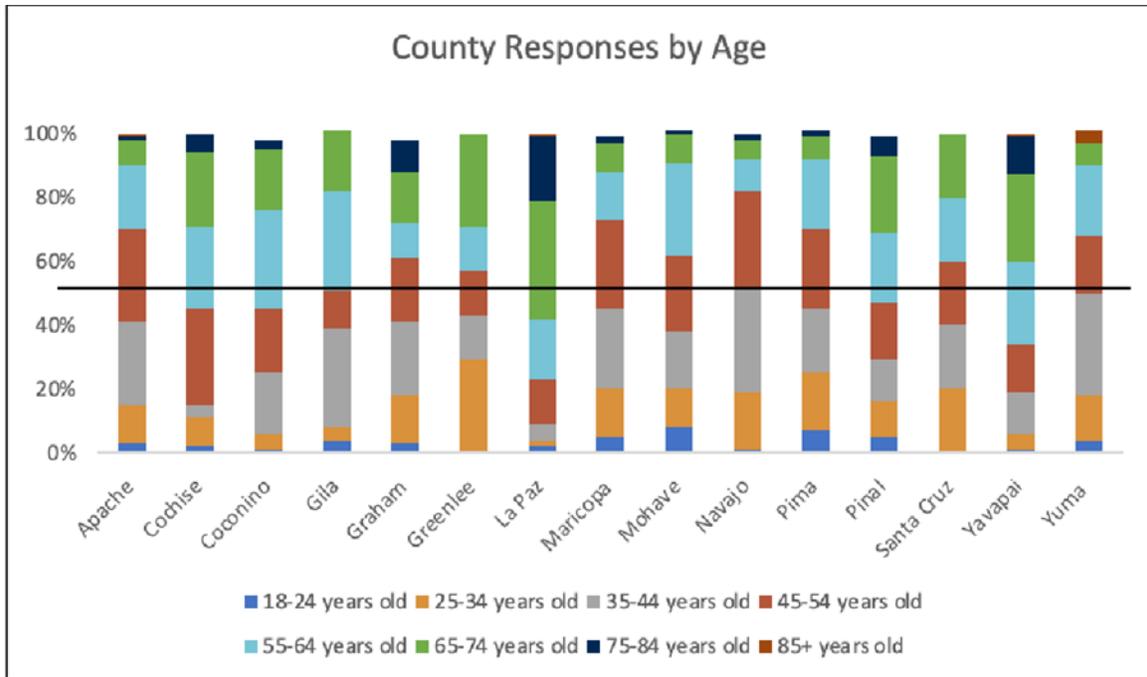


Figure 5: Community member participant age by county. Age Groups: Respondents varied by age with good representation from most age groups

Community Anchor Survey: There were 371 responses to the community anchor survey. Respondents represented all counties in Arizona. When broken down by county, anchor institutions reported serving all covered populations with the exception of Greenlee County not servicing members of a Tribal Nation and several counties not serving incarcerated individuals.

Covered Population Service: The percentage of surveyed anchor institutions that serve covered populations are listed below in Table 4. Organizations serving members of a racial or ethnic minority group were highest at 44% and those serving incarcerated individuals were the lowest at 15%. Identification of these agencies is vital to collaborations and partnerships moving forward with agencies that are currently doing the work in their communities.

Number and Percentage of Those Community Anchor Institutions Reported Working within Their Community within Covered Populations*							
Aging Individuals	Veteran	Disability	Language Barrier	Member of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group	Reside in a Rural Area	Member of a Tribal Nation**	Incarcerated Individual
150 40%	143 39%	156 42%	149 40%	163 44%	154 42%	128 35%	54 15%

Table 4: Community Anchor Institution Respondents by Covered Population

*Income levels were not asked or recorded on the survey; therefore, Covered Households are not represented in Table 4.

** Tribal populations are not identified as a covered population, but the identification of anchor institutions that work directly with the tribal nation is imperative to digital equity work in Arizona.

The Complexity of Poverty (Covered Households)

Poverty occurs everywhere in the state to varying degrees (Figures 4 and 9), and is often confounded with other factors including age, race, disabilities, language barriers, and being a member of ethnic minority group. Poverty is the lack of income and financial resources needed to purchase products – including cell phones, digital devices, and services – including mobile and broadband subscriptions, and participation in programs – including education and workforce training. Therefore, the needs of individuals and households experiencing poverty can be addressed through financial assistance programs to purchase, loan, discount, or fund products and services. The specific products and services that are needed to achieve digital equity in impoverished communities and households are the confounded factors in all other covered populations and communities. For example: healthcare, workforce development, education, language skills, and civic engagement all have financial barriers to access that can be overcome by making programs free, while addressing specific needs. We did not specifically ask survey respondents to self-identify whether they are in a household below poverty levels in part because of the accuracy of the data. Poverty levels are based on both household income and household size and is not generally something that people can answer accurately without additional data. What is known is that the spatial distribution of households experiencing poverty often coincides with other disadvantages to access digital resources equitably.

Ecosystem-Building

The ecosystem-building methodology was a comprehensive approach to constructing and nurturing interconnected human ecosystems within communities. It dovetailed with mapping and quantitative capture. It entailed the joining together of various complex systems encompassing economic, socio-political, technological, cultural, historical, psychological, and physical factors. The methodology revolved around central organizing principles, including individuals, the environment, and the interactions between them.

Collaboration, resource availability, partnerships, safety, scalability, simplified complexity, and weavability were considered the necessary conditions for success. Measurement tools such as models, engagement methods, and impact assessment tools were employed to evaluate progress and results. This methodology aimed to create inclusive and impactful learning ecosystems by adhering to open standards and promoting widespread participation. For the State of Arizona, the Digital Equity Ecosystem building component took the form of statewide Listening Sessions designed to gather data to be analyzed for inclusion in this Plan.

Barriers to Digital Equity Across Arizona

“Internet access is slow and current needs of the community exceed capacity.”- Community Member in Coconino County

“Internet speed and bandwidth is very poor in my neighborhood and the cellular LTE is not strong enough to be very functional. We only have one choice for internet provider that’s not satellite in our neighborhood and it comes over the old phone line.”- Community Member in Yavapai County

“I wish there was a free class for those who have no digital experience.”- Community Anchor Institution in Cochise County

The Digital Equity Act Population Viewer²⁹ provides us with a statewide look at what barriers to digital equity people across Arizona face. For the 7,278,717 residents of Arizona, 5,808,000, or nearly 80%, fall within a covered population as defined by the NTIA. 5.2% of the population are in households lacking fixed broadband availability; over 11% lack a computer or a subscription to broadband; over 21% are not using the internet at all, and nearly 40% are not using a PC or tablet computer.

Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results of the statewide listening tours and survey data identified numerous themes Arizonans see as impacting digital equity in Arizona, which are outlined below. Figure 6 is a summary of barriers that were identified throughout the research and planning process, and collectively demonstrates the most urgent barriers and needs of the residents in Arizona. Many similarities can be seen when compared to the Digital Equity Act Population Viewer data, such as lack of affordable and reliable high-speed internet. Connections can be made between adoption of internet use, and comfort with and availability of devices as well.

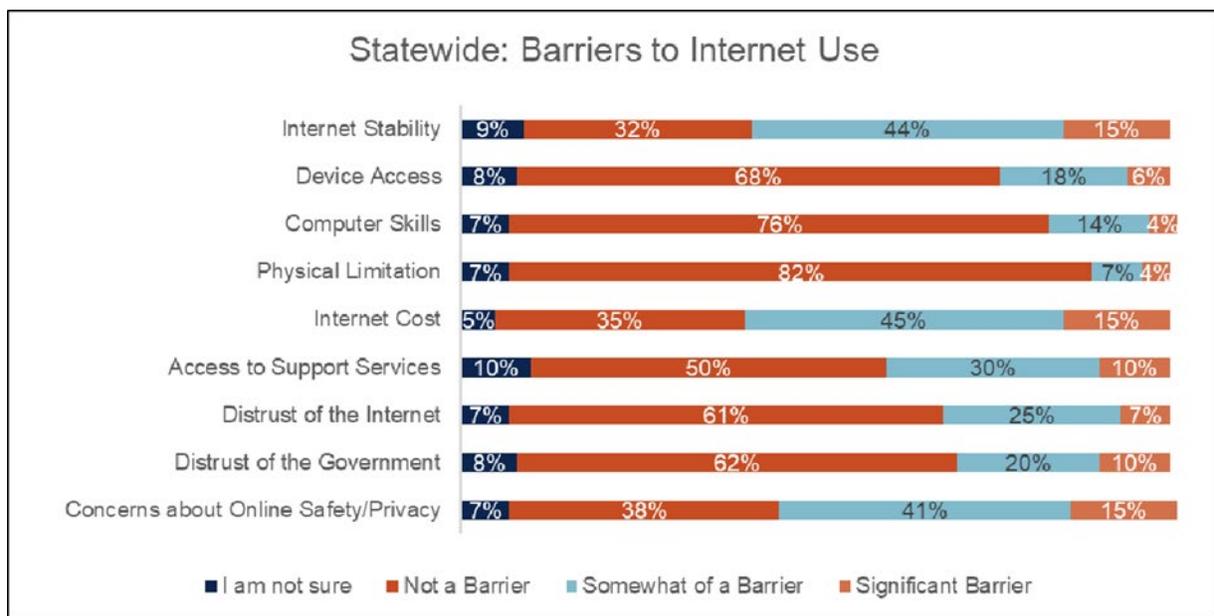


Figure 6: Statewide Barriers to Internet Use.

As indicated in the survey data seen above, the most significant barriers statewide are internet cost, internet stability, and concerns about online safety. The list of noted barriers from the Arizona surveys provides valuable insights into the challenges that residents face in adopting internet services. It also

²⁹ <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42>

provides important insight for public and private companies, community organizations, and government agencies to consider as they make plans.

1. Internet Cost (60%): Cost was the top concern, with the majority of respondents indicating that the cost of internet service is a significant barrier. This underscores the importance of addressing affordability issues to promote broadband adoption
2. Internet Stability (59%): Almost as prevalent as cost, concerns about internet stability highlight the need for reliable connections, especially in areas where the infrastructure may be less developed.
3. Concerns about Online Safety/Privacy (56%): Worries about online safety and privacy rank high, emphasizing the importance of robust cybersecurity measures and public awareness campaigns.
4. Distrust of the Government (30%): A substantial portion of respondents expressed distrust in government initiatives. Building trust and transparency in government-led broadband programs is crucial to the implementation of equity plans moving forward.
5. Access to Support Services (40%): Access to support services, likely related to digital literacy and assistance in navigating the online world, is a significant concern that must be addressed to bridge the digital divide.
6. Distrust of the Internet (32%): A notable proportion of respondents distrust the internet itself, possibly due to concerns about misinformation or scams. Efforts to combat online mistrust are essential.
7. Device Access (24%): While not as high as other barriers, the lack of access to devices is still a noteworthy concern, particularly for low-income households. It is important to consider that not all devices are equally equipped for all online needs.
8. Computer Skills (18%): The need for digital skills training is evident, as a significant minority of respondents indicated a lack of computer skills.
9. Physical Limitation (12%): A smaller percentage noted physical limitations as a barrier, which could include mobility issues that affect their ability to use digital devices effectively.

Community Anchor Identified Boundaries

At the end of the survey, community anchor respondents were asked if there was anything they would like to add regarding the unique needs of members in their community. Respondents from all counties except Greenlee provided comments. Summaries are provided for rural and urban community anchor institutions.

Summary of Community Anchor Institutions - Rural

The overall summary of Community Anchor Institution feedback in rural counties (taking out Maricopa and Pima County) highlights various issues and challenges related to internet access and connectivity in different communities. There is a call for financial assistance, training, and more resources for impoverished individuals to access computers and the internet. These comments emphasize the urgency of addressing internet access disparities, affordability issues, and infrastructure gaps across various communities.

The need for vendor expansion to communities with existing fiber optic connections, especially in rural areas and reservations like the Navajo Nation, is critical due to the limited internet access, with only 25%

of the Navajo Nation having internet access. Rural communities, including those with students on free and reduced lunch programs, face challenges in accessing the internet, affecting online learning. To address this digital divide, there's a demand for digital literacy programs, providing free classes for those with no digital experience. Nonprofits struggle with internet costs, impacting their ability to serve the community effectively. Affordable high-speed internet is lacking in many households, particularly in rural regions, with concerns about insufficient emphasis on upload speeds, crucial for applications like telemedicine.

Limited internet services also affect access to essential services like medical and employment assistance, notably in urban areas such as Flagstaff. Inadequate internet speeds in schools, especially those with multiple campuses, hinder effective education. Access to better internet options is needed in rural areas and reservations, prompting suggestions to treat internet services as a community utility with standard rates to increase affordability. Infrastructure gaps, particularly in middle and last-mile infrastructure in rural counties like Coconino, need to be addressed to support communities and visitors. Additionally, Verizon's phone internet service is criticized for inadequacy, though many rely on it as a hotspot for work. Lastly, affordable housing is intertwined with addressing the digital divide, emphasizing the complexity of the issue.

Summary of Community Anchor Institutions Feedback - Urban

When examining comments included by community anchor institutions from Maricopa and Pima Counties, themes highlight the need for affordable and accessible internet, digital literacy programs, expanded public Wi-Fi, and partnerships to bridge the digital divide, especially in low-income and rural communities.

Affordability concerns are widespread as families experiencing poverty struggle with rising internet costs. Some areas face technical challenges with 5G due to building materials. There is a need for low-cost home Wi-Fi for clients and students, along with access to devices and digital education, particularly for vulnerable populations. Digital literacy is essential, and libraries and organizations lend Wi-Fi hotspots. Internet access is crucial for business, and efforts are underway to expand public Wi-Fi networks. Concerns persist regarding internet affordability for families and its impact on education. Increased funding and equitable resource distribution are sought, while barriers to internet access persist, including cost and location challenges. Fiber connectivity is a priority in underserved areas, but some broadband providers face criticism. Support is needed for vulnerable groups like veterans and older adults, and partnerships between sectors are emphasized. Rural areas, including Tribal communities, contend with unreliable internet access, highlighting the urgency of addressing their digital divide.

The Census maps demonstrate the quantity, classification, and location of covered populations within the margins of error. The baseline can be used to identify the potential pool of residents who could potentially benefit from Digital Equity programs and services.

Digital Vulnerability Index

Based on the US Census estimates for covered populations, we leveraged an index to aggregate risk factors for the covered populations and identify the tracts that have the highest rankings.

The areas of most need for services that can address the needs of covered populations are distributed uniformly throughout the state, but they do not aggregate in the higher-density urban areas of Greater Phoenix Area or Tucson. They also do not group in any region of the state. One important observation to make is that data does not exist for military facilities that are not occupied by civilians. These areas show up as blank because there are no populations there, although there could be other reasons to deliver digital equity infrastructure and services.

The index is created by rank ordering each covered population as a percent of the total population (with the exception of incarcerated persons, because they are institutionalized populations). Once each covered population is ranked, the rank order percentage is summed into an aggregate rank percentage. The aggregate percentage is then, again ranked into a percentile metric between 0 and 1. In this way, the index produces a relative rank ordering of cumulative covered population percentages within each census tract. This methodology follows other existing index approaches, most notably, the CDC Social Vulnerability Index³⁰. While there are many ways to construct indices, this established methodology is appropriate for census-tract level ACS index data.

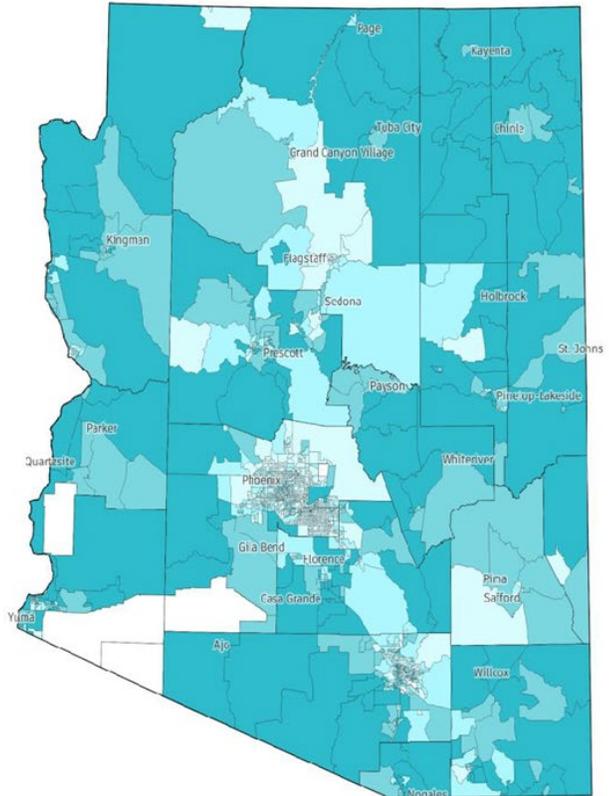
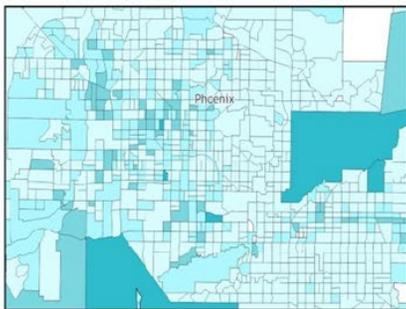
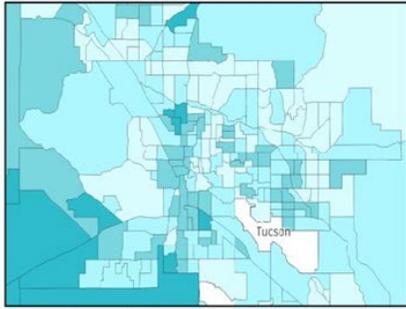
The areas of most need from the Digital Vulnerability Index are shown in figures 7 and 8 below. The highest concentration of census tracts are in Maricopa County in the Phoenix Metro Area and Pima County around Tucson, which is predominantly ranked in the bottom half of vulnerable tracts. This indicates that the covered individuals most in need of support and services to achieve digital equity are in rural areas.

³⁰ From “CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index” by CDC/ATSDR, 2023 (<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>)

Areas of Need

Percentile

- Less than 50th
- 50th - 75th
- 75th - 90th
- 90th



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2017 - 2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Figure 7: Areas of most need from the Digital Vulnerability Index.

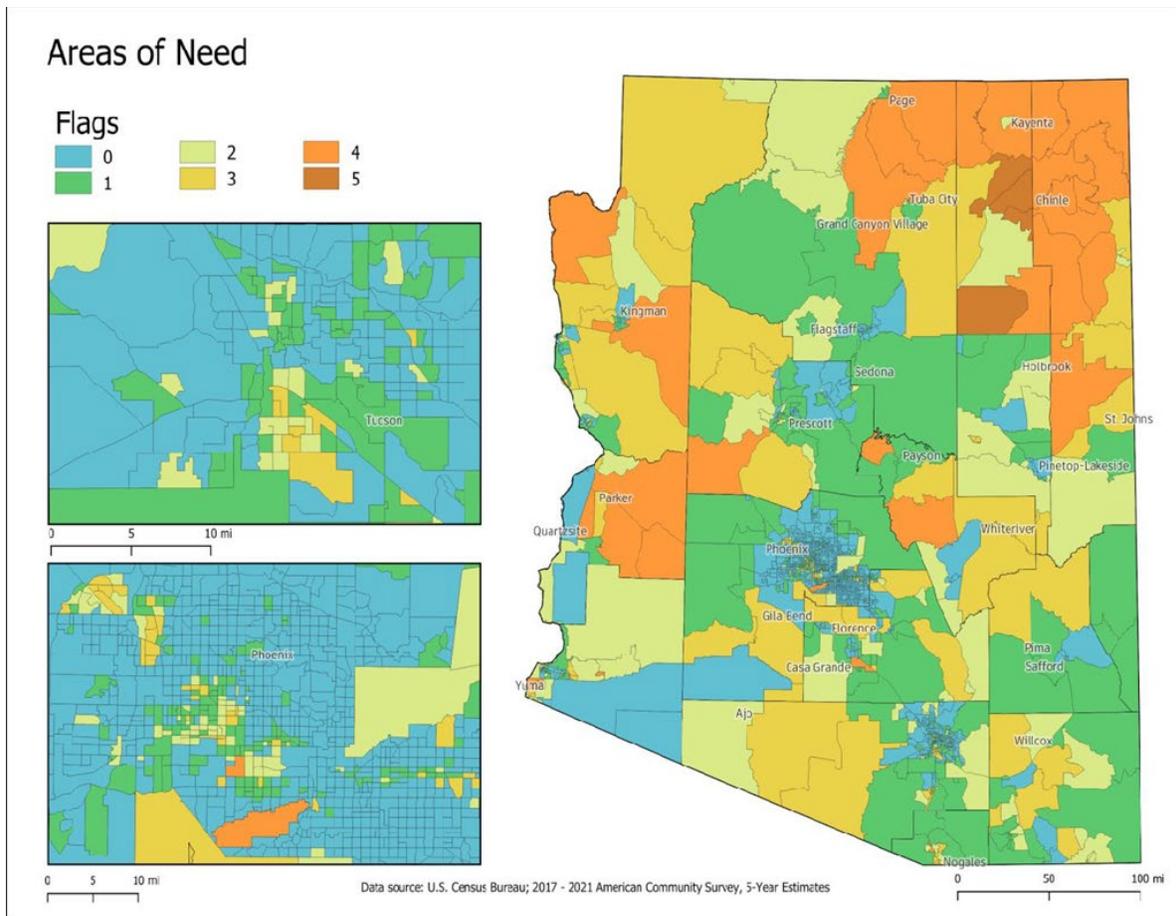


Figure 8: Digital Social Vulnerability Index scores for Arizona based on Digital Equity Institute methodology. The first map shows the vulnerability score as the sum of the rank orders of each covered population. The second map shows the number of high-vulnerability metrics for each census tract, where high is any ranking above 90%. For example, if there are 4 flags in a census tract, it means that four of the percent rankings for covered populations are each above 90%, indicating a very high degree of digital vulnerability that will need programs and services to allow residents to reach digital equity status.

3.2.1. Barriers and Needs by Covered Population

“I am visually impaired, and some websites and applications are hard to navigate. The internet does provide me a connection to the community.” - Community Member in Maricopa County

“Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare & benefits require reliable, secure internet in order to access the increasing amount of digital interactions with VA. This need is particularly acute in rural areas of Arizona, to include Native American communities. Digital literacy is also a challenge among the older veteran population.” - Community Member in Maricopa County

Individuals within covered populations can be profoundly more impacted by elements of digital inequity than their less vulnerable counterparts. The Arizona Digital Equity Plan focuses on the eight categories of covered populations designated by NTIA because they are likely to experience elevated challenges in achieving digital equity and accessing services through digital technologies.

Barriers By Covered Population

Identifying barriers for each covered population was completed through analyzing feedback from listening sessions, community surveys, individual interviews, and subject matter experts to ensure a comprehensive exploration of all barriers. The barriers identified by members of each covered population are listed below.

Covered Households (Low-income)

Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Covered Households (Low-Income)	<p>Access to Devices: Low-income households lack access to essential digital devices such as computers, smartphones, or tablets, making it difficult to connect and engage in online activities.</p> <p>Access to Internet: Lack of access to reliable internet hinders low-income students' ability to participate in online learning, exacerbating educational disparities.</p> <p>Affordability: Limited resources lead to lower-quality devices or outdated software, making it difficult to access and engage with modern digital content and services.</p> <p>Affordability: Cost of internet services can be a significant barrier, with low-income households struggling to afford broadband or mobile data plans, limiting their online access.</p> <p>Safety and Privacy: Concerns about privacy and security, particularly related to data collection and surveillance emerged.</p>	<p>Establish a low-cost BEAD plan. Increase awareness of and participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program.</p> <p>Establish a device stipend program for covered households.</p> <p>Encourage technology providers to offer device discount programs.</p> <p>Partner with CAIs to offer focused in-community literacy and skill building.</p> <p>Stand up tech hubs in marginalized communities to provide digital skill building, device access, and technical support.</p>

Primary barriers for covered households block individuals from acquiring digital devices, paying for subscription services, and affording broadband, cellular, and satellite communications. Confounding factors present themselves in areas with higher prevalence of poverty, including regions that are rural and/or have high concentrations of veterans, aging individuals, non-English speakers, and racial and ethnic minorities.

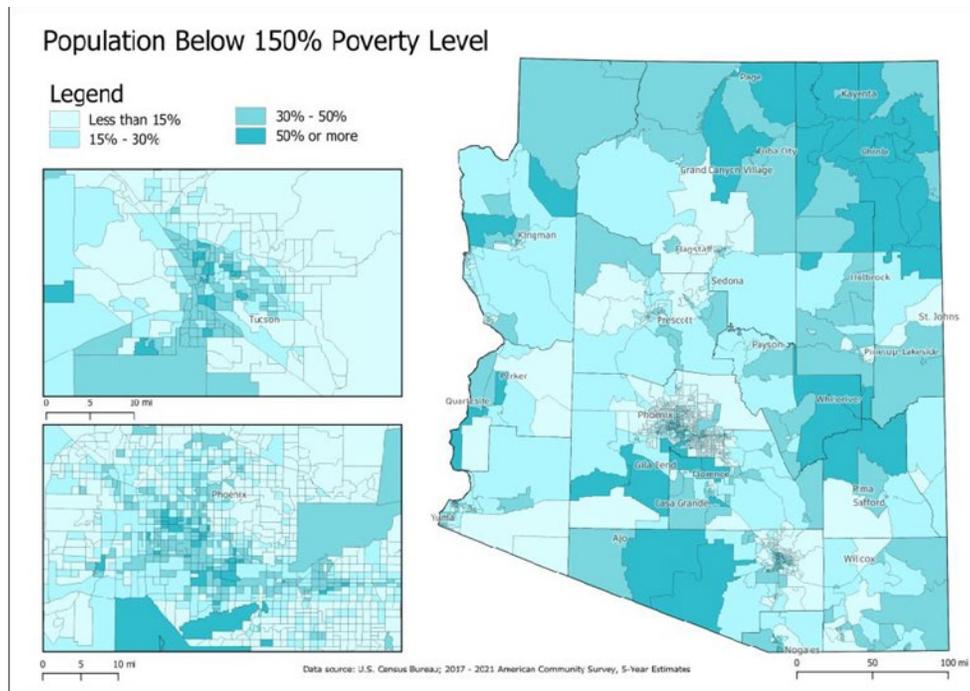


Figure 9: ACS estimates of the percentage of households that are below 150% of the poverty level based on the number of individuals within the household.

Aging Individuals

Covered Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Aging Individuals	<p>Access and Support: Transportation challenges when seeking tech help or resources.</p> <p>Digital Skill/Literacy: Intimidation and fear of new technology and online scams.</p> <p>Digital Skill/Literacy: Communication challenges; especially for those aged 65+.</p> <p>Digital Literacy/Skill: Assumed technological sophistication, such as QR codes, can be challenging.</p> <p>Safety and Privacy: Concerns about privacy and security in a rapidly changing digital environment.</p>	<p>Support Digital Navigator programs, nonprofits and Community Anchor Institutions providing digital literacy and skills programs tailored to aging individuals.</p> <p>Deliver online safety training and provide resources tailored for aging individuals and delivered at a pace at which they are comfortable to learn Fund programs that provide accessible devices that are responsive to the physical challenges faced by aging individuals.</p> <p>Support peer navigator programs that train aging individuals to support others in their communities.</p>

	<p>Support: Lack of support and patience from younger adults. Support: Dependence on family members for tech support.</p> <p>Support: Embarrassment when struggling with technology.</p>	
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Aging individuals have primary barriers to achieving digital equity due to the changing technologies environment that may not be familiar to them. Older adults are often confused about how to access broadband and other digital services and may have challenges using the devices and applications to navigate digital tasks efficiently. They will need services and assistive technologies to learn how to execute tasks that have shifted to a primarily online service delivery, such as telehealth, online bill payments, streaming services, and online shopping. Many aging individuals - especially those in good physical and mental health - are interested in adult education and other socialization activities and events that require typing, reading, emailing, and completing online tasks. Older adults may benefit from connections made or fostered in online spaces³¹.

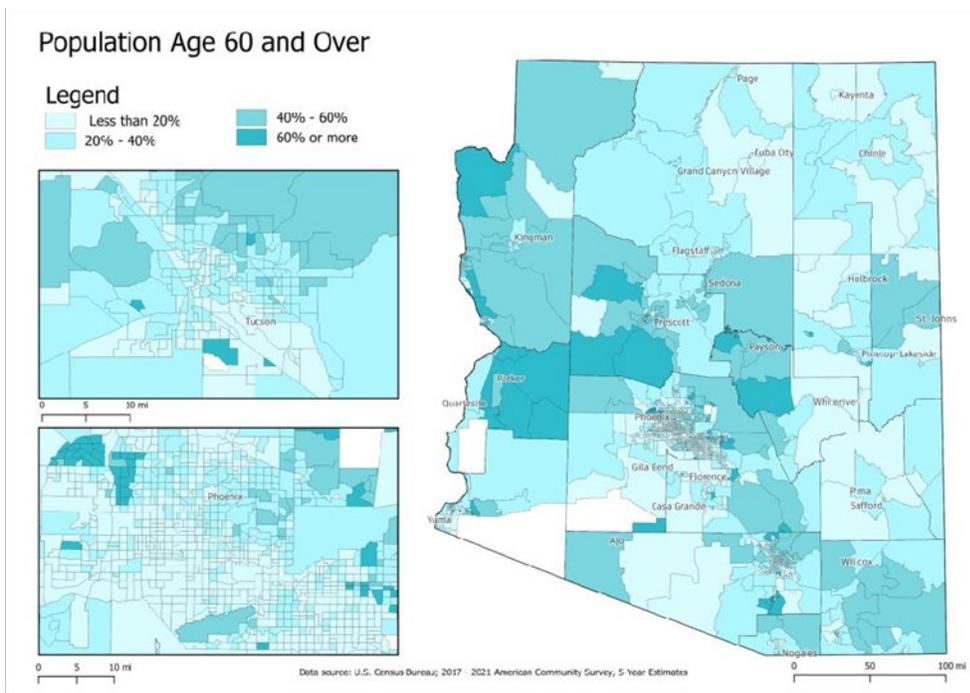


Figure 10: ACS estimates the percent of Arizona residents aged 60 and over by census tract.

Adults aged 65 and older, constituting 16.8% of the U.S. population (55.8 million people), experienced a growth rate of 38.6% from 2010 to 2020, surpassing the overall population growth rate of 7.4%³².

³¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/06/opinion/loneliness-epidemic-solutions.html>

³² From Caplan, Z., "U.S. Older Population Grew from 2010 to 2020 at Fastest Rate Since 1880 to 1890," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 12, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/05/2020-census-united-states-older-population-grew.html>.

However, this demographic is still significantly left behind in the digital era, with approximately 42% lacking broadband access at home, according to a study by Humana and Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)³³. While accessibility to reliable internet is a fundamental concern, other factors such as accessible devices, digital literacy, ageism, and ongoing support play crucial roles in their digital engagement.

Efforts to increase internet access and usage among older adults have been diverse but have struggled to cater consistently to the varied needs of this group, which spans a wide range of ages, demographics, and backgrounds. Disparities in access are notable, with disparities linked to factors like high school completion, income level, race, health status, disability, rural location, and marital status. Ensuring adequate representation of this diverse group in decision-making and program creation is essential.

Effective digital training should be conducted in a safe, inclusive space that encourages community building and knowledge sharing. Training should encompass digital skills, digital safety, and fraud prevention. Furthermore, it should empower older learners and address ageism. Ongoing support is equally important, allowing participants to seek assistance, address updates, and reinforce their skills³⁴. Devices and digital tools must meet specific criteria to support sustainable digital use, including full screens, up-to-date operating systems, and accessibility features. These features should be covered in training and ongoing support. Digital inclusion among older adults is crucial for aging in place, reducing health disparities, combating social isolation, enabling lifelong learning, increasing access to healthcare, financial management, and transportation alternatives. It fosters intergenerational connections and reduces societal costs³⁵. With the right connectivity, devices, training, and support, older adults can access the internet meaningfully, improving their well-being, safety, and overall quality of life.

Rural Communities

“It's challenging in the rural areas. It's really, really challenging. And there's not a lot of options for people if they don't have their own connection.” - Community Member in Arizona

Covered Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Individuals that live in rural areas	Access: challenges including spotty signals and lack of broadband services.	Expand initiatives to increase access and adoption of broadband infrastructure through BEAD.
	Access: Unreliable internet connections.	
	Access: insufficient bandwidth cited as a barrier to professional- level work.	Offer free or low-cost digital literacy workshops.

³³ From “Report: 22 Million U.S. Seniors Lack Broadband Internet Access; First Time Study Quantifies Digital Isolation of Older Americans as Pandemic Continues to Ravage Nation”, 2021 <https://press.humana.com/news/news-details/2021/Report-22-Million-U.S.-Seniors-Lack-Broadband-Internet-Access-First-Time-Study-Quantifies-Digital-Isolation-of-Older-Americans-as-Pandemic-Continues-to-Ravage-Nation/default.aspx#gsc.tab=0>

³⁴ From “Patient Characteristics Associated with Objective Measures of Digital Health Tool Use in the US: A Literature Review” by S. Nouri et al., 2020 <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0m86p4qw>

³⁵ From “Equity in AgeTech for Ageing Well in Technology-Driven Places: The Role of Social Determinants in Designing AI-based Assistive Technologies” by G. Rubeis, Fang, M.L., & Sixsmith, A. 2022. Science and Engineering Ethics, 28(49) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11948-022-00397-y>

	<p>Affordability: Prohibitive cost of internet service.</p> <p>Affordability: devices and internet service are too expensive.</p> <p>Cost: High cost of engineering infrastructure affecting end user's monthly bill.</p> <p>Digital Literacy/Skills: Need for basic training, from using a mouse to basic computer skills.</p> <p>Distance: Distance to public internet access points and cost of public transportation. Distance: Residents driving miles to find a signal for emergency services. Language barriers: Impacts effective internet use.</p> <p>Limited resources: Relying on public services like libraries for internet access is not always feasible or preferable. Online safety: Predatory marketing schemes for internet services.</p> <p>Safety and Privacy: Need help distinguishing truth from fiction online.</p> <p>Support: Dependence on community members for internet access for tasks like job applications.</p> <p>Quality: Concerns about the quality of technology provided.</p>	<p>Address equipment and service cost barriers with financial assistance programs.</p> <p>Leverage local organizations to deliver foundational digital literacy and skills training (in the language of the learner). Provide online safety and privacy training for individuals in rural areas.</p> <p>Provide cybersecurity training for rural businesses.</p> <p>Ensure essential services can be accessed online to address transportation challenges.</p> <p>Leverage trusted organizations and CAIs to increase trust with community members.</p> <p>Extend digital equity to the agricultural sector.</p>
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Rural regions, constituting approximately 75% of the nation's land area³⁶, play a pivotal role in the socio-economic fabric of the country. Statistically, every fifth American resides in these regions, underscoring the significance of rural communities in the national demographic. These areas, characterized by their resilience and diversity, are instrumental in the provision of natural resources, anchoring food supply chains, and facilitating tourism and outdoor recreational activities.

³⁶ From "Rural Broadband," by the Farm Bureau Federation, 2022 <https://www.fb.org/issue/infrastructure/rural-broadband>

Rural communities in Arizona, like many across the nation, often grapple with limited broadband infrastructure, which can hinder access to essential services like healthcare, education, and government resources. The importance of addressing these challenges is underscored by the fact that approximately 766,272 individuals, or 10.7% of Arizona's population, reside in rural areas, as per the latest US Census ACS 5-Year estimates (2017-2021)³⁷. In Arizona the deficit in broadband services has profound implications for the state's rural populace. The importance of broadband is intrinsically linked to overall quality of life, and potential economic advancement.

The role of broadband emerges as a critical component for farmers and ranchers where it has become an essential tool. It facilitates their engagement with global markets, streamlines communication channels with customers, and ensures adherence to regulatory frameworks. Modern agricultural practices, underscored by a commitment to sustainability, increasingly rely on technology. Precision agriculture, underpinned by broadband connectivity, informs a myriad of decisions ranging from resource allocation to pest management, epitomizing efficient and environmentally conscious farming methodologies.

Beyond agriculture, the healthcare landscape in rural Arizona presents its own set of challenges. Access to healthcare services in these regions is often fraught with difficulties. Data from the 2019 Arizona State Health Assessment highlights this disparity: urban locales have a ratio of 2,407 residents per Primary Care Provider, whereas rural areas grapple with a ratio of 3,896:1³⁸. The Arizona Health Improvement Plan has identified and acknowledged this discrepancy, emphasizing the imperative for a healthcare workforce that is both diverse and reflective of the communities it serves. This is not merely a quantitative issue but one that pertains to fostering trust, cultural understanding, and community-centric healthcare provision.

Incarcerated individuals

Covered Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Incarcerated individuals	<p>Access: lack of access to certain websites and services due to firewalls.</p> <p>Access: restricted websites due to firewalls.</p> <p>Access: Heavily controlled device usage.</p> <p>Access to Internet: challenges during re-entry preparations due to limited internet access.</p> <p>Affordability: cost of internet access upon reentry.</p>	<p>Support incarceration and reentry focused Digital Navigator initiatives.</p> <p>Expand the network of Digital Navigators and tech support services into correctional facilities.</p> <p>Educate released individuals on how to schedule and access resources and essential services.</p>

³⁷ American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2009-2021) by US Census <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html>

³⁸ From "Rural Broadband," by the Farm Bureau Federation, 2022 <https://www.fb.org/issue/infrastructure/rural-broadband>

	<p>Digital literacy: lack of familiarity with technology.</p> <p>Digital Literacy: need for training and orientation sessions on available resources.</p> <p>Digital Navigators: lack of community awareness about available resources for recently released individuals.</p> <p>Safety and Privacy: Need for safe and conducive spaces for internet access without distractions.</p> <p>Support: Need for specialized support and a digital "guide to getting out".</p> <p>Support: lack of specialized support and resources.</p>	<p>Support measures to address cost of device use while incarcerated.</p> <p>Collaborate with agencies to provide digital literacy and skills training to incarcerated individuals.</p> <p>Hold online safety training for incarcerated individuals and people preparing for reentry.</p> <p>Expand tech centers to provide digital skilling, support, and devices in correctional facilities</p>
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Incarcerated individuals encounter significant barriers to accessing digital equity, stemming from both personal and institutional factors. Within correctional facilities, technology programs often suffer from inadequate funding and are subject to stringent security and access protocols that restrict inmates' use of digital technology, including web access and social media. These constraints limit essential online activities such as communication with family, legal research, and court preparation. These institutional constraints are further compounded by the non-geographic nature of correctional environments, making the implementation of programs aimed at enhancing digital access a complex challenge.

Incarcerated populations also face significant challenges due to their limited access to technology and educational resources within correctional facilities. A paramount concern is the exorbitant cost associated with communication services, imposing a substantial financial burden on inmates and their financially disadvantaged families. Inadequate access to modern technology devices further impedes their digital literacy development, as many facilities lack up-to-date hardware, constraining engagement with digital learning materials³⁹. Additionally, the outdated and insufficient digital infrastructure within these facilities compromises network security and quality, hindering digital education initiatives. The absence of comprehensive digital skills training programs leaves incarcerated individuals ill-prepared for the demands of a digitized society upon release, posing a substantial obstacle to successful reintegration into the community and overall rehabilitation.

³⁹ Benton Institute for Broadband & Society. (2023, December 11). An open letter to state broadband leaders on digital equity for incarcerated people. Benton Institute for Broadband & Society. URL: https://www.benton.org/blog/open-letter-state-broadband-leaders-digital-equity-incarcerated-people?utm_campaign=Newsletters&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sendgrid

Recognizing these multifaceted challenges is imperative for promoting digital equity within correctional facilities and enhancing the prospects of incarcerated individuals upon their eventual release.

Veterans

Covered Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Veterans	<p>Access: Lack of reliable internet access, especially for those in rural and tribal areas.</p> <p>Affordability: Financial constraints, particularly for older veterans living on fixed incomes.</p> <p>Digital Literacy/Skills: Challenges faced by older veterans in understanding and using modern technology.</p> <p>Internet Reliability: Need for consistent and reliable connectivity, especially for online education or remote work.</p> <p>Support: Absence of a centralized resource page for veterans in Arizona.</p> <p>Support: Difficulty transitioning from military service to civilian sector employment.</p>	<p>Improve broadband access for veterans.</p> <p>Utilize community and veteran advisory councils to coordinate resources.</p> <p>Partner with workforce development agencies to support veterans in job searches and successful transition to the civilian workforce.</p> <p>Provide Digital Navigator support to assist enrollment in online federal veteran benefit programs.</p>

In Arizona, veterans are found in higher concentrations in the western and south-eastern rural areas of the state as shown in Figure 11. Arizona veterans have unique barriers to achieving digital equity due to the nature of veteran specific services and programs. Many veterans are highly technologically savvy and will function in digital environments as well as non-veteran civilian counterparts. Special services may be needed for mental health and trauma from combat and military experiences. Disabled veterans could have additional physical limitations that require additional equipment or human assistance to use. 16.1% of Veterans also have a disability. 41.9% of Veterans are from service years prior to 1990⁴⁰, including the Vietnam War era, the Korean War era, and the WWII era. Disabled, elderly veterans will benefit from interventions that address all three covered statuses concurrently.

⁴⁰ From QuickFacts. State of Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/AZ/PST045222>

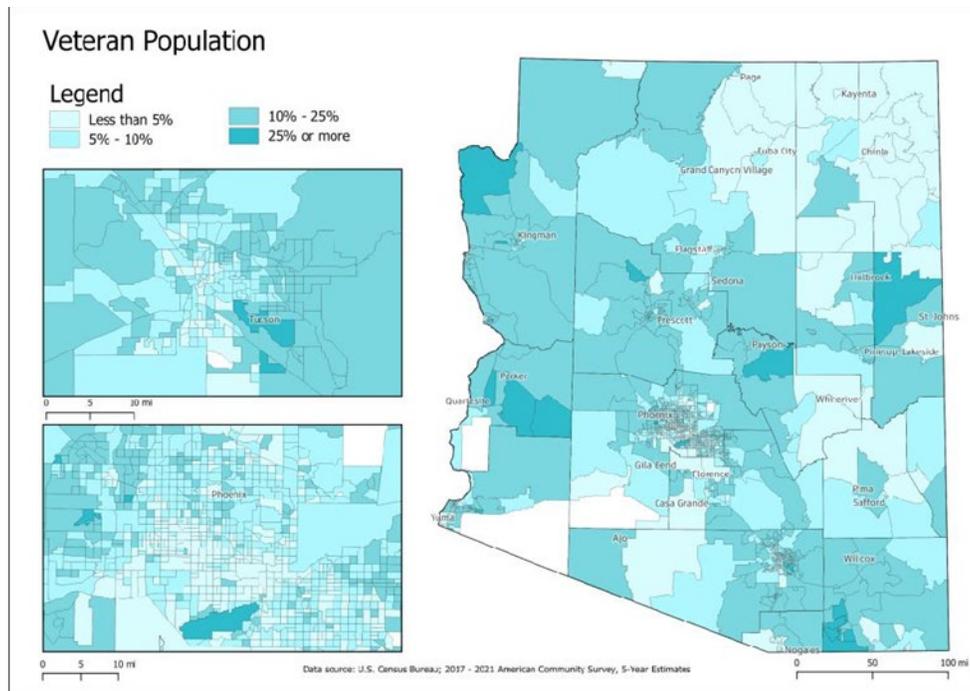


Figure 11: ACS estimates of Arizona veterans of the US military by census tract

Individuals with a Disability

Covered Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Individuals with a Disability	<p>Access: Difficulty in obtaining Wi- Fi, which is essential for receiving medical exercises and paperwork.</p> <p>Access: Physical health barriers, lack of transportation to essential services.</p> <p>Access: The loss of community resources like computers and Wi- Fi at local senior centers, which were previously relied upon.</p> <p>Accessibility: Many websites lack proper descriptions for images or graphics.</p> <p>Devices: The need for devices that can speak for the visually impaired and considerations for those who are hearing impaired.</p> <p>Digital Literacy/Skill: Difficulties applying for jobs online due to inaccessible application forms.</p>	<p>Implement web accessibility standards (WCAG) and provide training for web developers on creating screen reader-friendly content.</p> <p>Mandate alt-text for all images and graphics as part of website design protocols.</p> <p>Offer workshops for digital content creators on accessibility.</p> <p>Partner with job platforms to ensure their forms meet accessibility standards and provide job application assistance programs.</p> <p>Develop and fund specialized support services, including Digital Navigators who are</p>

	<p>Safety and Privacy: Concerns about privacy, security, and that affect trust in digital platforms.</p> <p>Safety and Security: The need for better online security measures to protect individuals with disabilities from scams and other digital threats.</p> <p>Support: Lack of services and support tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Support: Challenges navigating websites not designed for screen readers.</p> <p>Support: Libraries not being a suitable alternative for the needs of individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>trained to assist individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Subsidize adaptive technology such as screen readers, Braille displays, and video relay services for the hearing impaired.</p> <p>Implement community Wi-Fi programs, especially in areas with significant populations of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Establish mobile tech units that can visit individuals where they are, ensuring continuous access to necessary technology.</p> <p>Invest in library resources to make them more accessible, including adaptive technology and trained support staff. Collaborate to offer regular digital security workshops and create easy- to-use resources to educate individuals on avoiding digital scams and general online safety.</p>
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Disabled persons face a range of potential barriers due to the nature of their disability, and the online/digital technologies they need to use. Disability refers to a wide range of physical, intellectual, and developmental conditions that may hinder a person's ability to meaningfully engage in digital spaces. Disability types include mobility, cognitive, hearing, visual, self-care, and independent living⁴¹. Physical disabilities could lead to challenges handling and manipulating devices without assistive technologies. Cognitive and mental disabilities could create challenges in using devices to achieve their intended purposes, such as seeking healthcare, education, or employment. 27% of adults in Arizona have a disability. 31.9% of disabled persons are also above 65 years old.

⁴¹ From "Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Arizona" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023 <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/arizona.html>

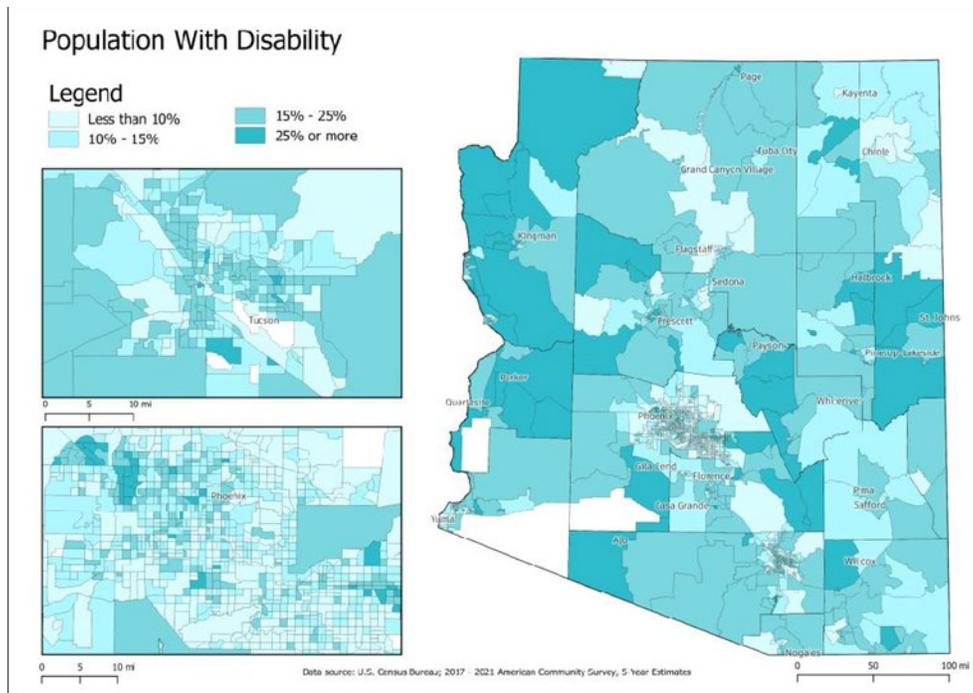


Figure 12: ACS estimates of the percentage of individuals with disabilities by census tract.

Individuals with a Language Barrier

Covered Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Individuals with a Language Barrier	<p>Access and Support: Relying on family members to bridge language and cultural barriers.</p> <p>Accessibility: Limited language proficiency makes it challenging for individuals to navigate websites and digital platforms that are primarily in English, hindering their ability to complete tasks, access information, and services.</p> <p>Navigation: Difficulties in navigating internet services and understanding costs/packages due to language barriers.</p> <p>Accessibility: Online education and e-learning platforms can pose significant barriers for individuals with a language barrier, as course materials and instructions are often presented in the dominant language.</p>	<p>Support existing Digital Navigator programs to deliver support in multiple languages. Working with state agencies to ensure websites and content is accessible in multiple languages.</p> <p>Support higher education institutions to expand delivery of e-learning instruction in multiple languages. Partner with workforce agencies to increase accessibility of application and job support service for people with a language barrier.</p>

	<p>Accessibility: Job search and application processes are often conducted online, and individuals with language barriers may face difficulties in applying for job opportunities, creating resumes, or participating in online interviews.</p> <p>Support: Many digital platforms and services may not provide customer support or help in languages other than the dominant one, making it difficult for individuals to seek assistance when needed.</p>	
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Individuals with a language barrier and individuals with low levels of literacy face barriers of comprehension, understanding, and efficiency when attempting to access online information that is English-only. Therefore, this population needs programs in their native language to assist them in online navigation, learning, and access to services, utilities, and social programs. Additional essential services like online legal, healthcare, or education services may be inaccessible without assistance or language services. The majority of limited English households are Spanish-speaking, accounting for 71.0% of the total. These households are likely under-represented in Census ACS data because they are harder to interview, and less likely to consent to being interviewed. Households that have undocumented persons are even more likely to be uncounted in the Census and to have other covered population status that goes uncounted. The Census does not count individuals with a language barrier or illiterate persons, making it an additional barrier to identify and provide services to these populations without additional incentives to provide employment and educational services.

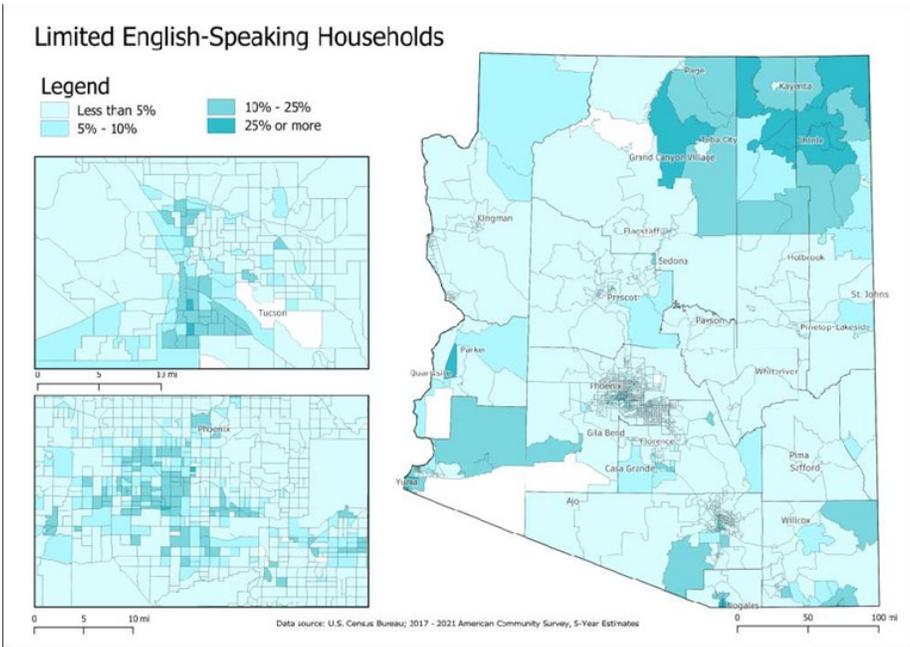


Figure 13: ACS estimates of the percentage of households who have limited English-speaking members.

Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups

Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
Racial/Ethnic Minority groups	<p>Accessibility: Differences in language and cultural practices can be exclusive.</p> <p>Affordability: Economic disparities create challenges in obtaining devices and internet subscriptions.</p> <p>Infrastructure: Infrastructure deficits in older neighborhoods. Relevance: existing classes lack cultural sensitivity.</p> <p>Trust: Reluctance to use digital applications.</p>	<p>Ensure training and services are available in the language of the learner.</p> <p>Expand infrastructure in areas with high populations of racial and ethnic minorities.</p> <p>Partner with trusted local organizations to deliver culturally responsive digital literacy and digital skill building.</p> <p>Partner with education providers to create content that reflects the diversity of the community.</p> <p>Ensure policies related to digital equity and free from bias.</p>

Concerns about privacy and security, particularly related to data collection and surveillance, may disproportionately affect ethnic and minority groups due to historical mistrust or targeted surveillance. Individuals who do not identify as white, non-Hispanic are considered racial and ethnic minority groups according to US Census definitions. These covered individuals face racial and cultural barriers to interacting with digital services or unfair discrimination while seeking to access digital resources.

Specific racial communities may experience local barriers combined with other covered population statuses.

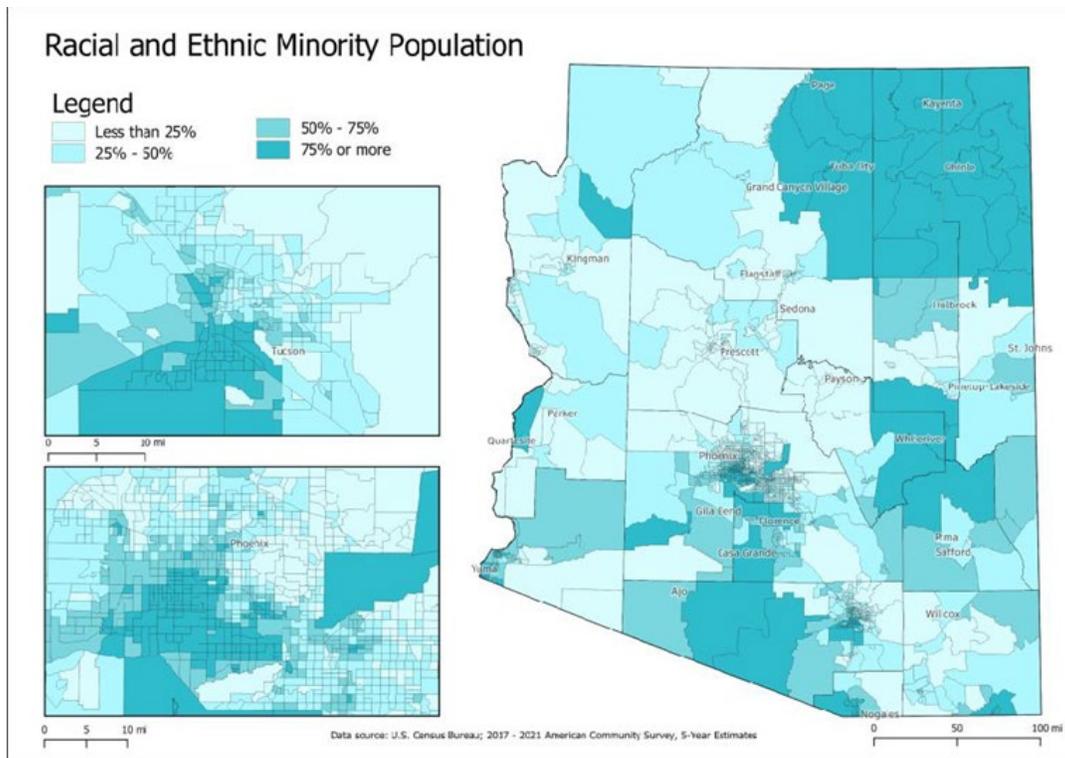


Figure 14: ACS estimates, aggregated for each racial and ethnic group, as a percentage of total population by census tract

Tribal Nations

“[The] elders [in the community] are raising [the] kids, but don’t know how to use technology when the kids do. It can be scary for the elders. This is why digital skills training is so important.” - Arizona Tribal Broadband Working Group Member

“How do we teach our community members to leverage broadband for economic advancement? First, getting buy-in is a challenge.” - Arizona Tribal Broadband Working Group Member

“Multi-generational housing makes service provision a challenge. Telemedicine would be super helpful, but it’s not always accessible. Management of schools’ funding for remote learning. Lack of understanding from elderly decision makers.” - Arizona Tribal Broadband Working Group Member

Population	Barriers	Recommended Digital Equity Strategy
<p>*Tribal Nations</p> <p>Note: The Arizona State Broadband Office also identified Tribal Nation residents as a priority population. Individuals who</p>	<p>Access: challenges including spotty signals and lack of broadband services.</p> <p>Access: Unreliable internet connections.</p> <p>Access: Insufficient bandwidth cited as a barrier to professional-level work.</p> <p>Affordability: Prohibitive cost of internet service.</p>	<p>Align Digital Equity initiatives to increase access and adoption of broadband infrastructure through BEAD.</p> <p>Offer free or low-cost digital literacy workshops designed for multi-generational households.</p>

<p>identify as a member of a Tribal Nation are considered a subgroup under the <i>Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group</i>, which is defined above.</p>	<p>Affordability: devices and internet service are too expensive. Cost: High cost of engineering infrastructure affecting end user's monthly bill.</p> <p>Digital Literacy/Skills: Need for basic training, from using a mouse to basic computer skills.</p> <p>Distance: Distance to public internet access points and transportation costs. Distance: Residents driving miles to find a signal for emergency services. Language barriers: Impacts effective internet use.</p> <p>Limited resources: Relying on public services like libraries for internet access is not always feasible or preferable. Online safety: Predatory marketing schemes for internet services. Safety and Privacy: Need help distinguishing truth from fiction online. Support: Dependence on community members for internet access for tasks like job applications.</p> <p>Quality: Concerns about the quality of technology provided.</p>	<p>Address equipment and service cost barriers with financial assistance programs.</p> <p>Leverage local organizations to deliver foundational digital literacy and skills training (in the language of the learner) Provide online safety and privacy training for individuals in tribal communities.</p> <p>Provide cybersecurity training for tribal businesses.</p> <p>Ensure essential services can be accessed online to address transportation challenges. Leverage trusted tribal organizations and CAIs to increase trust with community members.</p> <p>Help tribes acquire the resources – personnel, knowledge base, and physical assets so they can future- proof their communities for generations to come.</p>
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Arizona is home to more Tribal lands than any other state in the United States. Tribal lands make up approximately 28% of the total land area of Arizona, including the largest Tribal Nation in the U.S., the Navajo Nation. Arizona recognizes the 22 Tribal governments within the state, the sovereignty of these Tribal governments, and their jurisdiction over their lands. This Digital Equity Plan seeks to support the Tribes’ efforts to build internal capacity, promote digital equity, increase the quality of life, and support the well-being of all Tribal Nations.

Like Individuals with a Language Barrier, Tribal Nations and its household members are also likely to be under-represented in Census ACS data because they are harder to interview, and far less likely to consent to being interviewed due to historical marginalization, language barriers, and lack of trust in the federal government as a whole.

Tribal communities and their members require programs in their native language, when possible, to assist them in online navigation, learning, and access to services, utilities, and social programs. Additional essential services like online legal, increased healthcare, or educational services may be inaccessible without assistance or language services.

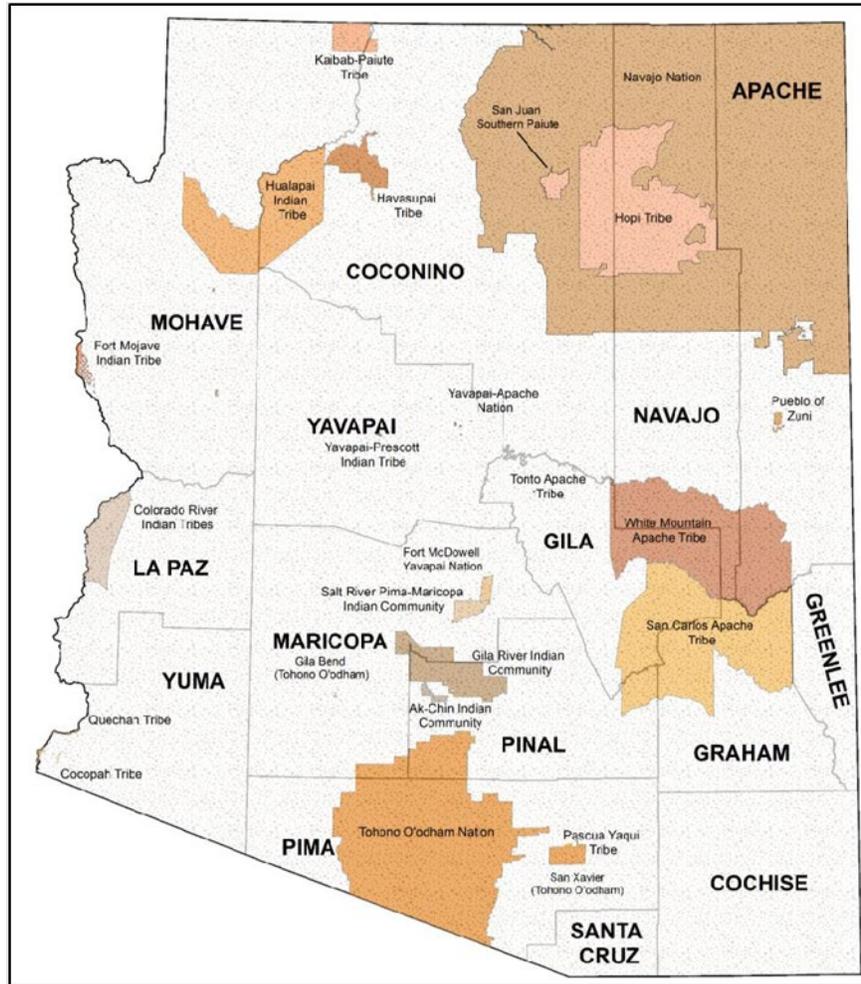


Figure 15: Intertribal Council of Arizona map of Tribal homelands in Arizona by County (2021)⁴².

Percentage of covered population members experiencing common barriers

Covered populations experience barriers to internet access and usage in ways that are unique to their population. Table 5 (below) provides insights into the barriers to accessing the internet and online services faced by covered populations, and strongly supports the need for a localized, informed approach to digital equity. The barriers listed in Table 5 are common across the state of Arizona, but it is important to note that different covered populations experience these barriers at varying levels. While one barrier may be significant for one covered population, it may not be as impactful for another.

Overall, the numbers in the table demonstrate the disparities in internet access and usage barriers among different demographic groups, emphasizing the need for directed interventions to address these disparities. Of note, the lack of access to devices and support services was very high across all covered populations. Members of a Tribal Nation reported the highest percentage of barriers including access to support services (69%) and distrust of the government (57%). This is closely followed by incarcerated individuals and individuals with a language barrier. Incarcerated individuals identified multiple barriers

⁴² Tribal Homelands- Arizona (2021) <https://itcaonline.com/>

including lack of access to devices (57%) and computer skills (43%). The biggest barrier identified by individuals with a language barrier is access to support services (63%) and access to devices (51%).

<i>Barrier</i>	Older than 60	Veteran	Individual with a Disability	Language Barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Individual Living in Rural Area	Member of a Tribal Nation
<i>Internet Stability</i>	40%	39%	38%	38%	34%	47%	52%
<i>Device Access</i>	62%	59%	61%	51%	56%	68%	64%
<i>Computer Skills</i>	24%	22%	29%	39%	28%	26%	42%
<i>Physical Limitation</i>	21%	17%	25%	40%	15%	17%	31%
<i>Internet Cost</i>	11%	10%	27%	21%	11%	11%	22%
<i>Access to Support Services</i>	60%	61%	66%	63%	60%	66%	69%
<i>Distrust of the Internet</i>	48%	41%	44%	41%	38%	46%	57%
<i>Distrust of the Government</i>	35%	35%	37%	48%	33%	34%	53%
<i>Concerns about Online Safety/Privacy</i>	35%	37%	40%	38%	31%	34%	49%

Table 5: Percentage of individuals in each covered population who experience the listed barriers to internet access and usage.

3.2.1.1. Telehealth

The health sector offers perhaps the greatest opportunity to impact the health and well-being of Arizona residents- especially the covered populations⁴³. Given this, it is vital to identify opportunities to address digital inclusion through the health sector and innovative health applications.

Digital health tools such as telehealth, patient portals to the electronic health record (EHR), wearables, and apps have grown dramatically in the past two decades with the proliferation of mobile devices, federal financial incentives for EHR adoption and use, and advances in software and cloud computing⁴⁴. Telehealth and patient portals became essential for obtaining healthcare during the pandemic⁴⁵.

Disparities in telehealth use for seniors, low income and rural populations, people of color and those with disabilities or not speaking English became evident early in the pandemic and precisely echoed disparities evident in portal use for over a decade. Lack of internet access, digital skills and devices were recognized early on as an important cause of the disparities⁴⁶. Public libraries are well positioned to assist with telehealth services in their communities because they tend to have private meeting space, high-speed internet, and the ability to support the lending of equipment and materials.

Community responses collected for this plan overwhelmingly support the need to expand access to telehealth services across Arizona. Respondents identified a lack of access to the internet as a significant barrier to obtaining telehealth services, particularly in areas not located within a reasonable distance of a doctor or specialist. Many Arizonans live in remote areas that make travel cumbersome, which can limit healthcare visits for routine and specialized care. This is also true for mental health services. According to a 2023 report on mental health care access, Arizona ranks last on the list for access to mental health services⁴⁷. Online access to health providers and digital technologies for physical and behavioral health, could alleviate many of these challenges, and improve the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable populations.

Benefits of expanding telehealth services

- *Telehealth benefits patients by saving the time and expense of going to the office. Patients can potentially access providers from around the world, possibly choosing ones that speak their language or come from their community.*
- *Patients can also access technology features that help people with hearing, visual or movement difficulties.*

⁴³ From “What the Health? Why and how to include health at the digital equity table. Panel Discussion: Northstar Digital Literacy: A Key Resource in your Digital Equity Plan Implementation” by A. Sheon, 2023 <https://netinclusion2023.sched.com/event/912b96c7769099c56ffcb1b8779257ad>

⁴⁴ From “Differences in the Use of Telephone and Video Telemedicine Visits During the COVID-19 Pandemic. The American Journal of Managed Care” by J. Rodriguez et al., 2021 <https://www.ajmc.com/view/differences-in-the-use-of-telephone-and-video-telemedicine-visits-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

⁴⁵ From “Characteristics of Telehealth Users in NYC for COVID-related Care during the Coronavirus Pandemic” by E. Weber et al., 2020, J Am Med Inform Assoc <https://academic.oup.com/jamia/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jamia/ocaa216/5899728>

⁴⁶ From “Patient Characteristics Associated with Objective Measures of Digital Health Tool Use in the US: A Literature Review” by S. Nouri et al., 2020 <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0m86p4qw>

⁴⁷ From “Best States for Mental Health Care” by Quote Wizard, 2023 <https://quotewizard.com/news/best-states-for-mental-healthcare>

- *Older unhoused seniors have very high mortality rates due to chronic conditions, disabilities, wounds, and mental health issues that require both ongoing and acute care. Telehealth can connect unhoused older adults with social services and resources for addressing other needs such as housing and food.*
- *Telehealth can reduce the costs for transportation to care, emergency room visits, and from missed appointments, reduce exposure of patients and providers to contagious diseases, and connect patients with a usual source of care to address chronic illness and complete treatment for acute conditions.*
- *Telehealth stands to deliver the most benefits to population groups that have numerous barriers to health.*
- *Telehealth can provide a safe and affirming experience for LGBTQ youth who may face stigma, discrimination or poor care quality. With providers pre-selected for their experience with this population, care can address sensitive issues such as gender-affirming care and mental health counseling.*

Barriers to telehealth to consider

- *Telehealth may require equipment, connectivity, and digital skills that the patient does not have access to.*
- *Patients, even those with digital skills, may need encouragement, training, and technical support if something goes wrong.*
- *Some patients prefer in-person appointments or don't understand what telehealth is and when it should be used.*
- *Providers need equipment, secure software and connectivity, linkages to electronic health records, and training and technical support for their staff and patients.*

3.2.1.2. Additional Considerations

The Importance of Language

The internet and social media platforms can be accelerants of social change, facilitating connection, social cohesion, information exchange, economic development, and collective action. Yet these same tools have been linked to increased polarization, frayed social fabric, democratic disillusionment, and widespread mis- and disinformation.

In expanding broadband access and adoption, a central question is how to capture the myriad possibilities and benefits of the internet—social media and messaging apps included—while anticipating, preparing for, and mitigating their risks, among them division, discrimination, and violence. Addressing this tension requires grappling with the features of the internet that make dangerous online content a particularly pernicious problem.

Online content does not exist in a vacuum⁴⁸ but instead interacts with and even supercharges offline dynamics within a given context⁴⁹, intergroup tensions and power imbalances, salient narratives, and historical grievances. It also gains influence from trusted messengers and valued information sources, often credible community leaders, who spread the content both online and offline. Together, this means that anticipating and managing the risks of dangerous online content requires grappling with its offline root causes.

Communications & Conflict

Communication is central to how we organize and understand ourselves as both individuals and within groups—how we find connections, develop relationships, form communities, and create social norms. Communication also allows us to develop, embrace, and spread narratives that help make sense of the world and our place within it. Through communication, we develop and share stories about what it means to be “us” and how we interact with “them.”

The Role of Technology

In facilitating our ability to connect, access information, and communicate, new information and communication technologies inevitably interact with the surrounding context, impacting information flows, intergroup relations, divisions, and even risks of division. This is not a new phenomenon.

New Technologies Amplify These Risks

More recent technologies – among them expanded internet access, social media platforms, and messaging apps – have supercharged these dynamics. How does this happen? Social media platform algorithms privilege divisive and inflammatory content, including hate speech—the very posts users are more likely to share⁵⁰. An absence of gatekeepers allows fringe views to travel into the mainstream and, thanks to likes and shares, appear normal or widespread. This enables a few loud voices—including those spreading misinformation and dangerous content—to have an outsized impact on online discourse and group norms.

Factors to Consider

Efforts to anticipate and manage risks that might stem from expanded internet access must address this web of dynamics—online and offline—that contribute to potential harms. Below we highlight three especially important factors to consider: (1) narratives, (2) intergroup relations and power dynamics, and (3) credible messengers.

⁴⁸ From “Understanding the Context Around Content: Looking behind Misinformation Narratives” by Laura Livingston, 2021 (<https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Global-Insights-Innovation-in-Counter-Disinformation-Toward-Globally-Networked-Civil-Society.pdf>)

⁴⁹ “A New Approach to Assessing the Role of Technology in Spurring and mitigating Conflict: Evidence from Research and Practice” by R. Brown and L. Livingston, 2018, *Journal of International Affairs*, 71(1.5), 77–86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26508121>

⁵⁰ “The Science of Fake News” by D. Lazer, M. Baum, Y. Benkler, A. Berenski, K. Greenhill, F. Menczer, B. Nyhan, G. Pennycook, D. Rothschild, M. Schudson, S. Sloman, C. Sunstein, E. Thornson, D. Watts & J. Zittrain, *Science*, 359,1094-1096(2018).DOI:10.1126/science.aao2998

Narratives: Efforts to anticipate and curb the spread of dangerous online content should consider the offline narratives already contributing to polarization and how they might be amplified online, reaching new audiences and/or strengthening existing views.

Intergroup relations and power dynamics: Online communications will tap into any intergroup tensions or power imbalances that exist within a given context – including any divisions or any new or long-standing grievances. Because social media is programmed to give us more of what we like, users are fed additional information that reinforces these views and related biases and thereby deepens divisions.

Credible messengers: Communications derive their influence in part from the messengers who are sharing them. Dangerous or divisive communications are more likely to spread and impact various target audiences when they come from individuals that the audience trusts – those they look to for new information, behavioral cues, or otherwise identify with. Social media and other online mediums can give credible offline voices a significantly larger platform to influence larger audiences.

Applying these considerations to Arizona requires investing in deeply understanding the state's contextual dynamics that connectivity might tap into. It's particularly important to consider current lines of division, intergroup relations and power dynamics, and current and historical group-targeted harm, including against Native and Indigenous communities, migrants, and LGBTQ+ communities.

This contextual awareness can also surface language or phrases that can help ensure broad buy-in to the rollout plan, as well as any phrases that should be avoided. In divided contexts, language itself can become loaded. Words that may have previously been considered innocuous, apolitical, or part of the common good can assume new meaning, denoting support for one group or another. Conducting a context analysis can help identify the language that might interfere with broad-based support for the plan and how to instead frame the plan using shared values and goals.

Cybersecurity

In the context of digital equity, cybersecurity emerges as a crucial foundation. As technology is more tightly interwoven with our daily lives, and governments, business, and citizens are becoming increasingly connected online, ensuring a safe and secure digital environment becomes paramount for all individuals, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic background. Cybersecurity is not only about protecting one's personal data; it's about safeguarding the availability of critical services and the participation of marginalized communities in the digital world. Today's modern threats are looking to take advantage of this, especially against communities which are new to technology and the Internet.

A robust cybersecurity framework guarantees that vulnerable populations are shielded not only from online threats but also from predatory behaviors that can exploit their digital presence. This encompasses preventing data breaches, safeguarding against digital harassment, scams, and discrimination, and harmful content, as well as inappropriate use of legitimately acquired data. These safeguards are particularly critical for marginalized individuals who may already face disproportionate vulnerabilities and risks in their offline lives.

Relatedly, information sharing will continue to play a key role in providing a collective defense against many of the threats that are seeking to exploit our vulnerabilities. Efforts to collect, analyze, and rapidly share actionable information to respond to these threats across all entities within Arizona will be crucial. This includes the fully transparent coordination with the private sector, non-governmental information

sharing organizations, law enforcement, and relevant Federal and State government entities where appropriate.

Moreover, a secure digital landscape with transparency and privacy built-in bolsters trust, encouraging wider adoption of digital tools among those who might otherwise be hesitant due to concerns about privacy and safety. By actively mitigating potential risks, we enable individuals to navigate the digital world with confidence, free from the fear of exploitation or exclusion. Through a digital equity lens, cybersecurity becomes a mechanism for democratizing access to online spaces, ensuring that everyone can reap the benefits of the digital world without compromise. By fostering a secure and inclusive digital environment, we pave the way for equitable participation, empowerment, and the realization of digital equity's transformative potential.

A final critical component tying all of this together is a properly resourced and trained cyber workforce and citizenry. To this end, collaboration among the education sector, industry partners, nonprofits and charities, and all levels of government must work together to establish sustainable workforce pipelines and creative development of effective cyber professionals and digital citizens.

The importance of addressing these challenges means that this must truly be a collaborative effort. Government, Non-profits, private industry, and various other key stakeholders must come together to advise and strategize around the security and privacy ramifications of rapid expansion of online services for an increasing digital population. As we provide technology, connectivity, and digital services, we need to be aware that threats are looking to take advantage of both vulnerable technology as well as vulnerable people and do everything we can to prepare and protect both.

3.2.2. Broadband Adoption

“When I travel through the state, there's still a ton of people sitting in the McDonald's parking lot using the wi-fi.” - Community Anchor Institution in Arizona

“There are some digital deserts within rather well-connected neighborhoods. I just don't think people appreciate how much of a digital desert exists in this state.” - Community Anchor Institution in Arizona

A thorough assessment of community member feedback in Arizona reveals five major barriers to broadband adoption including cost (61%), internet availability (28%), internet reliability (27%), access to devices (13%), and digital literacy skills (17% combining safety and lack of knowledge) in figure 16. This evaluation is essential for gaining insight into the current status in Arizona and discerning actionable pathways for enhancement in these critical domains. Cost, the overwhelming reason given, will be discussed in section 3.2.3.

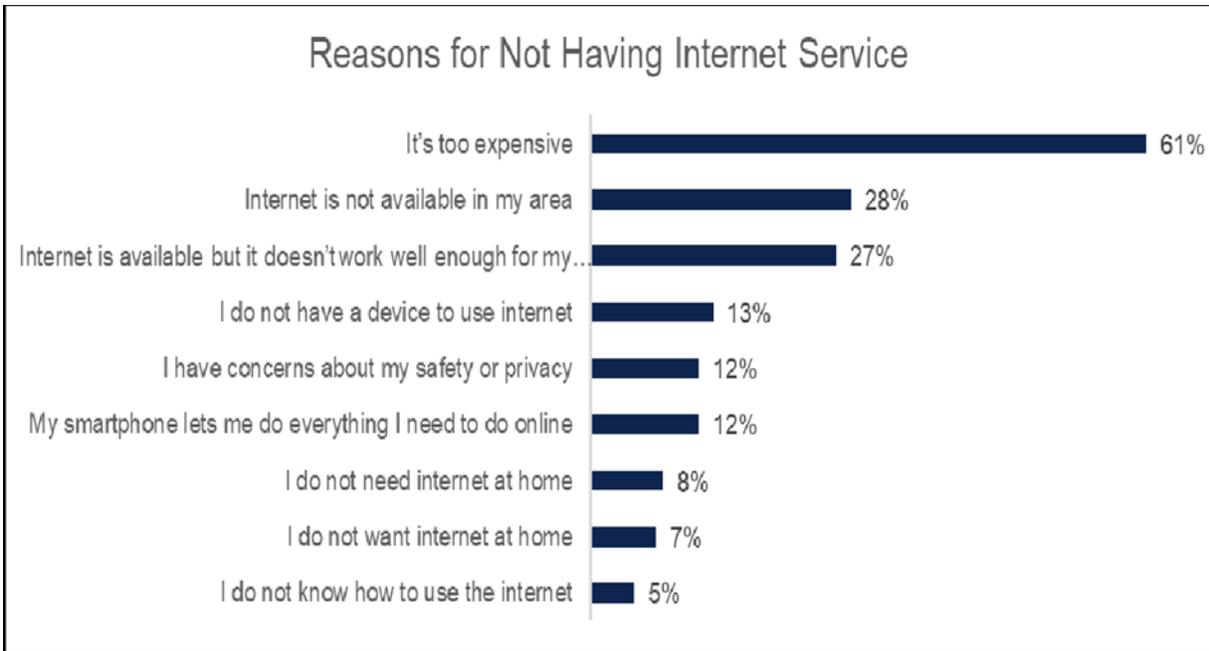


Figure 16: Statewide results when asked the reason(s) for not having internet service at home.

Internet Availability

Access to the internet is a fundamental first step in achieving digital equity in Arizona. Community member interviews and listening sessions identified many residents who do not have internet access, with many relying on access at public libraries and local businesses. Additional analysis reveals that internet access varies greatly between counties, and among covered populations. When asked about internet access, residents in Apache County, Maricopa County, Yavapai County, and Yuma County report the highest percentages of people without internet access. Around 28% of the residents of Apache County and 18% of residents in Maricopa County report no internet access. Figure 17 provides an all-county breakdown, as reported by residents who responded to the survey.

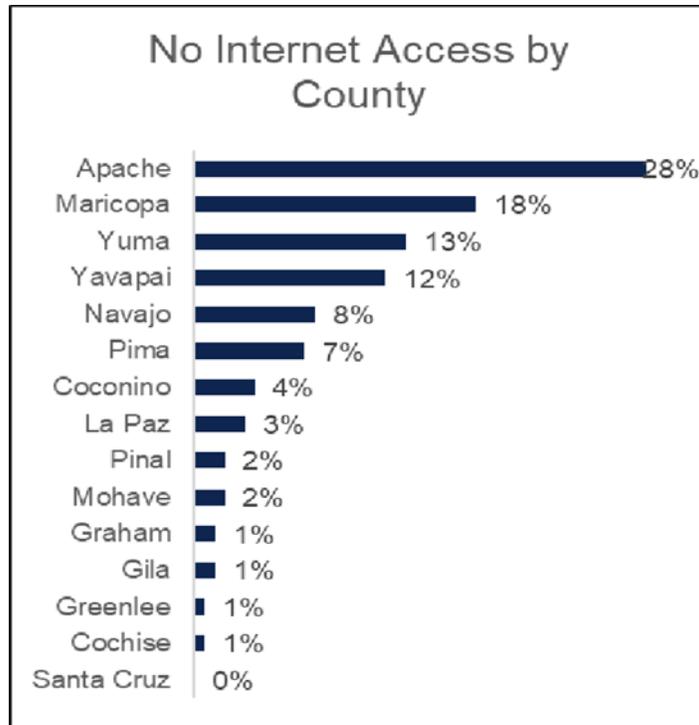


Figure 17: Self- Reported Percent of Arizona residents without internet access

In comparing the self-reported levels of internet access to NTIA’s Digital Equity Act Population Viewer data, we found that, while some counties have significantly more or less access than the survey results suggested, there are still huge numbers of Arizonans without access to high-speed broadband internet. It is also important to note that the NTIA Digital Equity Act Viewer data reports minimum requirements of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds; this may not be what self-reporting residents considered “adequate access” to reliable internet.

County	Percentage of Population in Households Lacking Fixed Broadband Availability
Apache	77%
La Paz	55.1%
Greenlee	47.2%
Navajo	40.7%
Coconino	30.3%
Gila	26.1%
Graham	23.9%
Mohave	23.9%
Cochise	23.6%
Yuma	10.3%
Yavapai	7.2%
Pinal	5.8%

Santa Cruz	2.9%
Pima	1.4%
Maricopa	0.7%

Figure 18: Percent of members of covered populations in Arizona that reported no internet access.

Across covered populations, respondents from tribal nations (15%) were the most prominent group without internet access, followed by residents with a disability (10%) and those with a language barrier (10%). See Figure 18 for all covered population results.

Internet Reliability

A reliable internet connection is vital for participation in the digital world. Internet reliability is closely related to digital equity and directly influences individuals' and communities' ability to access and utilize education, work, healthcare, and citizen services. Poor reliability is described by community members as bad connections, frequent outages, lack of service options, and slow service.

As shown in Figure 19 below, survey results indicate that 45% of Arizonans are either extremely dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with their internet reliability. Results varied considerably among counties. Coconino, Gila, and La Paz Counties report the highest rates of dissatisfaction, while Greenlee, Pima, and Yuma have the highest rates of satisfaction. See Figure 20 for full results by county. These findings are important to consider as service is expanded into rural and underserved areas of Arizona. Access to internet service is vital, but the connection must also be reliable.

Internet reliability, or the lack thereof, poses a significant barrier for covered populations, particularly among individuals living in low-income households and those who primarily reside in rural areas. Geographic and geologic factors can impact Internet connection in these regions, disrupting essential online activities such as remote work, distance learning, and telehealth services. Results indicate that low-income households in rural areas are disproportionately disadvantaged.

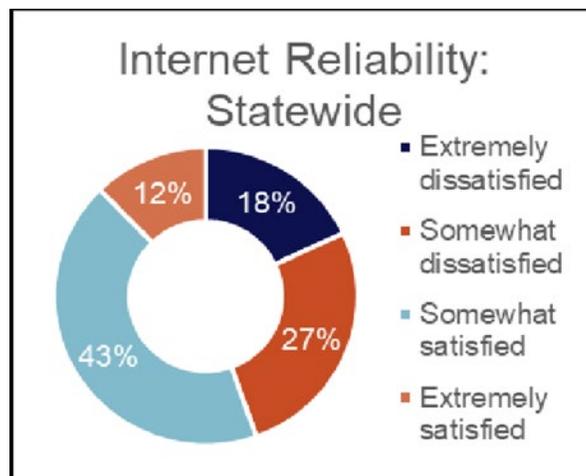


Figure 19: Internet Reliability Across Arizona

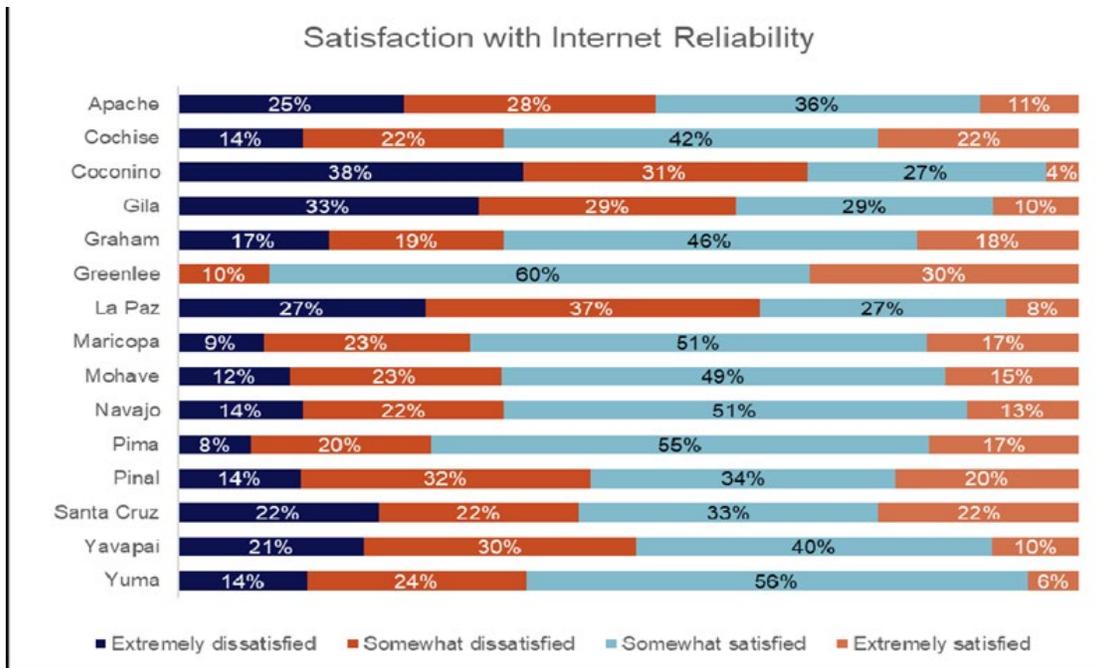


Figure 20: Satisfaction with internet reliability by county in Arizona

Use of Digital Devices

Having a digital device that can connect a user to the internet is a basic need. Internet service is important, but Arizonans also need access to the right device for their unique needs. Community member survey analysis indicates that overall, Arizonans have access to a device. When respondents were asked if their household has enough digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) to meet their needs, the majority (80%) responded “yes” as shown in Figure 21. Only 18% of the respondents indicated that they did not, and 2% reported having no device.

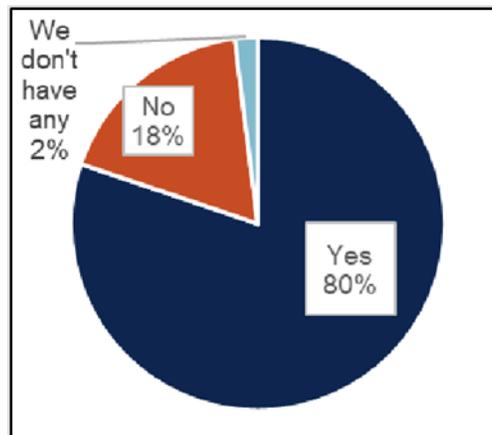


Figure 21: Percent of community members answering “yes” when asked if their household has enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) to meet the needs of everyone living in the home.

When examined by county, this trend continued with most respondents reporting that they did have enough devices. However, In Navajo County, the percentage of households that have enough devices dropped to 66%, and the percentage of respondents in Apache County fell to 59%. The full county results can be found in Figure 22.

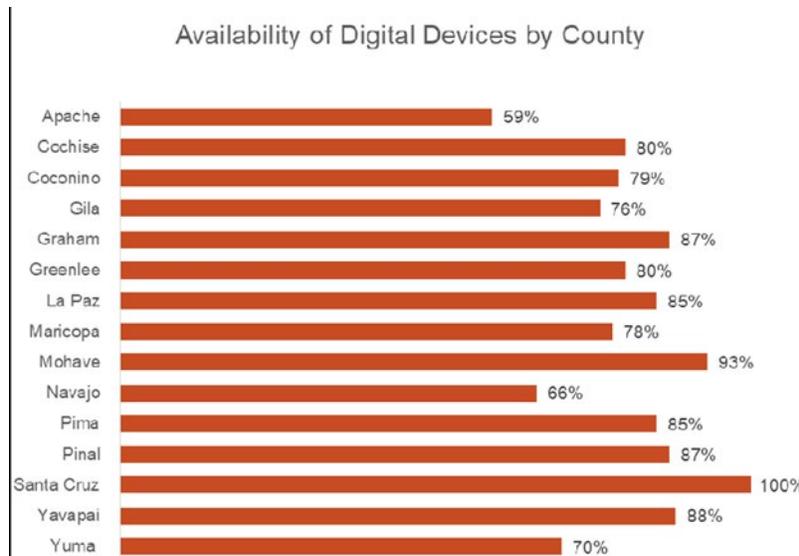


Figure 22: Community member percent answering “yes” when asked if their household has enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) to meet the needs of everyone living in the home by county

Digging Deeper

While the majority of Arizonans reported having access to a digital device, a deeper dive is warranted. Not all devices are created equally, and some devices don’t enable meaningful participation. For example, a smart phone is not the best device for learning remotely. Repeatedly we heard stories of students using their phones for writing papers and submitting homework. Similarly, members of the community shared that their phone was the device they used to complete paperwork or apply for a job. Across the state, 68% of respondents reported access to a cellular phone while only 53% had access to a personal computer. Around 38% use a tablet, and 22% use a computer from work or school (Figure 23). The discrepancies in these numbers indicate that while Arizonans may have access to devices, the device might not be the best fit for their needs.

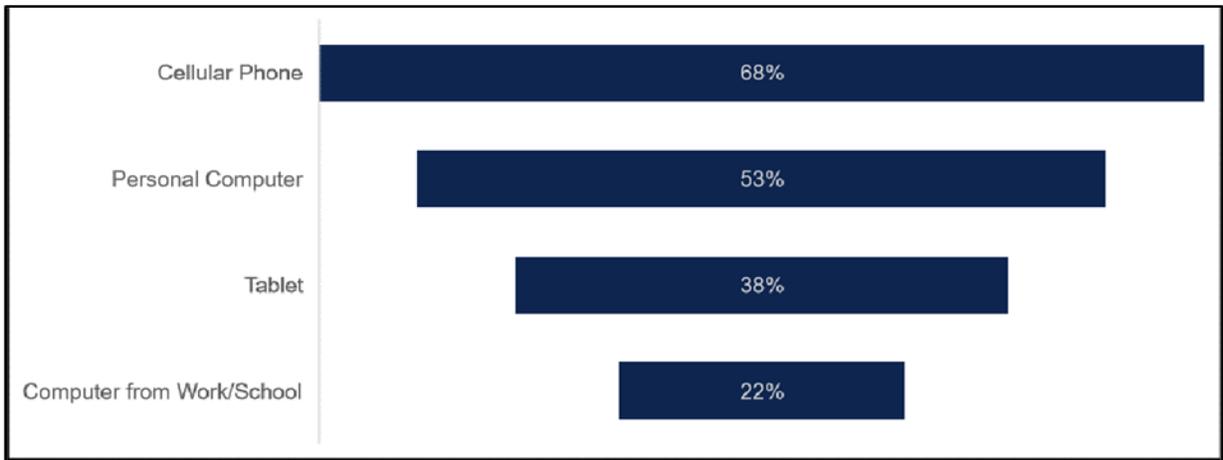


Figure 23: Statewide community member access to a digital device by device type

Access to Devices By Covered Population

When examined by covered populations, results reveal that most of the covered population groups fall below the state average of 80%. Only veterans and older adults exceeded the state average. Only 55% of households in Tribal Nations have access to the devices they need, and only 63% of incarcerated individuals have enough devices. Analysis revealed that 69% of households with a language barrier report having enough devices, which could greatly exacerbate the challenges they face as they navigate a world in which they are not a native speaker. Full results can be reviewed in Figure 24.

Figure 25 shows the type of devices being used by members of covered populations in Arizona. Similar to the previous results, respondents from covered populations overwhelmingly report that the device they are using is a cell phone. Only 37% of respondents with a language barrier have access to a personal computer, and 52% of people from Tribal Nations have access to a personal computer. Results indicate that nearly 30% of disabled individuals do not have access to a personal computer, which could greatly impact the ability to meaningfully engage in digital spaces.

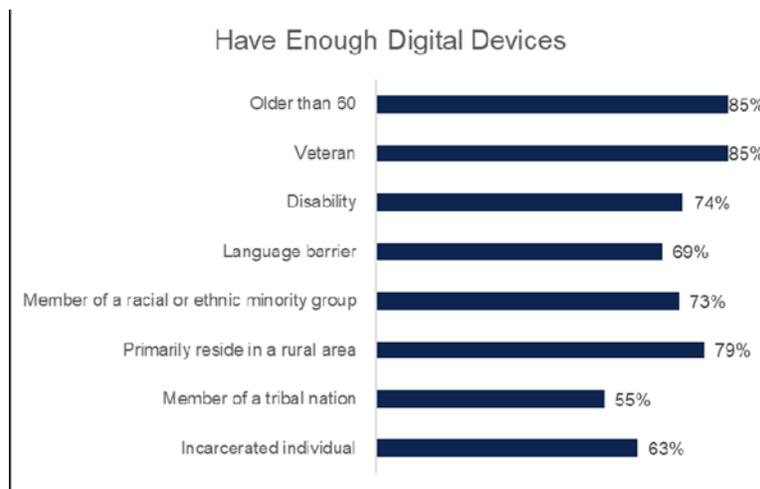


Figure 24: Covered population member percent answering “yes” when asked if their household has enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) to meet the needs of everyone living in the home by county.

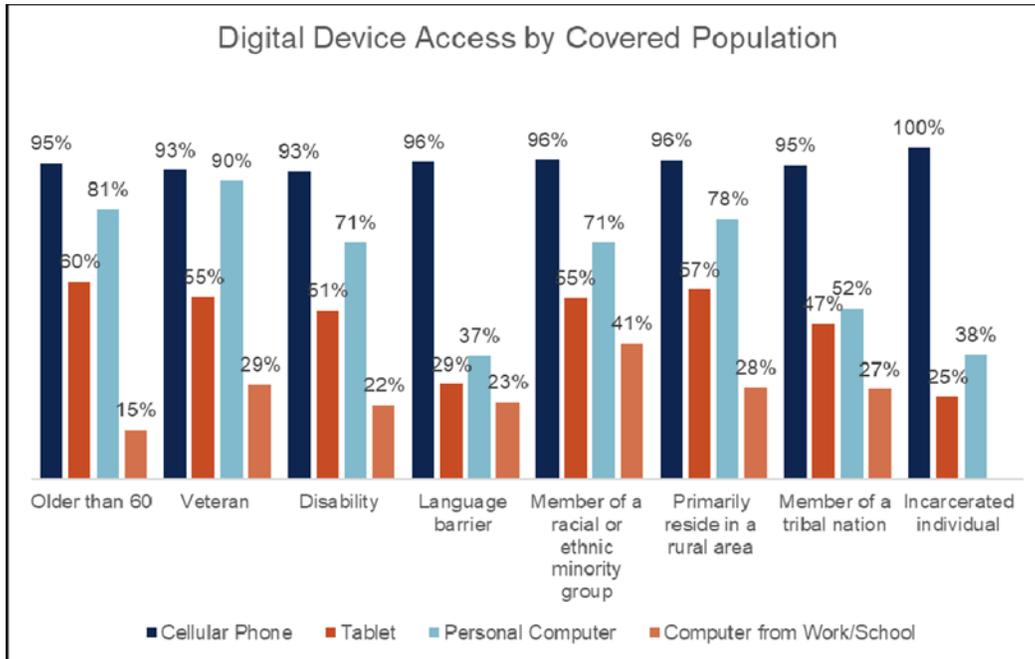


Figure 25: Digital device access among covered populations

Digital Literacy and Online Safety

Digital literacy is an overarching term that represents a learning path through which users gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed for meaningful use of online services. Community interviews and survey feedback overwhelmingly identified public libraries, nonprofits, and community organizations as the places where people go to learn basic computer skills with libraries being the most frequently identified. Interestingly, awareness of digital literacy programs was low among many Arizonans, which presents an opportunity for community awareness campaigns to improve skills and safe participation.

Participants responded that they were able to complete many tasks online. However, when asked what skills they want to learn, protecting one's privacy, identifying false and misleading information, and finding credible sources accounted for 60% of the feedback as shown in Figure 26. These results support a theme that emerged during interviews and listening sessions where participants expressed concerns about cybersecurity and falling victim to scams or disinformation. In general, Arizonans want to participate in online environments, but they want to do so safely. While less frequently reported, respondents report a desire to access telehealth and essential services, create online content, access entertainment, and engage on social platforms.

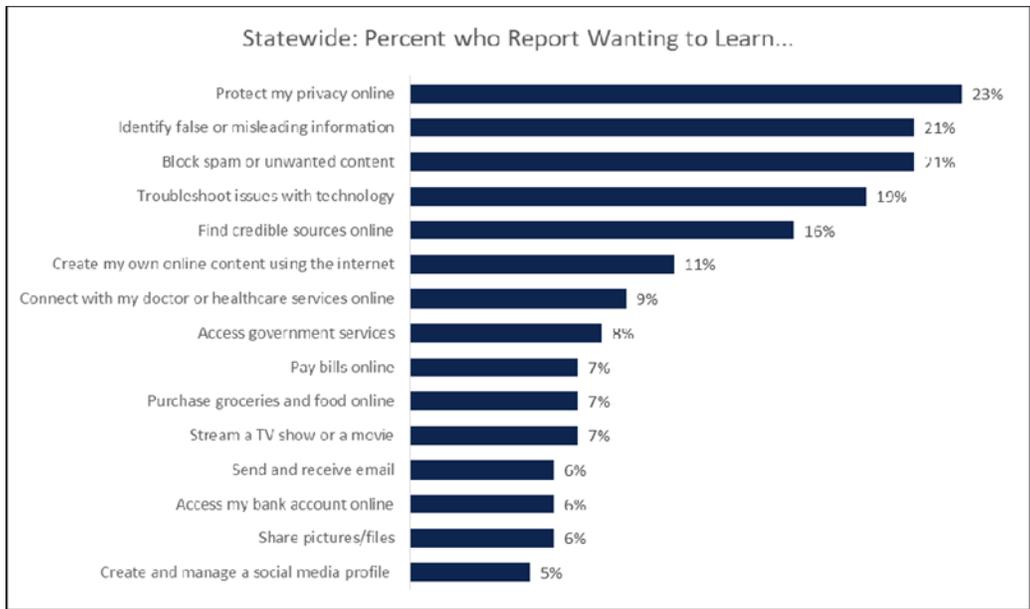


Figure 26: Percent of Arizona residents that want to learn more about various topics

Digital Literacy and Online Safety by Covered Population

When the data are examined by covered population, results are similar. Safe use of the internet emerged as the top concern. Members indicated that they would like to learn more about identifying false or misleading information, finding credible sources, blocking spam or unwanted content, and protecting their privacy online. Members of tribal nations, individuals with disabilities, and residents older than 60 expressed the most interest in these topics. 50% of respondents over the age of 60 want to learn more about protecting their privacy, and 45% need guidance identifying false or misleading information. Around half of surveyed community members that have a disability or are part of a racial or ethnic group indicated an interest in learning ways to protect their privacy online. Members of covered populations also indicated that they would like to learn more about troubleshooting issues with technology. Half of the surveyed members of tribal nations indicate an interest in learning more about troubleshooting, and 47% of individuals with disabilities expressed interest. Full results for all covered populations are represented in Table 6. Safety and cybersecurity are vital parts of digital literacy and are incorporated into the implementation of the state plan.

	Aging Individuals	Veteran	Disability	Language barrier	Member of a racial or ethnic minority group	Primarily reside in a rural area	Member of a tribal nation
Identify false or misleading information	45%	36%	50%	57%	43%	37%	53%
Find credible sources online	31%	28%	42%	47%	39%	30%	43%

Block spam or unwanted content	46%	43%	49%	42%	42%	40%	53%
Protect my privacy online	50%	38%	50%	42%	49%	43%	56%
Troubleshoot issues with technology	41%	35%	47%	34%	39%	39%	50%

Table 6: Percent of residents in covered populations that would like to learn more about indicated topics

3.2.3. Broadband Affordability

“If you're already strapped for cash on your electric bill, which a lot of people are, especially during our summertime. Why would you justify paying for Internet?” - Community Member in Arizona

The Pew Research Center study showed that 43% of households earning less than \$30,000 per year do not have home internet subscriptions, compared to merely 8% of households earning over \$75,000. Many cited costs as the primary explanation for not subscribing to internet service⁵¹. One way of expressing the difference between these households is that, given the present pricing models, households earning under \$30,000 per year typically have to pay over 2% of their annual income for broadband service.

Based on this 2% standard, the median household in Arizona would be considered cost-burdened with broadband service that costs more than \$100 per month. Per the BEAD program requirements, the ACA Broadband Office will develop an affordable pricing structure for eligible households which subrecipients of BEAD funding must offer to bridge the gap in affordability.

Although the Federal Communications Commission discloses comprehensive information on broadband availability at the location level, the data on pricing is absent from the FCC National Broadband Map. Although the data is expected to become more accurate as the challenge process and other learning initiatives continue, the ACA Broadband Office is currently unable to determine the number of households in Arizona that experience cost burdens from the expense of internet service.

Identifying the population who are eligible for the ACP program is a challenging task since the ACS provides data only on household incomes and estimates of the percentage of households below various poverty levels, but not on the number of households enrolled in other assistance programs. According to estimates made by Education Superhighway and based on the 2021 ACS data, 42.7% of households in Arizona are eligible for the ACP. Of those who are eligible, 39% of households have enrolled in the ACP, according to the USAC's ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker data as of Sept 20, 2023. Arizona is 19th in the country in terms of ACP participation.

⁵¹ From How to Make Broadband a Priority in Affordable Rental Housing by A. Read & K. Wert. Pew Research, 2022 <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2022/11/03/how-to-make-broadband-a-priority-in-affordable-rental-housing-development>

Cost was the primary reason cited by Arizonans who do not subscribe to internet service with a significant majority (60%) indicating this as their main deterrent. (Figure 16). The cost of internet services acts as a substantial deterrent to broadband adoption, particularly for low-income households. The financial burden of internet connectivity can be prohibitive, restricting their full participation in the digital age. The cost of internet service varies greatly across Arizona, and survey respondents often mention a lack of options as a driver for higher prices in their area. Statewide results indicated that approximately 26% of the state population is extremely dissatisfied with the cost of their internet services and 34% are somewhat dissatisfied as indicated in Figure 27. Only 8% of Arizonans indicated that they are extremely satisfied with the cost of their service, leaving a lot of room for improvement.

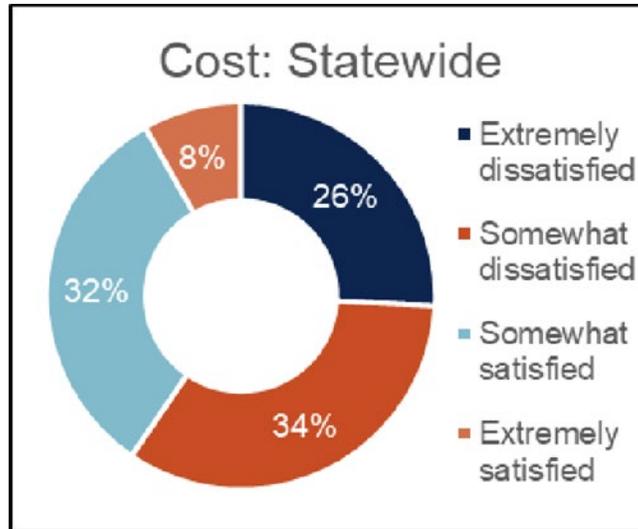


Figure 27: Statewide cost opinions from the community member survey.

Cost by County

Across Arizona, there are marked differences in satisfaction with internet price plans. Given this, it is important to dig deeper and examine the impact of internet service cost based on geography. Figure 28 breaks down the state by county, and indicates that La Paz County (68%), Yavapai County (67%), Cochise County (67%), and Coconino County (63%) reported the largest percentages of dissatisfaction with the cost of internet service. Residents in Greenlee County had the highest satisfaction rate in the state at 80%.

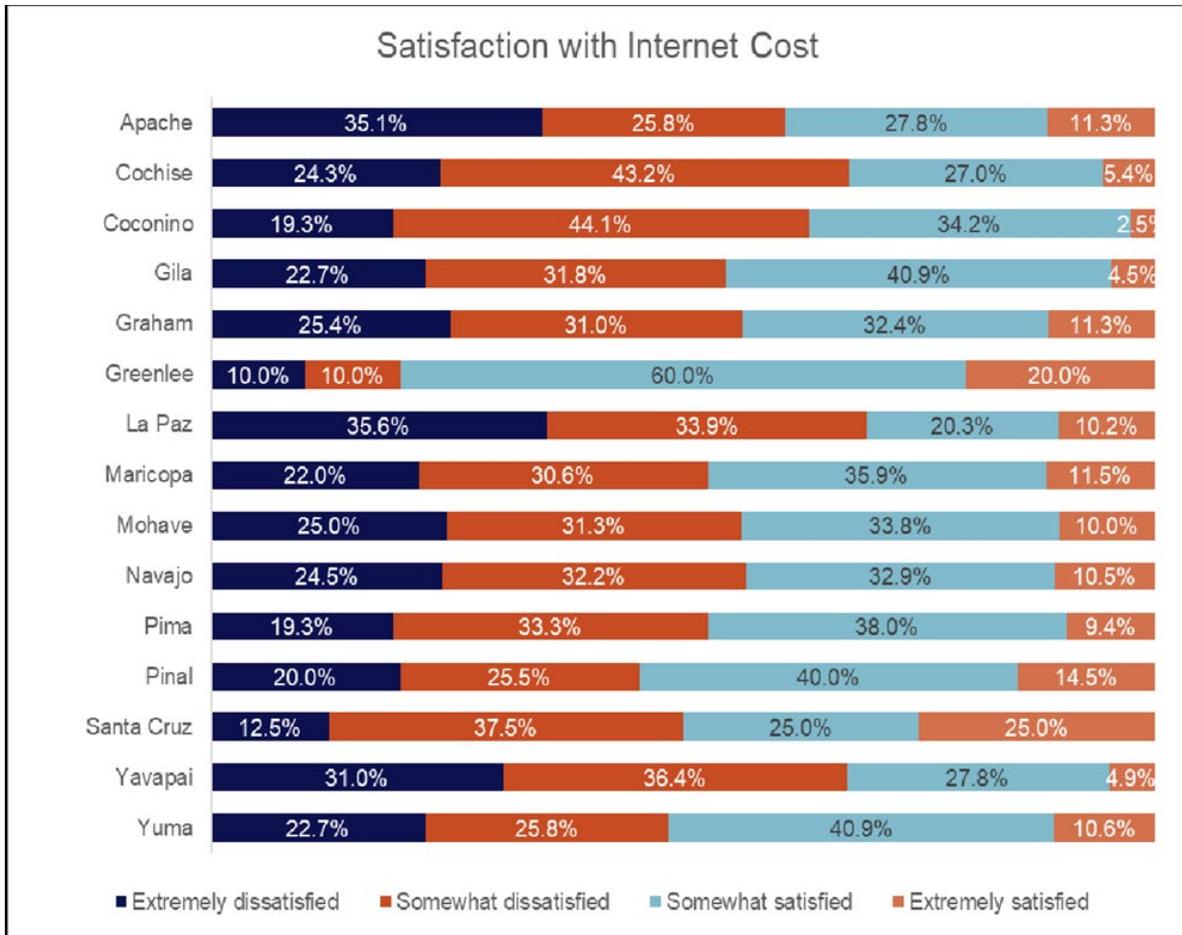


Figure 28: Satisfaction with internet cost by county in Arizona

Affordability by Covered Population

As shown in Figure 29, members of covered populations are overwhelmingly only “somewhat satisfied” with the price of internet services in their area. 28% of Arizonans with a disability find their internet service unaffordable, and 25% of populations that live in rural areas consider their service expensive. Only 11% of Arizonans over the age of 60 rate their internet service as “very affordable.” Free access to internet service appears to be very limited in Arizona, with members of Tribal Nations (18%) and incarcerated individuals (13%) reporting the highest numbers among the covered populations.

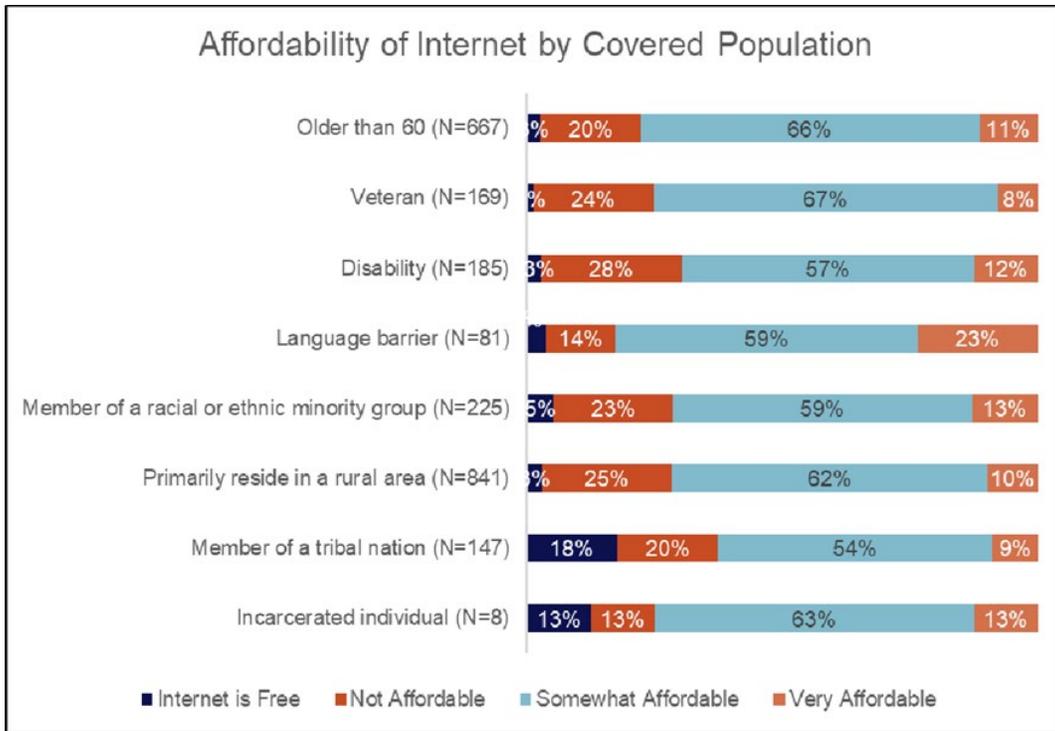


Figure 29: Member responses by covered population indicate that most members of covered populations consider the internet not affordable or somewhat affordable.

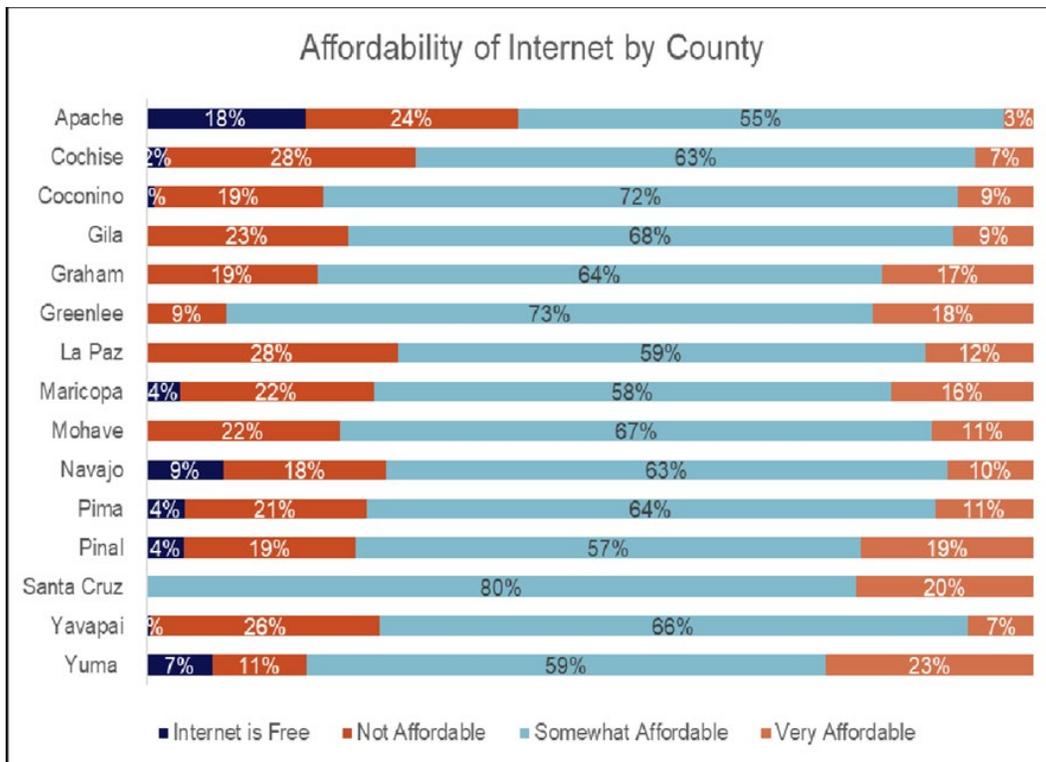


Figure 30: Member responses by county indicates that most members of covered populations consider the internet not affordable or somewhat affordable.

Access to Free Internet

Having access to internet services at no cost is an excellent solution to the affordability barriers to connectivity. However, free access is very rare in homes across Arizona, and most “free” internet access is obtained at a community location (24%) or a local place of business (22%). When asked where they could access free internet in their community, 10% of respondents said there was no place in their community with free internet. Others reported the following community locations as shown in the figure below. For those that marked “other” responses ranged from a friend or family member’s home to churches to libraries to parks to their apartment complex. (Figure 31)

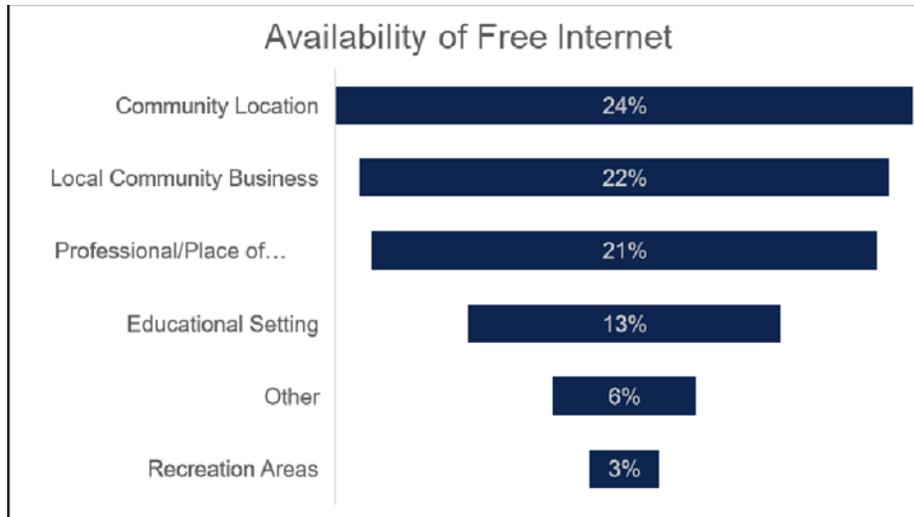


Figure 31: Identified areas where access to the internet is provided at no personal cost

3.2.4. County Reports

Arizona's digital equity plan draws on both quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from listening sessions. The surveys provided clear, numerical data on issues like internet access and digital skills gaps across diverse demographics. This data helped identify specific areas requiring attention.

Complementing this, the listening sessions offered qualitative feedback, giving voice to individual experiences and challenges related to digital inequity. These narratives provided context to the numbers, revealing the real-life impacts of the digital divide.

The synergy of these two data types is critical. The surveys show the extent of digital inequity, while the listening sessions explain its day-to-day impact on residents. For instance, a statistic on limited internet access gains meaning when paired with a story of a student struggling to complete online assignments.

This dual approach shapes a targeted and responsive digital equity plan, ensuring that our actions are data-driven yet human-centered. It allows us to create solutions that are not only statistically sound but also deeply rooted in the community's actual needs.

Furthermore, the utilization of county reports, given Arizona's manageable number of 15 counties, enables a focused and detailed analysis of digital equity issues. These reports allow for a localized understanding of each county's unique digital landscape, ensuring tailored solutions that address specific community needs and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the state's digital equity initiatives.

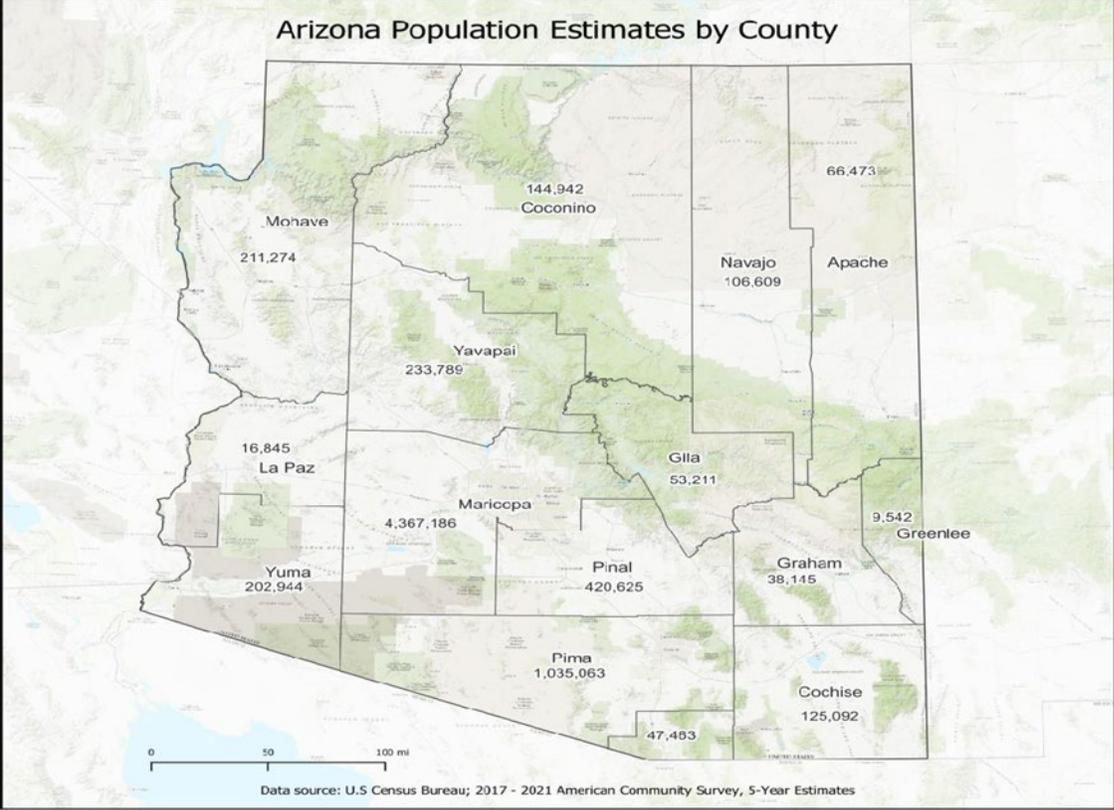


Figure 32: ACS estimates of total population for each county in Arizona



Apache County



Apache County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

Apache County urgently needs improved, affordable internet and cellular services, particularly in the rural, remote, and underserved areas. These services are vital for education, work, healthcare, and the delivery of essential services. The community reports that current cellular infrastructure is unreliable and costly, particularly for hotspot usage.

There is a significant demand for better broadband internet, with criticisms directed at major providers for depending on outdated technologies and neglecting these communities' needs. Concerns about internet safety, such as cyber scam risks and password security, are also increasing.

Rural areas face specific issues like limited cell tower coverage and high costs of current services. Satellite-based solutions like Starlink, though known, are considered expensive and operationally challenging. Waitlists are long and inaccessible for most people. The community's feedback highlights a pressing need for affordable and reliable internet solutions, and a sense of urgency of collaborative solutions.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Apache County

Located in the northeastern region of Arizona, Apache County is characterized by natural landscapes and diverse indigenous heritage. Notable demographic segments include individuals under 18 years (26.0%) and those aged 65 years and over (16.7%). Most residents identify as American Indian (73.4%). Linguistic diversity is prominent, as 54.9% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. This linguistic diversity, combined with a relatively lower percentage of households with a computer (62.1%) and broadband Internet subscription (42.9%), underscores the importance of digital equity initiatives to bridge these gaps.⁵⁶

Quotes from the County

Access Barriers

"They cannot work from here. They do not have sufficient bandwidth for them to do their job, you know, and that's been the case forever."

Comfort and Safety Concerns

"The parents can't know how to know when their child is potentially in an unsafe or incorrect area and have the tools to move them in the right direction to protect our senior citizens in the same way."

⁵⁶ From QuickFacts. Apache County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/apachecountyarizona,yavapaicountyarizona,US/PST045222>

Apache County has a median household income of \$34,788 and a per capita income of \$16,888, with 28.4% of the population living in poverty. The county's economic resilience is reflected in its total employment establishments (445) and businesses (324), contributing to its local economy.⁵⁷

Barriers in Apache County

Access Barriers

Much of the county lacks digital infrastructure which impacts access to education, jobs, healthcare, and essential services. Where service is available, bandwidth constraints hinder professional-level work and limit the types of jobs and businesses that can effectively operate within the region. The unreliability of service providers has eroded the community's trust in internet service offerings.

Cost Barriers

Both businesses and residential users grapple with high equipment and service costs. For businesses, initial setup costs can soar up to \$2,500, while residential users may face initial expenses of up to \$700, with recurring monthly fees ranging from \$120 to \$500, rendering internet services financially unattainable for many.

Skill Barriers

While libraries in Apache County offer some free internet and training, their resources are limited. They often need help with understaffing and restricted hours, making them an insufficient solution for fully meeting the diverse educational needs of the community. Residents in Apache County face a notable digital skills deficit. For people to meaningfully and safely participate online, training is needed in everything from computer foundations to identifying mis- and disinformation. Skills barriers prevent individuals from fully harnessing the potential of the internet for personal and professional benefit.

Trust Barriers/Safety and Security Concerns

The community expressed a pronounced lack of trust in the safety and security of online platforms. Concerns are wide-ranging including parents worrying about their children's online safety, concerns about the susceptibility of older adults to online scams and fraud, and concerns about the intrusiveness of the government. There is deep resistance to change, skepticism towards government-led internet initiatives, resistance to the expansion of towns, and resistance to new technologies. Here, rural communities value their isolation and exhibit apprehension towards external interventions that might impact their way of life. This resistance is rooted in a longstanding preference for traditional methods and a general mistrust of new initiatives.

Barriers by Covered Populations in Apache County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Individuals with disabilities encounter a range of

⁵⁷ From QuickFacts. Apache County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/apachecountyarizona,yavapaicountyarizona,US/PST045222>

challenges related to the availability and accessibility of technology, internet resources, hardware, and software that meets their specific needs. Additionally, transportation barriers hinder access to healthcare, particularly for those with physical and intellectual disabilities who sometimes have to drive for hours to reach the nearest doctor.

Barriers for Rural Areas: The significantly higher cost of engineering infrastructure in this rural area affects the end user's monthly bill. The divide between well-off people and those living in poverty in these areas also affects bandwidth usage, access issues and limits to internet availability.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Students in Apache County frequently leave to acquire basic computer skills due to inadequate local resources. Libraries, despite offering some educational opportunities, face constraints that impact their hours of operation and staffing. To address this inequity, educating the community on safe and effective internet usage is critical. The "train the trainer" approach is suggested to create local support navigators, thereby enhancing digital literacy and education

Barriers for Aging Individuals: The community emphasizes the importance of protecting seniors from digital scams. Senior centers and libraries are identified as key venues for educational workshops that focus on basic computer skills and safe internet navigation.

Barriers for Racial or Ethnic Minorities: It is crucial to acknowledge the economic disparities that disproportionately impact communities of color in the region. Efforts to address digital inequity should strive to reduce disparities based on race or ethnicity, ensuring equitable access to digital resources and opportunities.

Barriers for Individuals with Language Barriers: For individuals facing language barriers, especially prevalent in tribal areas, the dominance of English-only materials creates significant access challenges. To foster digital inclusivity, providing training materials in native languages and offering on-site translation services is vital. Additionally, respecting cultural nuances and customs, especially in Native American communities where elders often speak exclusively in their native languages, is essential for effective engagement and support.

Resources

Nonprofits and Local Businesses

Libraries are recognized as critical community hubs, providing indispensable support for residents in areas such as employment assistance, internet navigation, and basic services like phone charging. Despite facing staffing challenges that may occasionally impact their service capabilities, libraries remain pivotal in offering free internet access and a range of training resources. Beyond libraries, the community benefits from nonprofit organizations dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship, local business development, skill development, and economic empowerment.

Residents heavily rely on library services for job searches, device charging, and internet

access. The libraries have implemented special programs to address specific community needs. It is important to note the financial burden even a nominal fee, such as \$10 for internet access, can have on some residents. This highlights the ongoing issue of affordability and its impact on resource accessibility in the community.

Local community centers and schools play a vital role in providing access to technology and education in a safe environment. The Round Valley youth center provides access to the internet and tech support for the kids who use the space. The high school in St. Johns, for instance, integrates technology into their courses, offers a pathway to higher education, and integrates an ACP program for their low-income students and students who are members of a tribal nation. However, the lack of internet access remains a significant hurdle. Addressing this gap is essential for ensuring equitable access to educational and developmental opportunities.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Affordability

The community identified the high cost of internet plans as a significant concern, especially for single-parent households. There was a strong focus on seeking solutions to make these services more affordable for low-income families and individuals facing economic hardships.

Address Language Barriers

Addressing language barriers is crucial, especially for aging individuals and non-English-speakers.

Advocate for Diverse Leadership

In tribal areas, experts with direct experience underscored the importance of culturally sensitive training programs. They advocate for these initiatives to be led by members from within the respective communities, ensuring relevance and respect for cultural nuances.

Create Policy Initiatives

Local and state governments are urged to consider policies that encourage internet service providers to offer affordable plans and invest in underserved areas.

Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation System

A robust monitoring and evaluation system is needed to assess the impact of these initiatives, allowing for data-driven modifications to enhance effectiveness.

Increase Library Capacity

Libraries are identified as vital centers for digital literacy and internet access. To effectively serve in this capacity, they require additional resources and staffing.

Secure Funding for Implementation of Broadband Projects

Securing funding through grants, public-private partnerships, and community fundraising is essential for implementing training and infrastructure projects. Micro-grants were specifically mentioned as a means to support training initiatives and provide free IT support in the community. The idea of creating a small IT service business, supported by micro-grants, was also proposed to stimulate local economic growth and meet IT needs.

Address Concerns About Online Safety and Security

Addressing safety concerns, especially for parents and seniors, is vital. Help people learn to keep themselves and their families safe online.

Thoughtfully Engage the Community

Town halls and community meetings are vital platforms for residents to voice concerns and offer suggestions. Engaging the community thoughtfully ensures that the solutions that are developed are precisely aligned with the community's unique needs.

Use Train The Trainer Models

To bolster community capacity for digital literacy, the 'train the trainer' model is proposed. This approach aims to empower local individuals to educate others, spreading digital literacy throughout the community.





Cochise County



Cochise County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Cochise County, residents are vocal about their dissatisfaction with limited and costly internet options, especially in rural locales. The community strongly advocates for more affordable, accessible high-speed internet, greater government intervention, and improved internet literacy resources. A common theme is the systemic barriers faced, such as inadequate internet access, evidenced by reliance on library computers and hotspots. The financial strain of existing internet services is a significant concern, given the integral role of digital connectivity in modern life. Notably, high-speed fiber options are scarce, with other providers being either too expensive or unreliable.

These internet speed deficiencies have tangible effects on education, compelling families to depend on Wi-Fi in schools due to inadequate DSL services at home. There's a widespread disillusionment with government initiatives to improve rural internet infrastructure, perceived as largely ineffective. Proposals include reclassifying internet services as a basic utility to enhance affordability and access, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, there's a noticeable lack of digital literacy resources, further impeding the use of internet connectivity for educational and professional growth.

Internet service providers are criticized for their selective service offerings and perceived negligence. Specific concerns include providers not offering in-home internet due to local governmental complexities. There is also heightened awareness of the disparities in internet service costs, which seem to disproportionately affect seniors on fixed incomes.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Cochise County

Cochise County is situated in the southeastern region of Arizona and boasts a unique blend of natural landscapes and diverse

Quotes from the County

Trust & Misinformation

"They say, oh, I won't open my email on a public computer because I'll be hacked. But what they have on their phones is social media and this is where they read it all, how you're going to be hacked if you do this and that. They need education to keep them safe."

Geographical Isolation

"They're taking the bus to get places. They would have to take an hour-long bus drive to get to just to go to college then find another bus just to get to the center, you know, that's not going to happen."

cultural heritage. Home to a population exceeding 126,000 residents, the county is situated along the borders of Mexico and New Mexico. The County encompasses seven municipalities and has a diverse demographic landscape. In addition to being a predominantly rural region, 35.9% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino (35.9%) and other 24.6% identify as Two or more races. This diversity extends to linguistic preferences, as 28.5% of residents communicate in languages other than English at home. Notably, 10.1% of the population speaks English less than 'very well,' underscoring the need for multilingual approaches to bridge language barriers. The median age is 43.2 years, with the age group between 25 to 44 years constituting 23.2% of the population—a pivotal segment for economic productivity and digital inclusion efforts.⁴⁸

Barriers in Cochise County

Access

Rural areas of Cochise County face significant challenges accessing reliable, high-speed internet. The poor digital infrastructure leads to slow and inconsistent services, affecting essential online access to education, work, and healthcare. Residents report relying on satellite internet, which is neither reliable nor affordable. Alternatively, people go to the library to get online.

Affordability

In Cochise County, rural residents struggle with economic barriers that make it difficult to afford digital devices, internet service plans, and data usage. As a result, internet access often takes a back seat to more pressing financial needs.

Cultural and Linguistic Barriers

Cultural resistance to technological change and apprehensions about the internet's impact on community values can impede the adoption of internet services. Community attitudes and perceptions play a crucial role in influencing internet adoption rates.

Skills Barriers

A notable gap in digital literacy exists among many Cochise County residents. There is a pressing need for educational programs and training to address this gap. Aging individuals, in particular, feel intimidated by technology, which can discourage them from seeking help and using internet services.

Trust Barriers/Safety and Security Concerns

Concerns about cybersecurity and privacy are significant deterrents to online engagement in Cochise County. A general mistrust of online platforms, coupled with fears of scams, misinformation, and fake news on social media, contributes to digital skepticism. These concerns are especially prevalent among youth, middle-aged adults, and aging individuals.

Barriers by Covered Populations in Cochise County

Barriers for Rural Areas: In Cochise County's predominantly rural landscape, residents face significant isolation. Long bus rides are often necessary to access basic services or shopping facilities. The separation of communities by highways further exacerbates the difficulty in accessing digital resources, leaving many in these rural areas digitally disconnected.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: There's a pressing need for education and training to tackle digital inequities in the community, especially for adults in their forties and fifties with limited computer experience. They, and others, require foundational digital skills training, including tasks like setting up email accounts, creating secure passwords, and navigating online spaces safely to avoid scams and misinformation. These individuals often have numerous questions and need extensive time and support for their digital learning journey.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Aging residents in Cochise County grapple with adapting to the digital age, often experiencing embarrassment and vulnerability due to their limited technological knowledge. This challenge is particularly pronounced among retired individuals, especially those on fixed incomes. For instance, one 85 year old resident who relocated from Pennsylvania to Arizona shared their journey of learning to stream online content and teaching their partner, who is in their seventies, to do the same. These anecdotes underscore the multifaceted hurdles and roles that aging individuals will play in this journey.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address the Affordability of Internet Plans

In Cochise County, it's vital that affordable internet plans consider residents' financial constraints. Exploring partnerships with internet service providers to provide discounted plans for low-income individuals can significantly improve digital accessibility.

Building Community Trust and Addressing Safety Concerns

Conducting educational campaigns on online safety and cybersecurity is essential for Cochise County communities. These campaigns should aim to debunk myths and misinformation, building trust in the digital environment and promoting responsible internet usage.

Develop and Support Public-Private Partnerships

Engaging in collaborations with both the public and private sectors can bring together resources and expertise to address the digital gaps in Cochise County.

Encouraging Open Discussions and Involve Community Leaders

Encouraging open discussions in Cochise County about the advantages and challenges of internet use is vital. Involving community leaders can help in advocating for digital equity as a communal objective.

Expand ISP Coverage

Motivating Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to broaden their coverage and offer affordable plans in underserved areas is a critical step towards enhancing digital access in Cochise County.

Invest in Infrastructure

Advocating for increased investment in digital infrastructure is key to ensuring reliable and high-speed internet in Cochise County. Innovative solutions, such as satellite internet, should be explored to reach the most remote areas.

Partner to Provide Training to the Community

Developing comprehensive digital literacy programs that cater to various skill levels and age groups is essential. Collaborating with libraries, community centers, and local organizations to offer regular training sessions can significantly improve digital literacy.

Tailor Outreach and Customize Programs to Meet the Needs of the Community

Efforts should be made to customize outreach programs to meet the unique needs and concerns of different demographic groups within Cochise County. Creating culturally sensitive training materials is necessary to overcome cultural barriers.

Resources

Training & Support Systems

Arizona@Work provides resources for training and employment, which in some instances, includes access to internet-connected devices and the internet. Local libraries offer digital literacy programs and training to help individuals learn how to use devices and access the internet. Local community organizations provide training sessions to help people acquire digital skills and become more comfortable with technology. Community centers offer training and workshops to enhance digital literacy.





Coconino County



Coconino County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Coconino County, particularly among rural and suburban residents, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of internet service. The primary issues include lack of reliable internet access, affordability, and service quality. Residents report that outdated, slow internet service impedes work, content streaming, and digital communication. Limited provider options in certain areas result in market monopolization, leading to high prices and poor service quality.

Complaints are frequent about the outdated DSL infrastructure, which negatively impacts speed and reliability. Certain providers are consistently identified as unresponsive and problematic. Although satellite-based services offer an alternative, they are often financially out of reach for many. Cellular services also face criticism for dropped calls and slow data speeds.

There is a demand for fiber-optic internet to address reliability and speed issues, but economic barriers, notably the high cost of quality internet services, are a significant obstacle. The community urges increased involvement from local and governmental bodies to enhance internet access, emphasizing connectivity as a critical modern utility, particularly for remote work. Additionally, there's a recognized need for educational initiatives to improve technological literacy within the community.

The collective voice from Coconino County clearly articulates the need for comprehensive solutions addressing the various aspects of internet inadequacy, ranging from infrastructure improvements to enhanced affordability and digital literacy, calling for concerted efforts from service providers and government entities.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Coconino County

Coconino County is the second-largest county in the United

Quotes from the County

The Need for Digital Navigators

"I gotta tell you, we need somebody who has repeated contact. It's the same person coming over and over again. They're from the neighborhood, they're trusted and teaching them. It's like a person existing in communities like, at a DMV or a library whose responsibility it is to give that citizenry information for what they need digitally."

The Importance of Trust and Safety

"And that's the piece that we're trying to understand in this new word. Where someone is actually there to address that safety piece that we all didn't realize was there until we're doing it every day and then, and then we're finding out too late. We need help sooner"

State by land area, covering approximately 18,661 square miles. Flagstaff is the largest city in the county. It is situated in the northern part of the state and encompasses a wide range of geographic features. The population of Coconino County was estimated to be around 145,000 in 2022, with a mix of urban and rural residents. The County is home to Northern Arizona University, which has an enrollment of around 30,000 students that mostly reside in Coconino County. Around 27% of the county's population identify as American Indian, and 15% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Nearly 20% of the population is aged 18 or under, and around 15% of the population is aged 65 or older. 49

Income levels in Coconino County vary significantly based on factors such as location and industry. In 2021, the median household income in the county was approximately \$61,888, which is slightly below the national average. It's important to note that the county includes both rural and urban areas, with Flagstaff, the county seat, having a somewhat higher cost of living and income levels compared to more remote areas. 50

While the city of Flagstaff enjoys relatively robust internet connectivity, remote communities in the county often grapple with limited broadband access. The county is exploring wireless, microwave, and satellite technologies to provide service in hard-to-reach areas. However, these technologies vary in type and cost. While fiber optics offer the best internet connectivity, their deployment is costly and thus far has been limited to densely populated areas.

Barriers in Coconino County

Access Barriers

Limited access to reliable and high-speed internet restricts full participation in online life, particularly for those living in rural areas and on tribal lands. This lack of access impedes the use of essential online services like education, social services, and healthcare.

Cost Barriers

Affordability poses a significant challenge for many residents. The cost of internet plans and necessary devices is often beyond the reach of individuals, impeding their online engagement. The high cost associated with the internet hinders participation in remote education, telework, telemedicine, and access to vital services. Furthermore, barriers such as limited digital skills and language differences prevent many from taking advantage of reduced-cost internet plans.

Digital Literacy and Education

There is a notable deficiency in digital literacy and skills, particularly among aging residents, those with disabilities, and non-English speakers. This gap hinders their ability to effectively use digital devices and navigate the internet safely. Training in fundamental digital skills is crucial as is opportunity to build on those skills once the basics are learned

49 From QuickFacts. Coconino County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/coconinocountyarizona,apachecountyarizona,yavapacountyarizona,US/PST045222>

50 From QuickFacts. Coconino County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/coconinocountyarizona,apachecountyarizona,yavapacountyarizona,US/PST045222>

Infrastructure

Government funding and initiatives to address these digital challenges are often complex and subject to delays, affecting the progress in bridging the digital divide in Coconino County.

Support

Residents lack adequate support and guidance in effectively using digital technology. The idea of digital navigators, offering assistance and education, is gaining traction but has not been widely implemented yet.

Trust Barriers/Safety and Security Concerns

A general mistrust in online platforms, fueled by fears of scams, misinformation, and fake news, is prevalent. This distrust underscores the need for ensuring digital safety and providing resources to combat online threats. The vulnerability of many individuals to online scams and misinformation, due to limited technological experience, highlights the importance of partnering with trusted entities.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Coconino County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Individuals with disabilities encounter a variety of obstacles in accessing, adopting, and effectively using the internet. Technology, resources, services, and supports often fail to adequately address their specific needs. There is a pressing need for accessible devices and technologies, such as those equipped with voice output for the visually impaired and specialized features for the hearing impaired, to ensure these individuals can fully engage with digital resources.

Barriers for Rural Areas: Community members highlight digital literacy challenges. There is concern about how to protect rural citizens from online scams and other digital threats due to their lack of experience with technology.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Digital equity is not just about providing devices and internet access but also ensuring that individuals have the literacy and skills to use them. In Coconino County there is an emphasis on the need for human support as the community learns foundational and more advanced skills, begins accessing the internet, using apps, and learns to be safe online. Local colleges like Coconino Community College and Northern Arizona University will play a pivotal role in reaching and supporting the community.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: The challenges faced by aging individuals include operating cell phones, but it's unclear if they are smartphones with internet capabilities. The role of churches in disseminating information to older individuals should be highlighted, with many relying on printed materials and announcements.

Barriers for Individuals with a Language Barriers: Non-English speakers in Coconino County face challenges accessing information and services online, as most resources are

available only in English. This language barrier creates a significant disconnect that prevents members of the community from fully utilizing essential digital services. An example was shared of a grandmother who only speaks Spanish who relies on bilingual grandchildren to translate. This increasingly common occurrence will be important to address as programs to increase digital skills are developed.

Resources

Community Engagement and Collaboration

Coconino County is bolstered by a strong sense of community and collaboration. Key community organizations such as the Murdoch Center, Tynkertopia, Southside Community Association, and Lived Black Experience CommUnity, all play a significant role. These groups have the trust of the community, and along with others, are exploring community-based solutions like setting up digital inclusion centers and local support networks.

Public Private Partnership

Effective digital equity solutions in Coconino County will require significant investment and collaboration between private and public sectors. Local community organizations and educational institutions will be instrumental in providing the digital literacy, skill training, and workforce development the community needs. Programs such as "Digital Navigators," which are supported by community organizations, along with efforts to provide digital literacy training, demonstrate a strong commitment to closing the digital divide.

Local Knowledge and Expertise

The community's rich local knowledge and expertise are invaluable assets in tailoring digital solutions to the unique challenges of Coconino County. This local expertise is crucial, especially in addressing the needs of Tribal nations, rural communities, and marginalized groups.

Potential Government Initiatives and Higher Education Support

Discussions in Coconino County highlight the role of government funding and initiatives in promoting digital equity. Furthermore, institutions like Northern Arizona University contribute to these efforts through higher education resources and expertise. This collaborative approach between community organizations, government initiatives, and higher education institutions like Northern Arizona University is pivotal in developing comprehensive solutions for digital inclusivity in the county.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Connectivity and Infrastructure Challenges

Addressing the lack of infrastructure and the high cost of connectivity is a priority. Ensuring that every community member has access to reliable and fast internet includes expanding broadband coverage and prioritizing remote and underserved areas.

Address Language Barriers

Providing multilingual online resources and services is essential to overcoming language barriers and ensuring equitable access and participation. Bilingual support and translation services can bridge the language gap.

Build Partnerships with Tribal Governments that Respect their Sovereignty

Building partnerships with tribal governments to create solutions for the unique digital challenges faced by tribal communities is crucial. Understanding their specific needs and including tribal members in planning processes is essential for comprehensive digital equity.

Create Awareness and Advocacy Programs

Launching public awareness campaigns to highlight the significance of digital inclusion is vital. Advocacy efforts can amplify this message, drawing attention to the many local organizations ready to assist in these efforts. Launching campaigns to educate residents about the internet's benefits and safe online practices can foster digital adoption. These campaigns should be in multiple languages and should emphasize digital inclusion and collaborate with local organizations and businesses for wider reach.

Establish Community Digital Inclusion Centers

Establishing digital inclusion centers in both urban and rural areas of Coconino County can provide crucial access to the internet, digital training, and assistance. These centers should be welcoming spaces for learning, technology access, and support.

Help People Learn to be Safe Online

Ensuring the digital safety of residents, particularly in rural communities, is imperative. Education and resources to combat online threats and scams can protect the most vulnerable.

Implement Digital Navigator Programs

Implementing digital navigator programs within the local communities that are personalized to the unique needs of the covered population with community members become more comfortable and confident being online, using digital devices, accessing online services, and safely navigating the internet safely.

Provide the Community Accessible Digital Literacy and Skill Building

Developing targeted digital literacy programs that cater to the specific needs of groups like aging individuals, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers is important for digital inclusivity

Provide Accessible Devices

Ensuring the availability of affordable and accessible devices is crucial. These devices

should be user-friendly, compatible with assistive technologies, and tailored to meet the diverse needs of community members, including but not limited to aging individuals, veterans, and those with disabilities.

Provide Affordable Internet Options

Introducing subsidized or more affordable internet plans is key to expanding access in Coconino County, particularly among low-income households and underserved communities for whom cost is prohibitive. Collaborating with ISPs to develop plans that address financial limitations is essential as rising internet costs continue to exclude many from the digital economy.

Provide Support and Resources

Provide more resources and staffing for libraries to transform into community hubs for digital literacy training and internet access. Senior centers and libraries could also serve as venues for educational workshops to protect older citizens from digital scams by teaching them basic computer skills and internet navigation. Additionally, support the creation of small businesses that offer IT support to benefit the community, potentially funded by micro-grants

Secure Micro-grants and Government Funding

Securing additional funding in Coconino County from government entities is crucial. These funds should focus on infrastructure development, educational programs, and equitable resource distribution, especially to underserved areas.





Gila County



Gila County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Gila County, survey responses, though limited in number, indicate a significant issue with internet service satisfaction. They highlight a county-wide need for reliable and affordable internet options that surpass the limitations of existing data plans. The findings suggest that currently available internet services are often inconsistent and unreliable. A major concern is the limited competition among internet service providers that contributes to decreased service quality and increased costs for residents. Of particular note is the scarcity of high-speed internet options, specifically those offering speeds of 1 Gbps or faster. Although the number of survey responses is modest, the issues identified – such as service reliability, affordability, limited competition, and the need for higher-speed options – likely reflect broader sentiments within the Gila County community.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Gila County

Gila County, nestled in the heart of Arizona, is at a crossroads with digital equity. According to census data from 2022, Gila County has a population of 53,922 residents. The average annual household income is \$51,406, which falls below the national average, and nearly 17% of the population lives in poverty. Nearly 18% of county residents identify as American Indian, and over 19% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Residents over the age of 65 represent 30% of the county's population.⁵¹ Overall, the county is lacking basic internet infrastructure, and the need for digital equity support has never been more pressing. Gila County's digital landscape is a tapestry of contrasts. While some areas enjoy the benefits of modern connectivity, others are left in the shadows of the digital age. The ability to call 911, a service many take for granted, is a challenge in certain parts of the county. Stories of residents driving miles to find a signal to call for emergency services are not uncommon. Such gaps in essential services underscore the urgency of the situation.

⁵¹ From QuickFacts. Gila County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gila County, Arizona

Quotes from the County

"What I'm hearing more often than not is that people are booking their appointments six months down the line just because they don't want to see someone over telehealth. They don't believe they can get that help, they think that if it's done through a screen, it's not going to be as good as someone right there actually is doing their examination."

"If folks haven't been in that space at all, how do we bring folks into a space that's moving, whether we all like it or not with some level of comfort and guidance and ongoing skill offering and training offering. It's mandatory."

"So they don't have transportation down into the valley to their appointments. If some of those doctors could do telehealth right at the senior center, that might be a real offering."

Barriers in Gila County

Accessibility Barriers

Challenges related to physical accessibility in community centers and libraries are significant, particularly for people with disabilities. For example, the location of a library on a hill presents a notable barrier to individuals with mobility challenges. This situation highlights the need for more thoughtfully designed, accessible public spaces and digital spaces that are responsive to the needs of everyone.

Affordability Barriers

In Gila County, the high cost of internet access presents a substantial obstacle, particularly for residents from low-income households. For many, affording the necessary technology, such as computers, coupled with the expense of maintaining a stable internet connection, poses a significant financial challenge.

Digital Skills Barriers

A substantial number of community members, particularly aging adults, lack fundamental digital skills. This shortfall highlights the urgent need for educational initiatives and resources focused on improving digital literacy and competencies within the older population.

Infrastructure Barriers

Internet service in rural Gila County is either unreliable or unavailable. This situation underscores the clear need for improving the infrastructure vital for essential digital services and opportunities in education, healthcare, and the workforce.

Training and Support

Gila County faces a shortage of accessible digital literacy and safety programs. This gap is compounded by staffing challenges and a lack of qualified instructors or digital navigators. This gap makes it difficult for organizations to provide digital literacy training, leaving many without the skills needed to navigate the digital world effectively.

Trust and Comfort Barriers

People in the county, particularly aging individuals, are skeptical of new digital services such as telehealth. This skepticism underscores the importance of creating trust and comfort with digital technologies targeted education and outreach efforts. There is disagreement about what broadband and digital equity efforts should be prioritized and a concern that funding entities don't truly understand the needs of the community.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Gila County

Barriers for Rural Areas: In rural areas of Gila County, including Payson, Houston, and Whispering Pines, there are well-documented challenges in accessing emergency and

essential services digitally. Residents find the concept of telehealth potentially beneficial but remain skeptical due to persistent connectivity issues. Additionally, the logistics of providing services, particularly transportation and access to medical services, are major concerns in these rural communities.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: The transition to online learning during COVID-19 highlighted significant challenges, such as the necessity of reliable internet for remote learning, especially on days with inclement weather. In Gila County, libraries serve as primary resources for internet and device access. However, their effectiveness is limited by staffing shortages and restricted operating hours, hindering accessibility. Users often require substantial support, which current staffing levels may not adequately provide. Community and Senior Centers face similar challenges, with potential for educational and internet access services being limited by funding and staffing constraints.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Older residents in Gila County often struggle with accessing online information and adopting new technologies. While some are nearly tech-savvy, they require additional guidance for full adaptation. Transportation for medical services is a significant hurdle for this demographic. Although telehealth is proposed as a solution, there remains skepticism about its practicality and effectiveness among older residents.

Barriers for Individuals from a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group/Individuals with a Language Barrier: Gila County's diverse linguistic landscape includes speakers of English, Spanish, Navajo, and Apache. However, information about resources and services is predominantly provided in English, creating a barrier to access and participation for non-English speakers and members of racial or ethnic minority groups. This limitation underscores the need for multilingual resources and services to ensure equitable access for all community members.

Resources

Libraries and Colleges

Libraries offer free public Wi-Fi and lend out hotspots for three weeks at a time to those with a valid library card. They also provide computers for public use and a variety of support services. Local colleges provide internet access, computers, and skills training. The availability of multiple cellular providers in Gila County, including T-Mobile, Cricket, and Verizon, offers residents a variety of options for mobile connectivity. This diversity in providers is beneficial for the community, allowing for a range of choices that can cater to different needs and budgets.

Public Private Partnerships and Community Collaboration

Digital Payson is an example of a strategic initiative in Gila County that focuses on expanding digital infrastructure and literacy. The initiative encompasses efforts to enhance internet connectivity and provide digital education, serving as a vital resource for the

county's technological advancement

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Generational Differences

Acknowledging the generational digital divide in Gila County is crucial. Younger residents are more digitally adept, whereas older individuals may feel embarrassed to seek help. Establishing trust and communication channels that cater to different demographics is important.

Insist on Transparency and Communication

Leveraging transparent and effective communication channels, such as community websites and social media, is necessary to keep residents informed. These channels must be accessible to individuals with language barriers and those with disabilities.

Support Digital Navigators in the Community

Implementing local "Digital Navigators" could provide residents with tailored training and serve as reliable sources of information on new technologies. These navigators can also help identify gaps in knowledge and develop needs-based classes and workshops. Specialized navigators can support the needs of Veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, and people needing help with telehealth.

Support and Expand Community Centers, Churches, and Libraries

Senior and community centers have the potential to be vital contributors to community education and internet access. However, securing funding for programs and staffing is essential for realizing this potential. Churches, integral to the Gila County community, could act as pivotal centers for ongoing educational classes and training, capitalizing on their established congregational communities. Community Anchors like libraries should be leveraged as trusted venues for unbiased accessibility of digital information and education.

Use Community Events to Provide Information and Resources

Utilizing community events is an effective strategy to spread information and resources about internet access and digital literacy. Integrating existing community resources and trusted leaders can foster trust and enhance inclusivity.

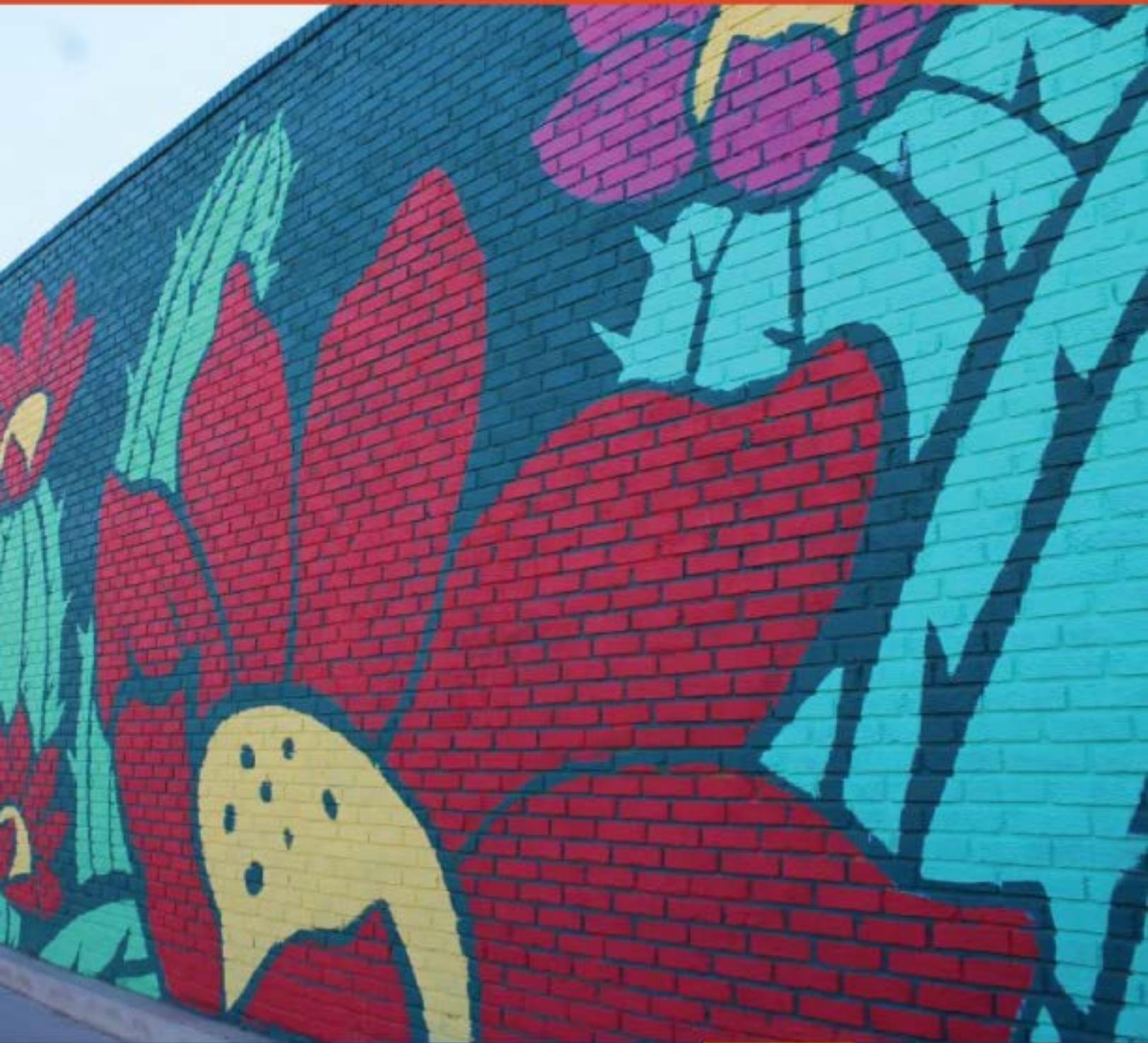
Use Community-Specific Language

All disseminated information should be presented in the language and vernacular familiar to the region's residents, ensuring accessibility and understanding.





Graham County



Graham County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

Residents of Graham County express a variety of concerns and frustrations, primarily centered around internet access and service quality. These issues underscore not only the challenges faced by the community but also highlight significant disparities in rural areas. At the core of these concerns is the need for more equitable, affordable, and reliable internet. The inability to access digital services is a fundamental problem, with some residents reporting a lack of digital phone cable infrastructure or reliance on outdated phone services. Bandwidth limitations are a frequent grievance. Bandwidth challenges also hinder access to essential online activities such as work and streaming.

The sense of urgency intensifies in rural regions, where internet services are often seen as disproportionately expensive and more likely affected by environmental factors like storms. The scarcity of provider options in these areas exacerbates reliability challenges. Economic concerns are prominent, with a clear need for affordable internet options for low-income individuals, highlighting the critical role of internet access in contemporary life.

Inequities in the distribution of technological infrastructure, particularly the availability of fiber-optic services, are notable. Such services are often concentrated in more affluent areas, raising questions about equitable service provision. Reliability is a major issue, with providers such as Sparklight identified for their unreliable services. The demand for more high-quality landline internet service providers further reflects the community's desire for dependable options. The rural-urban divide is a recurring theme, with rural residents feeling that their needs are often overshadowed by urban development priorities in terms of internet infrastructure. Lastly, there is a call for more transparent and consumer-friendly practices, including affordable unlimited usage plans and regulatory oversight to ensure that ISPs offer realistic connection speeds.

Quotes from the County

"It's an everyday thing where my internet is not working at all. I don't know how the schools and stuff do it where they don't have a constant use of internet."

"How do we benefit rural communities (in Graham County) with digital services without trying to turn them into big cities?"

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Graham County, Arizona

Graham County, located in southeastern Arizona, is a 4,621 square mile region known for its diverse geography. The county is characterized by a diverse landscape including portions of the Gila River Valley, the Gila Mountains, and the Coronado National Forest. This geographic diversity presents unique challenges to ubiquitous internet coverage.

According to census data, the population of Graham county in 2022 was nearly 39,000. It is notable that 14.5% of the county residents are over the age of 65, and persons under the age of 18 make up 26.8% of the county's population. Around 13% of the population identify as American Indian, and 33.5 % of the county residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. Income levels vary across the county. Some areas have relatively lower median household incomes, while others, particularly in and around the county seat, Safford, have slightly higher income levels. About 20% of county residents live in poverty. In 2022, the median household income was approximately \$57,000, which is below the national average. Economic activities include agriculture, mining, tourism, and government employment, with Eastern Arizona College also contributing to the local economy.⁵²

Barriers in Graham County

Access and Awareness

In Graham, the unavailability of the internet impacts the community's ability to access essential services and information. Unreliable internet is a persistent challenge. Areas with limited or no network access struggle to stay connected which limits the accessibility of essential online services and resources. The problem is compounded for those living in rural areas who are often unaware of available programs. Effective communication about programs and resources will be important to addressing gaps.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural perceptions and attitudes towards technology significantly influence internet engagement in Graham County. Socio-cultural factors contribute to a divide in how different groups interact with online resources. Particularly, aging individuals may be reluctant to use digital resources due to concerns about societal perceptions.

Digital Literacy Barriers

There is a noticeable digital literacy gap across generations in Graham County. Younger individuals lack the skills needed to critically evaluate online information, while older adults face a steeper learning curve and a reluctance to use new technologies.

Lack of Trust

A lack of local trust in new initiatives poses a challenge in Graham County. A lack of community support for new programs hinders participation, effectiveness, and acceptance. There is significant resistance to change and skepticism towards new technologies. This

⁵² From QuickFacts. Graham County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/grahamcountyarizona/IPE120222#IPE120222>

resistance, rooted in long-standing habits and preferences, poses a barrier to the adoption and implementation of technological advancements.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Graham County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Individuals with disabilities in Graham County encounter significant challenges in accessing essential services and participating in online programs. These challenges encompass physical accessibility to local facilities offering digital resources and a lack of specialized tools or interfaces designed for various disabilities. This situation restricts their engagement with online services and programs, underscoring the urgent need for more inclusive digital solutions.

Barriers for Rural Areas: In Graham County's rural areas, the inconsistency and unreliability of internet connectivity present major challenges. This limited access restricts residents' ability to reach essential information and online resources, critically impacting their online engagement with necessary services like medical, veterinary care, and educational opportunities.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Digital literacy gaps are prevalent across different age groups in the community. Older members often face challenges with basic digital tasks, while younger residents typically struggle with critically assessing online information.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: In Graham County, differing generational attitudes towards technology are evident. Older residents frequently hesitate to sign up for online resources, even when in need, due to fear of negative perceptions or access difficulties. Sociocultural factors contribute to this reluctance, with concerns about knowledge gaps and safety prevalent among older individuals. Tailoring the presentation and communication of digital resources to this demographic is vital to encourage their engagement and utilization.

Resources

Government Initiatives

Graham County's existing Community Resilience Plan and Public Safety Agency will be assets as the county advances digital access, online safety, as well as skill building and literacy initiatives.

Local Organizations

Local organizations, libraries, and educational institutions are essential resources for providing access to education and digital skills training. Some provide computers, trained staff, and opportunities to build digital skills.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Develop Sustainable Plans

Developing a sustainable, transparent local plan is important to ensure ongoing support and resources for regional digital equity and inclusion.

Ensure Resources are Available and Accessible

Ensuring that essential resources and services are available and accessible online is important, particularly for those with limited physical challenges. Addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities and individuals with a language barrier is key.

Encourage Community Engagement

Building local trust and engagement is critical. Strategies and initiatives must involve local individuals and be community-specific. Collaboration with local organizations, libraries, educational institutions, and service providers will create a supportive network for digital access.

Incorporate Inclusivity and Representation

Ensuring that the voices and perspectives of local community members are included in digital equity efforts is vital. This includes feedback from aging individuals, people with disabilities, veterans, racial minorities, and people facing language barriers. Materials should be accessible to those with disabilities and available in multiple languages. Approaches must address cultural attitudes towards technology and resonate with everyone.

Increase Communication with the Public

Effective communication strategies are essential to keeping residents informed about available resources and programs. It is important that information be communicated in ways that encourage participation and help to overcome stigmas associated with seeking assistance.

Invest in Infrastructure

Investing in infrastructure improvements, such as fiber-optic cables, is critical in Graham County. Investment should address access and reliability issues, particularly in rural areas, to ensure the internet is high-speed and reliable.

Provide Comprehensive Education and Training

Communities need comprehensive digital literacy education and training. Programs should meet the unique needs of the community and should equip individuals with the necessary skills to use the internet effectively, safely, and confidently.





Greenlee County



Greenlee County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Greenlee County, although the responses from residents are limited in number, they reveal significant concerns regarding internet access in rural areas. The feedback underscores the importance of reliable, high-speed internet for work, education, and healthcare. A notable aspect of this input is the highlighted need for fiber-optic internet services. Fiber is perceived as a more effective and cost-efficient alternative to traditional copper lines, particularly for facilitating remote work and efficient video conferencing, which are currently constrained in the region. There is an appeal to reinstating the "Tech Consultant" role at the local library. This role is seen by community members and library staff as crucial for providing residents with personalized educational training and support, thereby improving digital literacy.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Greenlee County

Greenlee County sits in the eastern part of Arizona and is the smallest county by population in Arizona. The county encompasses the eastern portion of the Coronado National Forest, the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, and the Blue Range Wilderness. Greenlee County's economy and livelihood is deeply connected to copper mining, agriculture, and ranching. In 2022, Greenlee County had a population of 9,302 according to Census data. Approximately 49% of the county's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, and around 27% of residents are under the age of 18. Income levels in Greenlee County vary widely across different areas. In 2022, the median household income in the county was approximately \$67,000, which is around the national average. However, income disparities exist between urban and rural communities within the county. 53

Quotes from the County

"Some of our older generation, we don't get them as often as maybe Clifton because a lot of you can't retire and stay here. Once you're done with your job, you're out. This is all private. We live in company housing. So if I lose my job or I retire, I have to go somewhere else and start all over (with digital support services)."

"We've offered in the past, real basic stuff... I've been surprised. Really surprised at how much, what I consider basic things people don't know how to do."

"We had to put up a thing because people wanted help with legal or banking and we can't do that. It's a privacy issue. So we had to say, I'm sorry, you can bring somebody with you to help you. But we can't do that. We're not supposed to know your passwords."

Barriers in Greenlee County

Access to Stable Housing and Internet Services

Extended housing waitlists reflect a concerning scarcity of stable housing, that in turn impacts the availability of consistent internet services. This issue particularly affects contractors and transient workers who often depend on temporary accommodations like "man camps," where internet access is not a given.

Access to Devices and Services

Residents frequently turn to public facilities like libraries for internet access and printing services, indicating a gap in personal device ownership and home internet service. This gap is more pronounced among lower-income residents, for whom the cost of devices and services is a significant barrier.

Community Engagement

Greenlee County's approach to digital equity involves actively engaging with the community to understand and address specific needs, particularly regarding privacy concerns. Educational campaigns and workshops tailored to these concerns could promote a more widespread use of online services.

Digital Literacy Training

There is an evident need for digital literacy training. Regular, structured training programs could significantly reduce the digital skills gap and benefit various demographics, including seniors and younger residents who lack the critical skills necessary to evaluate online content.

Infrastructure Barriers

Certain areas in Greenlee County, notably North and South Clifton, lack access to advanced digital infrastructure like fiber-optic internet, despite previous commitments. Addressing these infrastructure gaps is critical to addressing concerns related to internet connectivity and reliability.

Limited Public Services

There are capacity challenges related to the delivery of public services, such as those provided by libraries. Challenges include devices and extending Wi-Fi coverage will significantly improve digital access and meaningful participation.

Reliance on Public Equipment and Services

The reliance on public services for internet access, as observed with library Wi-Fi usage, highlights the need for better in-home digital resources for residents throughout the county.

Privacy Concerns

Privacy concerns, particularly among Greenlee's aging community, act as a barrier to embracing online services. Addressing these concerns through dedicated initiatives could foster trust and encourage greater digital participation.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Greenlee County

Barriers Individuals with a Disability: Services and support for individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities are limited in Greenlee. In addition to devices and accessories that address physical and cognitive limitations, people will need trained navigators or support services to make participation online safer and easier.

Barriers for Rural Areas: Geographical and logistical barriers make it challenging for people in the more rural areas to access essential services. Residents of Clifton face unique challenges related to internet access, challenges that are compounded by a declining economy, housing shortages, and high levels of household poverty.

Education & Literacy Barriers: There is limited access to digital literacy and skills training. Staffing and funding challenges at the libraries make it difficult for them to deliver programs at the scale needed. While high school graduation rates are high here, pathways to higher education are limited. To address the varying needs of the communities in this region, skills training that ranges from foundational to more advanced, are needed.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Aging individuals in Greenlee County face challenges that impact their ability to access and adopt the internet. In addition to physical challenges, stigmas towards technology hinder participation.

Barriers for Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups and people with a Language Barrier: A significant portion of the Greenlee population is Hispanic. Equity here requires services, resources, and support to be available in Spanish as well as English.

Resources

Community Connections

Most Greenlee County community members use their phones, laptops, or tablets to access the internet. Community members share information about internet resources through Facebook pages and among groups of people who already know each other. These channels and trusted community members should be included and leveraged to increase awareness and build trust as digital equity programs roll out.

Public Libraries

Libraries in Greenlee offer basic digital skills training. While these are not regularly offered

classes, they do help community members with varying levels of digital skill better participate. Libraries offer free printing services up to 10 pages. This service is particularly useful for those who don't have printers at home. Libraries also provide free Wi-Fi access to the community. When the library is closed, community members can access the Wi-Fi in the courtyard. The library staff assists community members with various tasks, from downloading photos to navigating websites. Librarians have boundaries set to ensure privacy, such as not assisting with online banking or legal matters. Reimplementation of a Tech Consultant at the local library

Senior Centers

Senior centers can provide digital skills training for aging individuals and can match peers or high schoolers to help with tech training.

Freeport-McMoran

The Freeport-McMoRan mine in Greenlee County is a key economic driver, providing substantial employment opportunities, community investments, and support for local businesses.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Encourage Partnership

Encouraging partnerships between senior and community centers, local schools, and businesses can create impactful programs. Tech training for seniors led by high school students could be helpful. Collaborations with service providers, local businesses, and community leaders are essential for the rejuvenation of towns and enhanced community life.

Expand Digital Infrastructure

There is a pressing need for better digital infrastructure, particularly in areas lacking high-speed internet. Engaging with service providers to extend fiber and other advanced services to rural areas ensures that these communities are not left behind.

Focus on a Thriving Economy

Fostering a thriving economy involves ensuring that every individual, including contractors and transient workers, has the opportunity to participate. Key to this is providing stable housing and consistent internet access, which are vital for attracting and retaining residents and businesses, thereby stimulating economic growth.

Focus on Public Safety

Ensuring digital safety is as important as physical safety. Addressing privacy concerns, particularly among older residents, through awareness campaigns, online safety workshops, and secure internet access points is vital for fostering trust and encouraging digital adoption.

Foster Resilience

Resilience in Greenlee County means adapting to and overcoming digital inclusion challenges. The community's proactive approach in identifying and addressing issues like infrastructure limitations and generational digital disparities is commendable. Collaborative initiatives, such as pairing youth with seniors for tech training, demonstrate innovative strategies to overcome these challenges.

Increase Accessibility and Access

Improving access to services provided by institutions like libraries, including increasing the availability of public-use devices and expanding Wi-Fi coverage, is crucial. The addition of Digital Navigators and adequately trained staff can address connectivity issues and meet the diverse needs of the community, including those with disabilities, language barriers, and the aging population.

Provide Regular Opportunities for the Community to Learn Digital Skills

Some residents lack even basic computer skills. The library's digital literacy training is a positive step. Regular, structured programs, potentially in partnership with schools or community centers, will help to ensure that all community members, regardless of age, become digitally proficient.





La Paz County



La Paz County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In La Paz County there persists a belief that the allocation of funds is biased toward large cities, leaving small towns with severely limited resources. La Paz has a small desert town, Quartzsite, that experiences seasonal population swelling taking the town to a population of a million and a half. While essential to the economy, the swelling makes it challenging for the region to meet the data and connectivity needs of its growing population. The town highlights the necessity for accurate representation beyond census numbers to address real challenges and emphasizes how population swells impact the quality of life, particularly during winter.

Limited internet access during winter months affects businesses and residents, overloading systems, and impacting cell phone service and broadband. The lack of reliable internet hampers education, business growth, and telehealth adoption, while also hindering the development of medical services. One participant questions why fiber infrastructure passing through the town isn't accessible and calls for a trunk system to expand access. The community's struggle for attention and support from larger political entities is evident. The challenges of attracting new businesses and residents without proper infrastructure, including reliable internet, are discussed, along with concerns about economic development and corporate interests.

Local leadership is recognized as helpful, but state and federal assistance is sought for specific issues. The community grapples with mixed reactions to technology and seeks creative solutions. Reliable communication in emergencies is stressed, and the impact of COVID-19 on the town's resilience is acknowledged. The importance of improving internet access for quality of life, remote work, and economic growth is highlighted, along with affordability concerns and potential government funding. The community's resilience and adaptability are commended, and collaboration between communities to access resources is proposed. Local voices and advocacy efforts are seen as crucial,

Quotes from the County

"It's 7 a.m. today and it works great. But by nine o'clock you're locked out. Maybe tomorrow you're fine all day. But then the next day you're doing a conference call and you're locked out again - we never know what will happen."

"The conditions we're living under are so stressful now to look at us, you wouldn't know any of us are stressed out but it's really difficult. If we were to see results occur in this town - 100 smiles would turn into a million smiles. Just attitudes would change."

Public Safety

"Life safety is key. So with groups that are trying to figure out dollar allocations, I think that one should be at the top of the list. I would say Quartzsite is probably unique to this problem, probably the most unique area in the country as far as the influx swell that happens here in winter months"

"So much is dependent on being able to attract people and to have a community worth coming to that has life safety taken seriously and it has health care taken seriously, medical, everything that people take for granted elsewhere, we're struggling to try to even get a level playing field."

along with the exploration of multiple funding sources. A survey for collecting community feedback and the concept of "braiding" funding sources are mentioned. Humor and camaraderie punctuate the discussion, recognizing community members' dedication to finding solutions.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in La Paz County

La Paz County is situated in the western part of Arizona, bordering the Colorado River to the west and California to the west and south. The county features a diverse landscape, encompassing desert terrain, the Colorado River, and portions of the Sonoran Desert. La Paz County, like many counties in Arizona, may be subject to specific financial considerations related to water management and conservation due to its location along the Colorado River.

La Paz County is the second smallest county in Arizona by population with 16,506 residents as of 2022. The population of the county tends to lean toward an older population, with nearly 42% of its population aged 65 or older. Over 17% of the population identifies as American Indian, while 27% is Hispanic or Latino. Income levels in La Paz County tend to fall below the national average. In 2021, the median household income in the county is approximately \$40,000.⁵³ While some areas benefit from tourism-related industries and retirees, residents in rural areas don't see the same benefits.

Barriers in La Paz County

Access and Infrastructure

The issue of access is twofold: First, physical infrastructure passes through local towns but is not accessible to the residents. This raises questions about why existing resources are not being utilized for the benefit of the local community. Internet and cell phone service are unreliable, especially in rural areas. Second, the seasonal influx of visitors strains the already limited internet resources, affecting permanent residents and businesses. This seasonal variation makes it difficult to maintain consistent service. The seasonal 'Swell' increases the population from 2,500 residents listed on the census to upwards of 750,000 temporary seasonal visitors, only registered with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Being Left Behind

In La Paz County there is a sense of resignation that even a 10-year plan to address connectivity is more of a "wish list" than a practical roadmap, adding to community stress and skepticism. These deeper insights reveal a community grappling with complex, interconnected challenges that go beyond just "getting online." The issues touch on social inequity, economic development, and overall quality of life. The lack of internet also hampers the community's growth prospects, affecting everything from education to emergency services.

Cost

Barriers associated with cost are not just about monthly fees but also includes the prohibi-

⁵³ From QuickFacts. La Paz County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lapazcountyarizona,coconinocountyarizona,apachecountyarizona,yavapaicountyarizona,US/PST045222>

tive upfront costs of equipment. These costs make it difficult for residents, particularly those from low-incomes, to even get started. These community members feel left out, especially when they can't even afford the initial installation costs.

Digital Literacy

There is a pervasive lack of comfort and digital skills across all demographics in La Paz. This skills gap is particularly impactful for members of covered populations.

Quality of Life and Medical Needs

The lack of reliable internet has a domino effect on the delivery of essential services like healthcare. Older residents, for example, can't access medical services that require a stable internet connection. This affects their ability to age gracefully and with dignity in their own community. The lack of internet also hampers the community's growth prospects, affecting everything from education to emergency services.

Reliable Internet

The inconsistency in service affects various aspects of life in the region. For businesses, unreliable internet means lost sales opportunities, as they can't process credit card transactions. The unreliability of the internet leaves students unable to complete schoolwork online. For residents, the service is so spotty that they can be locked out at different times, making it unreliable for work, essential service, education, or healthcare needs.

Trust/ Safety and Security Concerns

Free Wi-Fi spots are not secure, posing a risk to users throughout the region. The ongoing connectivity challenges have led to a stressful environment. Residents feel that their needs are not being addressed. They lack trust in the system and in the state agencies they feel are responsible for their systemic neglect.

Barriers for Covered Populations in La Paz County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: LaPaz County residents with disabilities face challenges accessing medical care. One participant mentioned the difficulty in obtaining Wi-Fi, which is essential for receiving medical exercises and blood work paperwork. The participant used to go to the senior center for Wi-Fi, but it lost its computer and Wi-Fi. Libraries were not considered an appropriate alternative for these needs. Support systems for people with disabilities are limited leaving many unable to access online spaces.

Barriers for Rural Areas: LaPaz County highlights the struggles of people in rural areas, particularly in accessing reliable internet service. Participants mentioned that they are resilient people who make do with what they have, but are reaching a point where they can't survive without better digital infrastructure. The community faces challenges with unreliable cell phone and internet service, affecting both residents and businesses. There is a sentiment that the state government doesn't fully understand the extent of the challenges faced in these communities.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: A significant number of homeschooled youth depend on the internet for their education, yet the limited accessibility and reliability of internet services, particularly during peak tourist seasons, pose challenges in completing schoolwork. Additionally, the community exhibits lower levels of digital literacy, prefers traditional methods of communication such as hard copy mail, and generally self-identifies as not being highly tech-savvy.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: The challenges faced by aging individuals center around accessing medical care. One participant mentioned that they have to drive to another location to get Wi-Fi for their medical needs and shared that they are not the only ones facing this issue. Some older residents have been moved out of the community by their families due to these challenges. The lack of reliable internet service makes it difficult for older individuals to age in place with grace and dignity.

Barriers for Individuals from a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Thriving in LaPaz County communities means it is inclusive, where every individual—even someone facing language barriers—has the right to the resources they need to participate fully in society.

Resources

Community Engagement

Community members are the region's greatest asset. They share information about internet resources through Facebook pages and among groups who know and trust each other.

Free Internet

Free internet is available at the libraries and at places like McDonald's. However, the free access is limited and not secure.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Affordability

One participant mentioned the example of Ashton, Oregon, where the entire town has free internet access. This is funded through taxes and has been successful in providing equitable internet access. For low-income families in La Paz, a solution that addresses barriers related to cost is essential.

Create a Scalable Plan

The plan should be scalable to accommodate the LaPaz County community's unique demographic shifts, such as the seasonal influx of a large number of people - this is unique to this county.

Develop and Grow Public-Private Partnerships

Leveraging relationships with multiple service providers to offer more affordable and reli-

able services is vital for LaPaz County.

Encourage Community Input and Support

Collaborate with community members and share information about available resources through platforms like Facebook. The community feels that state-level solutions often do not address their unique challenges. Tailored solutions informed by the local community are needed.

Focus on Local Rather Than State Level Solutions

The need for reliable internet for local businesses was highlighted, suggesting that improving internet access could also boost the local economy. The community feels that state-level solutions often do not address their unique challenges. Tailored, local solutions are needed.

Identify Better and More Sustainable Solutions

People do utilize free internet services available at the library and McDonald's. However, these are not optimal solutions and are often used by visitors rather than local residents.

Improve Digital Literacy Through Community Education and Training Programs

Limited internet access and digital literacy skills pose substantial obstacles to education, particularly impacting homeschooled students who struggle with completing homework and engaging in online learning due to unreliable internet. To make education accessible to all, it is crucial to overcome these barriers. Enhancing digital literacy through community education and training programs is key, and creating pathways to high-wage jobs and higher education will serve as catalysts for economic development.

Plan for Economic Development

Reliable internet is crucial for local businesses in LaPaz County, especially during the winter season when the county sees the most business activity. The lack of reliable internet affects the community's economic development. A separate plan should be created to address key needs of tribal communities.

Prioritize Public Safety and Build Trust

The lack of reliable internet service poses a significant risk to public safety. Emergency services are harder to access, and life safety issues become magnified when connectivity is unreliable. In a world increasingly reliant on digital communication, the absence of reliable internet can be life-threatening. It is important to ensure that free or public Wi-Fi services are secure and users are protected from potential risks. There is skepticism about promises from fiber companies that have not been fulfilled. LaPaz County wants a plan that is realistic where people are accountable.

Respect Community Resilience

Resilience in the face of adversity is a defining characteristic of LaPaz County. However, resilience should not mean making do with subpar services. The state needs to understand the unique challenges LaPaz County faces, from unreliable cell phone and internet service

to limited resources. The community is resilient and tries to "get by with what we have," but this is not a sustainable solution for the long term.

Share Resources and Information Widely

Sharing Information about available internet resources is often shared among community members through Facebook pages and among groups that already know each other. Utilizing community networks and social media to disseminate information about available resources and services.

Think About the Long-Term

The LaPaz County community is looking forward to a 10-year plan, which they hope will be more than just a "wish list" but a realistic roadmap for digital equity in their communities, locally.





Maricopa County



Maricopa County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Maricopa County, survey responses paint a multi-faceted landscape of concerns across the county including poor speed, unreliability, lack of access, and high costs. There is a collective call for more competition and an urgent response to the intersectional challenges faced in the broader community. Respondents complained of latency and bandwidth limitations during peak usage hours which they believe can be ameliorated by increased competition. There are distinct mentions of the challenges faced in underserved neighborhoods, where issues of slow speed, signal loss, and intermittent connectivity persist. These are considered symptomatic of larger systemic issues, including a lack of infrastructural investment in such communities.

Affordability emerges as a recurrent theme, with many respondents identifying the cost of internet services as a significant financial obstacle, particularly for low-income households. This issue is exacerbated by the limited number of service providers in certain areas, which respondents view as antithetical to competition and thus indirectly responsible for the perpetuation of high prices.

There is also a pronounced call for the implementation of targeted digital skills and literacy programs, particularly for aging adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and formerly incarcerated individuals who may face difficulties in effectively navigating the digital landscape. Meanwhile, concerns are raised over the state of existing infrastructure, with users frustrated by outdated technology and the inaccessibility of high-speed internet even in metropolitan areas.

Additionally, community members advocate for the establishment of more public internet access points, particularly in economically disadvantaged communities. This suggestion is seen in the context of a larger discourse on internet inequality and the digital divide, issues that disproportionately affect those in low-income households who are unable to afford reliable internet services.

Quotes from the County

"But of course, you're looking at places in the more rural areas that don't actually have access. Taking in consideration that people who don't know tech and want to learn tech are dealing with insecurity, possibly shame, and fear."

"Making sure that we understand that people aren't necessarily just being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn. But there's an emotional route to the way that they're acting or the way that they come at technology. They feel afraid or embarrassed."

"Trust is a big one. You can't expect people to just automatically feel comfortable working with someone. There has to be a system where they can build a relationship, build trust."

The comments touch upon community-specific needs that extend beyond traditional considerations of internet services. These include demands for enhanced security measures on social media platforms, pedestrian-friendly infrastructural improvements, and better access to public transportation. Maricopa County feedback reveals a complex set of challenges and aspirations and a complexity of issues, from basic service quality and affordability to broader socio-economic disparities, that require multifaceted solutions that engage both public and private stakeholders.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Maricopa County

Maricopa County, located in the central part of Arizona, is the state's most populous county and is home to the capital city, Phoenix. Maricopa County covers a vast area of approximately 9,200 square miles and boasts diverse geography. Its central location in Arizona makes it a hub for commerce, culture, and outdoor activities. Maricopa County's economy is dynamic, with a focus on technology and healthcare sectors. It hosts numerous corporate headquarters and has a robust small business community.

4.5 million people call Maricopa County home, with most of these residents living in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Residents over the age of 65 make up 16% of the county's population, and over 30% of the county's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. African Americans make up nearly 7% of the population, and around 5% of the residents identify as Asian American. Maricopa County is the economic engine of Arizona, with a diverse economy that includes finance, healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and tourism. In 2022, the median household income in the county was around \$73,000, reflecting its position as the state's economic center.⁵⁴ However, income disparities exist, with variations between urban and rural areas where incomes are markedly lower.

Barriers in Maricopa County

Access and Affordability

A significant gap in internet access exists in Maricopa County, particularly in low-income, rural and tribal areas, where proper infrastructure is lacking and the cost of internet services is prohibitively high. Reliability and speed concerns are reported throughout the county.

Awareness

Maricopa County residents report limited awareness of available resources, services, and programs designed to address access, adoption and skill barriers. This lack of awareness presents a significant barrier to participation.

⁵⁴ From QuickFacts. Maricopa County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/maricopacountyarizona,US,greenleecountyarizona/IPE120222>

Education and Digital Literacy

Community members report lacking the skills needed to fully and safely participate online. This deficiency in digital skill spans from basic computer use to recognizing and avoiding online risks. For those in marginalized group skills gaps are compounded by other barriers. Without digital skills people are unable to access education, jobs, telemedicine, and services.

Trust and Safety

Community members report distrust of the government and government run programs. There is also a lack of trust in internet service providers, who are perceived to have overstated their coverage in the county. Community members report concerns about online privacy and security and want help keeping themselves and their families safe. Trust is a recurring theme; building it is essential for community engagement, particularly in marginalized communities and on tribal lands

Language Barriers

Language barriers, particularly in Hispanic communities, hinder digital inclusivity and participation. The lack of digital skills among aging adults further isolates them, making it difficult to access essential services or connect with their community.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Maricopa County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities in Maricopa County: Individuals with disabilities encounter difficulties in accessing online services, resources, and medical care, especially those from low-income households or who are veterans. The lack of affordable, reliable Wi-Fi further exacerbates these challenges, hindering their ability to live with grace and dignity.

Barriers for Rural Areas: Rural regions of Maricopa County, including tribal lands, face significant challenges due to unreliable and unaffordable internet connectivity. This limits access to critical services, educational opportunities, emergency assistance, and hinders economic growth. Capacity challenges in rural areas make it difficult to deliver navigator services or provide ongoing support.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: In Maricopa County, foundational educational programs are essential, not only for basic digital literacy but also as a stepping stone to more advanced workforce skills. These programs should be structured to progressively develop competencies that align with current and future job market demands, ensuring that individuals are well-equipped for the digital aspects of various career paths. Key local institutions like nonprofits and libraries as well as Maricopa County Colleges and Arizona State University play a vital role in designing and delivering these programs. Programs should be accessible, should be delivered at a pace that meets the needs of the learner, and should be available in multiple languages.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Aging individuals face multiple challenges in adapting to digital technology, including discomfort with online environments, safety concerns, and keeping pace with rapid technological advancements. Many have internet access but lack the skills for effective usage. Older adults often depend on younger family members for online tasks and may require assistance for tasks like filling out online applications. Health conditions can further impact their technology use. The need for personal connections, a comfortable learning pace, trust, and peer teaching was emphasized to engage older adults effectively.

Barriers for Veterans: Veterans in Maricopa County face unique challenges in digital literacy and transitioning to civilian digital environments. Addressing these barriers requires targeted digital literacy programs and advanced skills training. Collaboration with local educational institutions and veteran organizations is key to providing relevant support and facilitating veterans' access to high-wage job opportunities. Ensuring the availability of veteran-specific resources and technology access is essential for their successful integration into a digital-centric economy.

Barriers for Incarcerated Individuals: While incarcerated, individuals often have restricted or no access to current technology and the internet. This gap can leave them significantly behind in terms of digital literacy and skills. Upon reentry, justice-impacted individuals may lack basic digital skills that are now considered essential for everyday tasks, such as searching for information online, digital communication, and applying for jobs and accessing services. Most jobs and educational opportunities require at least basic computer skills. The lack of these skills can be a major barrier to employment and education.

Barriers for Individuals from Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups: Economic constraints and a lack of resources pose barriers for individuals from racial and ethnic minority communities. These barriers impact access to the internet, technology, digital skills, and critical resources. For refugee communities, challenges extend to a lack of digital literacy, affecting both individuals and families. There is a need for culturally relevant communication and education strategies and support that is tailored and reflective of the community. Local educational institutions can play a pivotal role in providing these services.

Barriers for Individuals with a Language Barrier: Language barriers, particularly in Hispanic communities, create significant obstacles accessing and utilizing digital resources. Internet-based resources and essential services are primarily available only in English. This restricts non-English speakers from effectively utilizing critical services. Additionally, programs and services often fail to accommodate the diverse values, norms, and communication styles of different cultural groups. This lack of inclusivity can discourage engagement and limit the effectiveness of online resources for those from varied cultural backgrounds.

Resources

Local government initiatives in Maricopa County focus on bridging the digital divide by offering resources, subsidies, or grants for internet access and devices to low-income residents and specific populations. Programs offered by Affordable Housing have been particularly impactful. By aligning capacity building efforts with existing projects, these initiatives can extend their reach and accelerate their impact.

Libraries, Nonprofits, and Community Centers

Some community centers, libraries, and nonprofits in Maricopa County offer digital literacy and skills training and provide access to technology. These organizations often provide targeted support that caters to the unique needs of individuals with a disability, veterans, aging individuals, minorities, incarcerated individuals and people with a language barrier. Where possible, capacity building should be braided with existing programs leveraging models with proven efficacy and impact.

Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

Some ISPs provide affordable or subsidized internet plans for low-income households. Efforts to increase awareness of these plans should include outreach campaigns and support for enrollment, assisted by local digital navigator groups. Outreach should be in the language of the local community and should address all accessibility challenges for people with disabilities.

Schools and Educational Institutions

Schools and higher education institutions provide internet access, devices, learning opportunities, and a wide range of support for students. Arizona State University and the Maricopa Colleges provide accessible digital and financial literacy and skill-building programs, along with pathways to certificates, credentials, and degrees. They have deep experience creating and providing education to covered populations. Engaging with these institutions will help the state to meet its education and workforce objectives and will significantly contribute to the economic mobility of covered populations in the region.

Local Organizations and Online Resources

There are various Maricopa County organizations that provide digital literacy, skill-building and workforce training programs for covered populations. Programs are available in person, online, and in hybrid formats.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Bridge Language, Cultural, and Accessibility Barriers

Provide training, classes, and support services in culturally sensitive ways, multiple languages, and accessible formats. Develop and support education programs that are relevant and accessible, and that reflect the demographics of Maricopa County's diverse communities.

Engage Aging Individuals and People with Disabilities as Educators to Help Design Solutions

Focus on digital literacy programs for aging individuals and individuals with disabilities. Encourage their involvement as learners and potentially as educators to create a more comfortable and relatable learning environment.

Engage Diverse Leaders to Design Programs that Reflect the Community

Actively involve community members, including those with disabilities, in teaching, supporting, and planning digital equity initiatives to ensure they are tailored to the specific needs and challenges of all groups within Maricopa County.

Evaluate Progress and Adapt to the Evolving Needs of of the Community

Continuously assess the gaps in Maricopa County and adapt strategies to address evolving needs and challenges.

Foster Resilience

Invest in expanding internet access in high-need urban, rural, and tribal areas in Maricopa County to bolster resilience in these communities. Recognize that internet connectivity is essential for accessing critical services, educational opportunities, and emergency assistance, particularly in times of adversity.

Implement Accessible Digital Literacy and Skill Building Programs:

Implement comprehensive digital literacy and skill building programs, focusing on covered populations and the unique challenges they face safely and effectively engaging online. Programs should be adaptive and inclusive, promoting economic inclusivity and addressing the changing landscape of technology. K-12 schools should prioritize integrating digital literacy into their curriculum. Digital literacy and skill-building programs should accommodate diverse learning styles, preferences, and accessibility needs. Resources should be available in various formats and languages to support individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Invest in Infrastructure

Prioritize the development of reliable, affordable, and accessible internet infrastructure, with a special focus on rural, underserved areas, and accessibility for people with disabilities. A recent investment in broadband and digital equity can serve as the catalyst for connecting the rest of the region, including residents in rural parts of the county and those in high-need urban areas.

Prioritize Trust, Safety, and Security

Develop accessible and user-friendly online resources for community members to access public services and emergency assistance. Ensure that digital accessibility is a priority in public safety initiatives. Build trust through personal connections and relationships by engaging with community members in ways that respect their emotional barriers and fos-

ters a sense of belonging. Ensure programs designed to help people be safe online are available and accessible. Hiring and training individuals from local communities to become digital navigators would help to ensure the needs of the community are met and would help to build trust.

Support Community Engagement

Involve community members in planning and implementation to ensure that initiatives are tailored to the specific needs of Maricopa County. Engaging individuals from within the community to teach and support their peers can be particularly effective. Involve community in the development of content and resources to ensure they resonate with the community prior to deployment. Collaborate with local organizations, governments, and businesses in Maricopa County to collectively address the gaps and develop comprehensive solutions, together.

Tailor Support to Vulnerable Groups

Create targeted support programs for the specific needs and challenges of covered populations, including veterans, incarcerated individuals, aging individuals, people with a disability, and members of a racial or ethnic minority group. Resources and materials must be accessible and user-friendly for individuals with varying levels of skill and ability. Hispanic communities often show reluctance to embrace new digital skills leading to a reliance on younger family members for digital assistance. Engaging local community members in educational roles can provide more culturally attuned and effective training.





Mohave County



Mohave County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Mohave County, a pervasive issue mentioned by users is the limited availability of internet service providers. The absence of choices often leads to monopolistic or duopolistic scenarios, resulting in high costs and subpar services. Users express discontent with unreliable internet services that frequently suffer outages and disruptions, adversely affecting the ability to work, study, or access crucial information.

The disparity in internet access between urban and rural areas is a recurrent theme. Rural users highlight the challenges associated with poor or nonexistent high-speed internet signals. This lack of access is not just an inconvenience; it's a barrier to safety and education, issues that have been exacerbated by the demands of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Affordability is another significant concern. High costs strain household budgets, and there is a strong sentiment that the internet should be considered a utility, subject to regulation, which would either make it free or more affordable. This idea is particularly salient in a society where internet access is increasingly viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury.

Respondents voice frustration and express a need for competitive pricing and diverse plans, indicating a demand for options tailored to meet individual needs and usage. The call for competitive pricing, improved service quality and speed, is particularly profound in rural areas where users often contend with slower speeds and frequent disruptions. The community also voiced a desire for financial credits for service outages, similar to what is sometimes offered for electricity outages. Users feel that paying for a service that is not consistently available is unfair.

Quotes from the County

"You get just a tiny bit (of wifi access) outside of that incorporated area it's zero (access). You know, you get, four or five miles away from town and the service available to you doesn't exist."

"Where I live for 50 bucks a month, you get five megs and it's actually gotten worse."

"They (students) don't know how to use a computer. They can use a smartphone. But when it comes to, like, where do I find my downloaded file or how do I upload my assignment, or how to turn it on, they don't know how to do that."

"Local bars with internet are extremely common in Mohave rural communities."

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Mohave County

Mohave County, located in northwestern Arizona, is the fifth largest county in Arizona by population. Mohave County encompasses a vast and diverse landscape, including portions of the Mojave Desert, the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, and the Colorado River.

The population of Mohave County is overwhelmingly white with 75% of residents identifying in this category. Around 18% are Hispanic or Latino, and 3% identifying as American Indian. Income levels in Mohave County can vary across the region. While some areas may have lower median household incomes, others, especially in more urban areas like Kingman and Lake Havasu City, have higher income levels. In 2022, the median household income in the county was approximately \$49,738, which is significantly lower than the national average.⁵⁵

Barriers in Mohave County

Access and Infrastructure

Mohave County communities lack reliable internet infrastructure. People living just a few miles outside of town centers often have no service at all. Libraries and community centers, traditionally fallback options for internet access, are struggling to provide services due to poor connectivity.

Affordability

The cost of internet service is a significant barrier for many households, particularly for those that are low-income. In some cases, people report paying well over \$100 per month for limited and unreliable service.

Digital Literacy and Skills

There is a notable gap in digital literacy and technology skill among aging individuals. Some tradeskill workers report having never used a computer. This lack of skills makes it difficult to navigate the digital world, even for basic tasks. People report having trouble accessing workforce development programs or getting tax help because they are unable to navigate online systems.

Gaps in Internet and Device Access and Use

Some students at Mohave Community College have either a laptop but no home internet or home internet but no computer. They need both to make it work.

Limited Capacity for DSL

In Mohave County, all available DSL capacity is sold out, forcing people to rely on libraries for internet access.

⁵⁵ From QuickFacts. Mohave County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/mohavecountyarizona,US/IPE120222>

Quality of Cellular Service

In some areas of Mohave County, the cellular service is 'terrible,' and the primary internet service provider is out of state.

Resistance to Technology

There are individuals in Mohave County who are resistant to using technology, either due to fear or a sense of cultural pride. While email has been available for decades, some see it as a new concept and are hesitant to use it.

Transportation Issues

Lack of public transportation makes it difficult for people to access internet centers like libraries or VFWs.

Trust and Reliability

There is a lack of trust in service providers, particularly in rural areas of the County, where providers have overstated their capabilities. Accurate surveying of internet speeds is needed to address this issue.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Mohave County

Barriers for Rural Areas: Residents in Mohave County struggle with unreliable internet access. Some residents in outlying areas go to libraries to use the internet because they can't get reliable service at home. Inconsistent and spotty coverage creates the need for accurate speed testing.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Even young students in Mohave County, often considered digital natives, lack the skills needed to use a computer effectively. They can use smartphones but struggle with tasks like finding downloaded files or uploading assignments.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Older individuals in Mohave County struggle with economic challenges. Some retirees, especially those on a fixed income, have never used a computer and expect libraries to train them. Older individuals face challenges in adapting to technology and asking for help.

Barriers for Individuals who are members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Many non-English speaking residents in Mohave County struggle to understand and navigate digital platforms without language assistance.

Resources

Internet Access

Mohave County libraries and educational institutions like Mohave Community College provide internet access. Libraries provide a variety of resources including help for people

taking online classes and exams, printing, and faxing. However, it is challenging to provide those services with unreliable internet.

Subsidy Programs

During the pandemic, some subsidy programs were introduced that repurpose E-Rate money. For example, people who qualify for Medicaid can get internet for around \$15 a month instead of \$50.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Affordability and Availability

Advocate for an inclusive economy that is accessible to all. Address the high costs of internet services, especially in Mohave County rural areas with limited and expensive options. Encourage competition among service providers to lower costs and improve service quality. The cost of internet service should be comparable for everyone in Mohave County, regardless of where they live. For example, someone living in a rural area should not have to pay more for lesser service. Internet service should be available even in rural or remote areas of Mohave County. The lack of service in such areas was highlighted as a significant issue.

Focus on Connectivity and Infrastructure

Prioritize investments in improving Mohave County's digital infrastructure. Focus on enhancing both the "last mile" connectivity to homes and the "middle mile" connecting ISPs to the broader internet in Mohave County. Conduct accurate surveys of internet speeds, especially in rural Mohave County areas, to guide infrastructure improvements.

Foster Resilience and Develop Strategies to Ensure Communities Have Reliable Internet Access

Recognize the importance of digital inclusion in Mohave County's ability to recover from adversities. Develop strategies to ensure communities have reliable internet access and can adapt to challenges like transiting to remote work or online schooling during crises. Focus on building digital resilience through infrastructure that can adapt to changing circumstances.

Invest in Telehealth

Invest in improving internet access to support healthcare delivery, especially telehealth services. Address areas, particularly rural areas, that lack access to telehealth due to poor or no internet connectivity.

Prioritize Education for Everyone

Recognize education as a fundamental right and address the digital barriers faced by students in the region. Enhance the digital infrastructure of community centers and libraries to ensure they can provide reliable internet services. Implement programs to equip students with the necessary digital skills and ensure they have access to both computers

and the internet. Prioritize initiatives that bridge the digital divide, ensuring education is accessible regardless of socio-economic status or location throughout Mohave County.

Prioritize Public Safety

Understand the implications of digital equity on public safety and emergency response services in Mohave County. Emphasize that robust and reliable connectivity is a critical public safety issue.

Remember That Internet is Not a Luxury

The opinion that home internet access is a luxury needs to change. It should be considered a necessity, much like electricity, especially for activities like education, access to vital services, and job interviews, which are increasingly being conducted online.

Seek Federal Funding to Help with Infrastructure Cost

Government funding could be used to infuse money into local companies to mitigate the risk of building expensive infrastructure and support digital navigation.





Navajo County



Navajo County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Navajo County, there is a strong community-driven demand for improvements in the reliability, affordability, and accessibility of the internet. These improvements are crucial not only for everyday life but are necessary for programs to effectively address the unique needs of the population.

Concern about the limited selection of internet service providers is notable. This scarcity, similar to what's seen in other counties, results in a lack of competitive pressure, which often leads to increased prices and compromised service quality. This problem is further exacerbated by the reported reliability issues with current internet services, which impact critical areas like work, education, and healthcare. The issue of affordability is also a repeated concern. The high cost of internet services remains a major obstacle for many families and individuals, necessitating immediate and focused attention.

There is distinct concern regarding populations with specific sensitivities, particularly those with electrical hypersensitivity (EHS) or environmental sensitivities. Public feedback indicates a need for wired internet connections to meet the particular needs of this group. Addressing such specific requirements highlights the criticality of diverse and inclusive internet access options.

Tourism presents a unique challenge that isn't commonly seen in other counties. It acts as a double-edged sword: while beneficial for the local economy, it also overburdens the existing internet infrastructure. This results in decreased service quality during peak tourist seasons, which is problematic for both visitors and residents.

Improving infrastructure is seen as a key solution to these challenges. Investments in expanding cellular towers and laying fiber optic lines are believed to enhance service quality and availability. This is particularly vital for people using the internet for educational purposes, and in low-income areas. The

Quotes from the County

"The internet's important to the students, so we've been looking at the affordable connectivity grant from the federal government. And unfortunately, some of the places that offer internet to our more rural places are not on the plan. And I don't know if it's their choice. The federal government's choice, whose choice. But, I mean, if you don't have hard wire internet in the area, you have to go satellite and, because you don't have cell service out there, it's tough."

"There's a lack of internet access, it's just astounding. Even not so much from an education standpoint, but just, you know, getting access to the internet for business using Google Maps, knowing when things are open, I mean, there's just no internet here. I mean, it's insane."

concept of establishing community access points for free or public Wi-Fi is highly favored. These access points could help those who can't afford home internet access and provide connectivity for county visitors.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Navajo County

Navajo County is situated in the northeastern part of the state. It shares its borders with New Mexico and Utah. The county is known for its significant Native American population, primarily consisting of members of the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe. These indigenous communities have a strong cultural presence in the county and contribute to its rich cultural diversity and heritage. Navajo County encompasses a diverse landscape, including portions of the Navajo Nation Reservation.

In 2022, Navajo County had a population of 108,650 residents. Around 20% of the population are aged 65 or older, and 25% are under the age of 18. Nearly 44% of the population identify as American Indian, and 12% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Income levels vary significantly among its residents. While some areas benefit from economic activities like tourism and agriculture, rural parts of the county have lower incomes. In 2021, the median household income in the county was approximately \$46,000, which falls below the national average.⁵⁶

The diversity of the Navajo community is among its greatest assets.

Barriers in Navajo County

Access and Use

There is a notable lack of infrastructure and internet availability in Navajo County that prohibits many residents from getting internet service in their homes and businesses. The impact on education, health, and the economy is profound. In rural areas and on tribal lands the impact is even more pronounced. Some communities, like Heritage and Pioneer (traditional homelands), are resistant to adopting internet technologies. Even in areas where the internet service is available, such as libraries, the service is often spotty and unreliable. The internet service market in the county is dominated by a single provider, resulting in a lack of competition and choice for residents. This monopoly leads to higher prices and less incentive for the provider to improve services.

Affordability Challenges

The cost of broadband for the entire county is prohibitively high. For residents, particularly those in low-income areas and on tribal lands, high costs of service pose a barrier to access and adoption. Even with grants, some people may not be able to afford to connect. Additionally, Navajo County is home to a significant number of single-income families. For these families, every penny counts, and any additional costs, such as taxes for infrastructure, are challenging.

⁵⁶ From QuickFacts. Navajo County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/navajocountyarizona,US/IPE120222>

Cultural Considerations

Each Tribal nation has unique beliefs and attitudes towards the internet and it is important that those beliefs are honored. Cultural sensitivity and respect for sovereignty will be important as programs to increase access advance.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Navajo County

Barriers for Rural Areas: Conversations with residents highlighted the challenges faced in rural parts of the county. These challenges include a lack of accessible services, difficulties in obtaining building permits, and limited internet connectivity. Some people in rural Navajo County have to drive for hours to access basic services, including the internet.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: The importance of internet access for education, especially for remote learning, is highlighted by community members. Libraries provide internet hotspots that are often used for education but they struggle with getting the hotspots returned. There is a need for computer classes as well as skill-building. To overcome barriers related to trust, community groups could play the role of digital navigator- educating their community about the benefits and uses of the internet.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Navajo County has an aging adult population struggling to adapt to the use of digital technologies. Offering community learning classes could help aging individuals understand how to work with digital devices and how to be safe online.

Barriers for Individuals from a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Insights were provided into the unique challenges faced by the Navajo Nation including communication barriers, challenges with water rights and potential future challenges related to internet access.

Resources

Libraries and Higher Education

Libraries provide digital literacy programs and support for members of the community. Universities provide "success coaches" that help students navigate online learning and digital environments.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Collaborate and Expand Services

One idea is to collaborate with local law enforcement, libraries, and other institutions to share benefits and resources. Support and expand educational programs and library ser-

vices that can serve as community hubs for digital literacy training. Collaborate with local law enforcement, libraries, and other institutions to share benefits and resources.

Create Additional Income-Based Programs

There is a call for more income-based programs to make internet access affordable for everyone, beyond just those who qualify for specific grants.

Develop Local-Level Initiatives

There is a suggestion that the local municipalities should take charge of internet infrastructure, including satellites and towers, to ensure equal access to everyone in the county.

Educate Everyone

Students in rural areas lack the internet access necessary for remote learning, putting them at a disadvantage. Schools and libraries can serve as community hubs for digital access, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their age or background, has the opportunity for lifelong learning.

Encourage Competition Among Providers

A thriving economy is an inclusive economy. However, the high costs associated with improving internet speeds can be a significant barrier for small municipalities. Public-private partnerships could be a solution, encouraging competition among providers and driving down prices, thus making it more affordable for businesses and residents alike.

Foster Resilience In The Community

Challenges, such as natural disasters and economic downturns, are combated by strong community networks. Digital tools can facilitate these networks, but only if communities have the infrastructure to support them. In Navajo County, tax measures and community investments are often barriers to building this necessary infrastructure.

Fund Programs

There are plans to conduct digital literacy programs in libraries and educational institutions in Navajo County. These programs could be funded by grants that cover full-time and part-time personnel. Grants and funding need to be expanded to meet the needs of the population in Navajo County. Current grants are not enough to cover a full-time person / part-time person for two years to work on digital literacy.

Invest in Infrastructure

The lack of robust internet infrastructure in rural Navajo County areas and reservations, such as the Navajo Nation, is a glaring issue. Investment in infrastructure should be a priority, not just for the sake of connectivity but as a means to improve all other areas of life, from education to public safety to economic development.

Protect the Safety of the Community

Educate community members about internet safety, passwords, and avoiding scams. This is particularly crucial for vulnerable populations like aging individuals who may not be fully digitally literate.





Pima County



Pima County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Pima County, there is a clear call for improved competition among Internet Service Providers (ISPs), with residents voicing frustration over the limited choices that lead to high costs and poor service quality. Additionally, commercial activities by ISPs are perceived as negatively affecting internet speed.

While some residents express gratitude for existing digital resources, there's also a notable lack of awareness about programs working to bridge the digital divide. Affordability is a recurring theme, with particular attention paid to the needs of individuals with limited resources. Several respondents appreciate programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program but suggest that eligibility could be more inclusive.

Support for vulnerable populations and increased digital literacy efforts are also emphasized. Users acknowledge that those who are digitally savvy have a responsibility to help others who aren't as equipped. The need for internet reliability extends beyond convenience, impacting essential services like education, jobs, and healthcare.

Issues of online privacy and security are also on the radar, with residents showing concern especially for families. Positive community benefits from digital tools, like the use of Zoom during the pandemic, are acknowledged. However, there's a desire for more education on safely using digital payment platforms.

There's a strong call for focused efforts in underserved areas, including Native Nations and economically disadvantaged communities. Residents appreciate local ISPs but believe financial assistance programs could make these services more accessible. Overall, there is a consensus on the need for governmental intervention to ensure affordable or even free internet access, underlining its role as an essential utility.

Finally, there's a palpable willingness among some residents to assist in bridging the digital divide, emphasizing that collective efforts are crucial for meaningful progress.

Quotes from the County

"If you choose to live in rural communities, you shouldn't be punished for it because you can't get online. If you rely on the internet, it's like relying on electricity and water. If you move there without knowing there's no internet, that's not ideal for anyone."

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Pima County, Arizona

Pima County is situated in southern Arizona where it shares a border with Mexico. Tucson, the largest city, serves as a cultural and educational center for the county. Tucson is also home to the University of Arizona, which enrolled over 51,000 students in 2022. Pima is the second largest county in Arizona with a population of 1,057,597 in 2022. Around 20% of Pima residents are aged 65 or older, and just under 20% are aged 18 or younger. Just over 4% of the population identify as American Indian, and the county is home to the Tohono O'odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe. Nearly 39% of Pima County residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, and around 50% of the population is white. In 2021, the median household income in the county was around \$59,000. ⁵⁷

In the Pima County community, as in many others, disparities in internet access and use persist. Pima County requires a bridge to cross the digital divide and ensure that all Pima County community members can reap the benefits of a connected world. Digital equity is a concern in Pima County, with efforts aimed at bridging the digital divide among its residents. Some individuals and communities may face challenges related to limited internet access, hindering their ability to access education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Initiatives to address these disparities often involve improving broadband infrastructure and promoting digital literacy programs.

Barriers in Pima County

Access Disparity

A significant gap in internet access exists in Pima County, particularly in low-income, rural and tribal areas, where proper infrastructure is lacking and the cost of services is prohibitively high.

Awareness Barriers

There is a lack of awareness about available resources, services, and programs to overcome digital barriers, hindering individuals from seeking help and support.

Digital Literacy Barriers

Pima County faces a digital literacy and skills gap. The gap is particularly evident among aging individuals, people in rural parts of the county, and among people with a language barrier.

Language and Cultural Barriers

Language barriers pose barriers for non-English speakers, making it challenging to access information and services that are not available in their native language. A culturally centered approach is needed to address this gap.

⁵⁷ From QuickFacts. Pima County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/pimacountyarizona/LND110210>

Infrastructure & Cost Barriers

The existing internet infrastructure in Pima County is insufficient to provide access to all residents, and the cost of internet service is prohibitively high..

Predatory Marketing

Concerns exist about predatory marketing schemes for internet services in Pima County, potentially taking advantage of covered populations.

Quality and Equity Barriers

Rural areas of Pima County receive lower-quality technology compared to more affluent areas, resulting in a technology quality gap. Ensuring equitable access to quality technology is crucial.

Reliability Issues

Internet services in rural Pima County areas often suffer from unreliability and spotty connectivity, impacting the consistent use of online tools and resources.

Transportation Barriers

The distance to public facilities with internet access, such as libraries, poses a transportation barrier, particularly for those with limited access to affordable transportation.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Pima County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Individuals with disabilities face a host of barriers including concerns about safety and security, a lack of access to accessible devices, and cost barriers for devices and internet services.

Barriers for Rural Areas: Rural parts of Pima County are among the most affected by the lack of internet access. The infrastructure is not there, and the cost is high. Libraries do provide some access, but their hours are limited. Relying on public services like Pima County libraries for internet access is not always feasible due to infrastructure limitations in rural areas. Rural Pima County communities are described as being hard-hit by the lack of internet access. The cost of building infrastructure in these areas is high and the nearest neighbor could be 10 miles away in a highly isolated community, so traditional approaches to internet service do not always work. Residents in rural Pima County often depend on community members with internet access to assist with tasks such as job applications, schoolwork, and accessing social services.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Many people, including those with low literacy levels, rely on public services like libraries, nonprofits, and education institutions. There is a need for digital literacy as part of a broader ecosystem that includes access, connectivity, and equipment. Training is needed to help people learn to be safe online including learning to interpret information, to be aware of cybersecurity risks. For young people who are often

assumed to be digital natives, safety training is particularly important. In Pima County, those without regular internet access are challenged in finding a job, particularly when the job hiring offices are not local to rural Pima County areas.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Pima County's aging residents have barriers related to online safety and security. They worry about and are more vulnerable to scams like phishing and catfishing and worry that their social security checks or pension checks will be stolen. Additionally, older people often find new technology more challenging and may lack the digital skills needed to fully participate in the digital world.

Barriers for Individuals who are members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Language barriers in Pima County affect teachers who often have to serve as educators for both students and their parents, especially when the students are first-generation or non-English speakers. Pima County refugee populations and others who may not speak English fluently face language barriers which makes it difficult to navigate the complexities of internet services. Pima County community members not fluent in English also find it difficult to understand internet costs and packages.

Resources

Church-Based Technology Classes

Some local churches offer technology classes, although maintaining up-to-date devices is noted as a considerable challenge.

Community Organizations

Community organizations play a pivotal role in addressing individual and community digital inequity. The Pima County One Stop provides individuals with rent, utilities, and employment, and provides free computer classes and labs. Pima County Public Libraries offer free internet access at various locations, digital navigator support, and have a program that gives out mobile hotspots. SAAVI, a non-profit organization, focuses on education and job skills training specifically for the visually impaired, offering programs that enable participants to lead independent and fulfilling lives. Tucson House contributes by providing free internet access and services that assist residents, including affordable housing tenant services, further demonstrating the community's commitment to digital inclusion and support services.

Community Workforce Development

Workforce development programs in Pima County help with skill-building and digital literacy. However, a noted limitation of these programs is their reliance on the library system for additional support. PCC, TOCC, and the University of Arizona all have robust workforce programs that are accessible to the community.

Education

In Pima County, higher education institutions, including University of Arizona, Pima Community Colleges, and Tohono O'odham Community College provide a range of digital and financial literacy as well as pathways to certificates, credentials, and degrees. Each has deep experience creating and providing education to covered populations. The Telemedicine Center at the University of Arizona plays an important role in the region's telehealth landscape.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Affordability and Reliability

Develop initiatives for more affordable internet services, including subsidies or reduced-cost plans to make services more affordable for low-income residents in rural and tribal communities. Improve the reliability of rural Pima County internet services by addressing connectivity issues with service providers.

Address Transportation Challenges

Improve transportation options to public facilities with internet access, ensuring easier access to community resources including internet connections, training, and devices for residents.

Conduct Outreach and Build Trust

Conduct outreach and awareness campaigns to inform Pima County community members about available resources, services, and programs to overcome digital barriers. Develop initiatives to build trust in technology usage and online services, addressing privacy and security concerns. Raise awareness about available internet services and resources, especially in rural Pima County communities.

Encourage Policy Development

Develop policies and programs that prioritize equity and inclusion, with the goal of reducing inequity in internet access among Pima County communities.

Enhance Accessibility

Ensure online content and services are available in multiple languages to address language barriers. Increase awareness about the availability of resources, services, and programs.

Implement Strategic Solutions

Implement a mobile broadband one-stop bus for digital classes and device distribution. Adopt a culturally centered approach to bridge the digital divide.

Prioritize Infrastructure Expansion

Prioritize the expansion of proper internet infrastructure, focusing on underserved Pima

County areas and implementing innovative approaches to infrastructure development. Invest in expanding proper internet infrastructure in rural Pima County communities to enhance access and availability. Explore innovative, cost-effective ways to set up infrastructure to provide reliable internet connections.

Public Safety and Resilience

Reliable internet services in rural Pima County areas are crucial for public safety and resilience, especially during crises.

Upskill the Community

Implement digital literacy programs in Pima County targeting all age groups, with a special focus on covered populations. These programs should enhance digital competence and empower users to safely and effectively navigate the digital world.





Pinal County



Pinal County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Pinal County there is an urgent demand for reliable and affordable high-speed internet access, particularly via fiber optic infrastructure. Residents want reliable and economical internet solutions, which they view as crucial for community well-being. There is a push for educational initiatives aimed at increasing digital literacy, especially given the perception that poor internet access is contributing to the decline of small-town populations. Some suggest that local governments could step in to offer internet services as a way to reverse this trend.

Frustrations over the current state of internet and phone services are common among Pinal County residents, with complaints about spotty service, high costs, and lack of reliability. Residents are not only looking for better access, but also quality service and the digital skills to navigate the online world effectively. The limited bandwidth in certain areas adds another layer of complexity, making it hard for people to fully engage in online activities. There is also a need for more flexible options, as some residents express a desire to keep their existing land-line services while improving their internet connectivity.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Pinal County, Arizona

Pinal County is in south-central Arizona and encompasses a diverse range of geographical features, from desert to mountainous regions. The county has experienced significant population growth and urban development in recent years, driven in part by its proximity to the Phoenix metropolitan area. Pinal County recorded a population of 464,154 residents in 2022 and demonstrated a 9% increase in population from 2020-2022. The county is home to a growing population of retirees, and around 21% of the residents of Pinal County are aged 65 or older. African Americans and American Indians each make up approximately 6% of the county's population and just

Quotes from the County

"How do you use it? A lot of times even with the training, unless you have a resource person, like coming in, sitting down with them and setting them up, that's another barrier, accessibility."

over 30% of the County's residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. In terms of income, Pinal County exhibits a mix of socioeconomic conditions. While some areas benefit from economic growth and urbanization, others, especially in rural parts of the county, face economic challenges and lower income levels. The median income in 2021 was just over \$65,000 a year and nearly 11% of the Pinal County residents live in poverty.

Barriers in Pinal County

Access Barriers

Certain Pinal County areas are underserved and lack proper internet infrastructure, which means that they cannot connect to the internet. Other rural communities in Pinal County face challenges with limited providers, resulting in poor service quality.

Cost Barriers

The cost of internet services and necessary equipment like computers was identified as a significant barrier for many Pinal County individuals and families.

Digital Literacy

A lack of digital skills and comfort with technology hampers effective use of the internet, especially among aging adults in Pinal County.

Infrastructure Barriers

In rural Pinal County areas, outdated or lacking infrastructure leads to poor service quality, spotty service, and limited internet access.

Skill Barriers

Many individuals in Pinal County face challenges in effectively utilizing the internet, even after receiving training. This knowledge gap, coupled with limited understanding of how to make the best use of the internet and computers, leaves many residents in the county at a disadvantage. A need for ongoing training was identified as an immediate need.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Pinal County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Physical health barriers prevent people from effectively accessing digital resources without the use of accessible devices.

Barriers for Rural Areas: The reliability of internet connections in some parts of Pinal County, internet speed, and the cost of devices are all barriers for rural residents. The number of internet providers in rural Pinal County communities is limited, making it difficult to get good service. The infrastructure in older neighborhoods is also lacking, making internet access almost non-existent in some areas.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Pinal County Libraries were cited as places where people can access the internet and receive training. However, these resources are limited, posing a challenge for those who need them for educational purposes.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Aging individuals in Pinal County face barriers as they are often on fixed incomes and prioritize groceries or rent over internet service. The lack of internet access limits their ability to socialize and engage in activities that could benefit their cognitive skills. Many seniors in rural Pinal County areas like Saddlebrook use telehealth services, emphasizing its importance for those who cannot travel and highlighting the challenges faced by seniors in rural areas, particularly those who can't afford to travel for essential services. Pinal County seniors, especially those who are homebound or live alone, need internet access and would benefit from things like neighborhood support security cameras and socializing with family over FaceTime.

Barriers for Incarcerated Individuals: The conversation touched on the topic of incarcerated individuals, mentioning that jails and prisons offer some internet-based resources like classes. The participants emphasized the need for rehabilitation rather than just incarceration, suggesting that internet access could be a part of that by supporting individuals when they get out and ensure they have a marketable skill set.

Barriers for Individuals who are members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Pinal County sees language barriers, particularly for Spanish-speaking individuals. Social and economical language barriers prevent people from accessing digital resources and online services that are not in their native language.

Resources

Jails and Prisons Support Systems

Arizona Correctional Facilities offer classes and/or training support systems for incarcerated individuals. These programs can be extended to reach more people and offer more services for individuals recently released from incarceration.

Lifeline Program

A program provided by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), offers free or discounted internet access to low-income recipients or those on reservations.

Public Libraries and Community Colleges

Public libraries and community colleges often provide free internet access and may offer computer stations for public use. Additional support for these programs would allow them to reach more residents.

USDA Grants for Telehealth

Provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), these grants are focused on rural communities and telehealth services.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Communicate Effectively with the Community

Effective communication strategies are needed to raise awareness about existing resources in Pinal County, as many resources remain underutilized or insufficiently publicized. Better communication and outreach efforts are needed to ensure that existing resources are effectively utilized by all residents.

Create tailored solutions for specific demographics:

Programs should be designed to meet the unique needs of seniors, those with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

Fund Local Digital Literacy and Training Programs:

Local organizations offer free or low cost training programs designed to improve digital literacy skills with a focus on seniors and those with low literacy levels. Supporting and expanding these programs would benefit all residents.

Increase Accessibility

Provide support systems for individuals with disabilities or language barriers to ensure they can access and utilize the internet.

Improve the Affordability of the Internet and Devices

Make internet services and devices affordable- especially for low-income families and seniors. Collaborations between government agencies and private companies could offer solutions like subsidized rates or community Wi-Fi.

Investment in Modernizing Infrastructure

Both the public and private sectors need to invest in improving connectivity, especially in rural Pinal County areas. Investment in modernizing infrastructure, particularly in rural Pinal County areas, is crucial for improving internet service quality.

Leverage Existing Community Spaces

Utilizing public spaces, libraries, and community colleges as hubs for free internet access and digital literacy training could be an effective strategy.

Provide Subsidized Internet

Public-private partnerships and collaboration between government and private sectors could provide subsidized internet rates and community Wi-Fi solutions for Pinal County community members.





Santa Cruz County



Santa Cruz County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

In Santa Cruz County, residents conveyed a strong sense of frustration and a call for more effective support, especially from governmental bodies. While the sample size is limited, the sentiments expressed convey a message of frustration among many residents. Residents expressed a feeling of abandonment by local and regional governments in matters of broadband access. They report feeling that they are essentially 'on their own,' citing limited communication and support from even higher levels of state government, including the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA). Promises surrounding the introduction of fiber internet in areas like Patagonia seem to have soured public trust. The community has experienced delays ranging from several months to nearly a year in the actual rollout of these services, causing skepticism about the reliability of such promises.

Technical expertise is another area where the community feels let down. According to respondents, local governments and institutions appear to lack the knowledge needed to effectively address broadband challenges, exacerbating the sense of isolation and frustration. Moreover there's a noted absence of any organized bodies within either the municipality or the county that is solely dedicated to resolving broadband issues. This lack of dedicated resources and focus contributes to the overall sentiment of neglect and the urgent need for informed action.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Santa Cruz County

Santa Cruz County is located in the southern part of Arizona, bordering Mexico to the south. In Santa Cruz County, the digital divide is a stark reality that hinders access to essential online resources for many residents. Despite its scenic beauty, the area faces significant barriers in internet connectivity and affordability. This lack of reliable internet service exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities, making digital equity an

Quotes from the County

"We aren't attractive to providers because there's not a lot of money in the county. And so there's no reason to build. So unless it's basically 100% government assistance, it's very difficult with the lack of competition. Our income level is one of the major barriers that we have for the county when it comes to high speed account."

urgent priority for the region.

Santa Cruz County has a diverse population, with a significant Hispanic presence, reflecting its proximity to the Mexican border. In 2022, Santa Cruz County recorded a population of 48,759 residents. Approximately 83% of these residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, and around 15% are white. In 2021, the median household income in Santa Cruz County was around \$45,000, which is well below the national average. Of note, the county's high school graduation rate of 77% among residents aged 25 years or older is lower than the national average of 87%. 59

Barriers in Santa Cruz County

Affordability Barriers

The cost of internet service in Santa Cruz is prohibitive. The region is facing economic challenges that extend to the affordability of housing.

Access and Use Barriers

Infrastructure is still lacking in several parts of the county. While there is an effort to construct a loop, many areas remain unconnected. Geographic challenges make it difficult to provide consistent internet access to the region.

Lack of Awareness

Even when resources like free Wi-Fi are available, not everyone is aware of them or how to use them effectively.

Limited Providers

In certain areas of Santa Cruz County, there's only one provider, limiting choices and potentially leading to monopolistic pricing or service constraints.

Restrictions

Some internet services, especially those provided by schools or government programs, come with restrictions that deter users.

Speed and Quality Barriers

In some areas, the internet speed is as low as 3 megabits per second, which is insufficient for tasks like video conferencing. The need for rapid deployment of internet services is needed to catch up with current demands for fiber-to-home, which was not feasible for the community in the past.

Training & Support Barriers

There is an emphasis on understanding why offered services aren't being utilized, which suggests there might be a gap in user education or awareness in Santa Cruz County.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Santa Cruz County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Limited access to assistive technologies and resources was mentioned often as a barrier. Challenges in navigating online platforms for individuals with certain disabilities were noted often as well.

Barriers for Rural Areas: Limited access to high-speed internet in remote and rural Santa Cruz County areas. Long distances to healthcare facilities and other essential services for Santa Cruz County community members create a need for telehealth.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: Limited digital literacy skills, particularly among older or less educated individuals pose challenges in accessing online educational resources. Limited awareness of available educational programs and resources prevents Santa Cruz County community members from thriving in a digital world.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Aging individuals often lack the digital literacy skills to navigate online services and programs. Difficulty in accessing online healthcare services, which is crucial for seniors. Was also noted as a barrier.

Barriers for Incarcerated Individuals: Incarcerated individuals in Santa Cruz County have limited access to technology and the internet while incarcerated, which creates challenges in transitioning to the digital world after release.

Barriers for Veterans: Veterans in Santa Cruz County have limited access to telehealth and other online benefit services. A lack of awareness of available benefits and programs also creates a barrier for this group.

Barriers for Individuals who are members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Limited access to information and services for Spanish-speaking Santa Cruz County community members may hinder understanding and utilization of digital available resources. Potential disparities in access to digital resources and opportunities was noted. Limited representation and cultural sensitivity in online services was mentioned as well.

Resources

Devices

The 1-to-1 program, which typically means one student is provided with one piece of technology, provides school-age students in the community with technological devices for educational purposes.

Internet Access

There's free Wi-Fi provided in county buildings, including Rio Rico. Users can connect to the county Wi-Fi without a password after accepting terms of use. The network has minimal restrictions, ensuring broad access.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Affordability

Address concerns about the high cost of certain internet packages, ensuring that services are affordable for all Santa Cruz County community members.

Collaborate on Infrastructure

There's a need for collaborative efforts to fund and complete missing infrastructure points. Building infrastructure is acknowledged as a significant expense, and warrants collaboration with various partners and stakeholders to fund the projects. Emphasize the importance of developing robust and sustainable digital infrastructure that meets the needs of the community. Emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts to bring resources like fiber to all schools and libraries. Consider establishing co-working or learning facilities where community members can access the internet and other resources.

Create Tailored Solutions for Specific Demographics

Programs (affordability, education, cybersecurity) should be designed to meet the unique needs of seniors, those with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

Device Availability

Beyond just internet access, ensure that Santa Cruz County community members have access to the necessary devices to utilize the internet effectively.

Ensure that Every Student has Access to Educational Resources

Educating the community about available resources and how to use them was mentioned repeatedly. This includes promoting the benefits of telehealth, online education, and other online services. Ensure that every student has access to the necessary devices for their educational needs.

Evaluate Programs with an Eye Towards Sustainability

Efforts should be made to understand why certain resources aren't being utilized so that efforts can be made to increase engagement and interest in available services. There is a concern about the sustainability of internet services and infrastructure including the maintenance of devices and infrastructure, as well as the continued training and onboarding of local talent to support these services.

Explore a Variety of Internet Solutions

Emphasize the importance of broadband access for all, recognizing that different communities in Santa Cruz County may have different preferences for delivery methods. Explore all options available to meet the needs. Understand that solutions like fiber-to-home might not be feasible for all areas, and be open to alternative methods of delivering internet access. A blend of technological solutions, including point-to-point and direct fiber, is needed to cater to the diverse needs of Santa Cruz County.

Explore Economic Impact Opportunities

Recognize the potential economic impact of improved connectivity, including its effect on real estate transactions and property values. Ideas like creating a revenue stream by renting out internet infrastructure (like towers) were discussed as a way to maintain and expand the infrastructure for Santa Cruz County.

Consider Geographical Challenges

Address the unique geographical challenges of the Santa Cruz County area, such as mountains and valleys, which can impact the delivery of internet services and require creative solutions.

Foster Public Safety

Consider the establishment of communication towers that serve multiple purposes, including public safety communication. However, it's essential to be aware of community sentiments in Santa Cruz County regarding towers and include the residents in planning conversations.





Yavapai County



Yavapai County

Summary of Comments from the Community Member Survey

Residents in Yavapai County voice a multitude of concerns that underscore the critical importance of accessible, reliable, and affordable internet services. These concerns range from limited competition among service providers to the pressing need for improved infrastructure and literacy initiatives. It is important to note that residents in Yavapai County had the highest respondent rates in the state survey project and demonstrate a marked interest in bringing reliable connectivity to their county.

A significant concern in Yavapai County is the lack of competition in internet services, leading to near-monopolistic conditions in many regions. These limitations not only result in high costs but also contribute to subpar service quality. Reliability of internet connections is a prevalent concern; as frequent disruptions and slow speeds are affecting residents' productivity and access to educational and work opportunities. The call for increased competition among service providers is loud and clear, with residents believing it would drive improvements in service quality and cost. The high cost of internet services is especially problematic for individuals on fixed incomes, further widening the digital divide. Compounding the issue are poor customer service experiences, which elevate community frustration levels.

Infrastructure is clearly top of mind, with residents pointing out that implementation of technologies like fiber optics is crucial for overcoming existing issues. Poor connectivity has significant ramifications for education and remote work—timely concerns given today's digital landscape. Although some residents have attempted to mitigate connectivity issues with alternative solutions like Mi-Fi devices and booster antennas, these are generally viewed as insufficient and unreliable.

Quotes from the County

"Our community is about 40,000 people located in the central mountains of Arizona. There is only one cable company, and thus charges outrageous rates for service. Their Internet is on and off again several times during any given hour. Their service is very poor, often not resolving the issues that they were called to resolve. Now they are saying that they are switching from Cable TV to Internet TV. That is a bad joke, since their Internet services are constantly on again, off again. Are they going to have to improve their Internet when this change is made? Given that they are allowed to be a monopoly, it seems that nothing will improve, including the cost for bad service, unless other companies are invited to provide service. Note that I am disabled and certainly would not be able to go out and clean out a satellite dish in inclement weather, nor is satellite service likely to work here since cell phones don't. Additionally, Sparklight has a history of not notifying people of changes they are making. They deleted thousands of emails without sufficient notice to customers to save their emails. They have never notified me that they are planning to change to Internet streaming, and as my techie said, they are planning to just disconnect cable services and not advise us in advance when that is going to happen. Consequently, I strongly suggest that rules and regulations be put in place about the Internet providers that get us away from Sparklights refusal to upgrade the equipment, their rudeness, their exorbitant prices, and outrageous business practices. IF one manages to be able to purchase computer equipment and TVs at today's insane prices, then they often can't manage to purchase cable/Internet services. I think your approach needs to be at least two-pronged: education about all this technology, and stricter rules of operation for cable/Internet providers to stop the gouging going on. They are the root of the problem in that they are keeping the poor away from the Internet!!! It's unconscionable!!!!"

Transparency in funding and decision-making processes is important to Yavapai residents and they seek clarity on how improvement projects are financed.

Additionally, there is a demand for educational initiatives focusing on digital literacy and technology utilization, further underscoring the community's awareness of the multi-faceted nature of the digital divide.

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Yavapai County

Yavapai County, located in north-central Arizona, is characterized by a mix of high desert landscapes, mountain ranges, and extensive forested areas. The county has a diverse demographic makeup, with a mix of urban and rural populations. It is home to residents of various ages, including a growing number of retirees.

Yavapai County reported a population of 246,191 in 2022 with a 4% growth in population reported between 2020 and 2022. Approximately 34% of the population is aged 65 or older, and a little more than 15% of the population is aged 18 years or younger. The population is overwhelmingly white, with 79% of the population falling in this group. Around 15% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. Only around 2% of the population in the county identifies as American Indian.⁵⁹

Barriers in Yavapai County

Access to Device and Services

Not everyone in Yavapai County has access to devices at home, which limits their ability to engage in digital activities. There are limited places in the county where residents can access devices for free, which is especially challenging for rural residents. While resources like hotspots are available for students, they sometimes don't work effectively in certain areas due to lack of data capacity.

Affordability Barriers

Some community members in Yavapai County face financial challenges, making it hard to afford consistent internet access or devices. A lack of affordable internet plan options make these challenges more difficult.

Awareness Barriers

Many Yavapai County community members are unaware of the opportunities and services available to them if they had internet access. They might not know about services like Teledoc or the benefits of having a digital connection.

⁵⁹ From QuickFacts. Yavapai County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/yavapaicountyarizona,US/PST045222>

Digital Literacy Barriers

Many community members in Yavapai County lack basic digital skills. This includes not knowing how to use a computer, understanding social media, or being aware of who has access to their information.

Digital Transition

The shift to digital permits and other online-only services can be challenging for those who are not familiar with digital platforms and residents that do not have access to devices or a reliable internet connection.

Emotional and Trust Barriers

Some community members in Yavapai County feel embarrassed about their lack of digital skills. They might wait for other people to leave before asking for help, or avoid using technology in front of others. Community members might not read terms and conditions and could be unknowingly sharing personal information. Misconceptions about digital tools, like the belief that QR codes can introduce viruses, can hinder digital adoption for Yavapai County community members.

Infrastructure Barriers

The infrastructure for internet connectivity is not uniformly available throughout Yavapai County, leading to "dead spots" or areas with slow internet. Dead zones for Wi-Fi and cell data exist in many parts of the region. Mountainous terrain in Yavapai County requires more towers for connectivity.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Yavapai County

Barriers for Rural Areas: The challenges confronted by rural Yavapai County community members include limited internet connectivity and data capacity in many Yavapai County areas. Transportation issues make it hard for individuals to access places with internet facilities, like Yavapai County libraries.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: There is a great need for digital access in Yavapai County and the obstacles experienced by those community members without it are mounting. Students encounter challenges in accessing digital tools and resources and often depend on friends and family for internet access. Many students live in campgrounds or remote areas without electricity, water, or internet access and must come on to campus for those services. Many community members lack basic digital skills including not knowing how to use a computer, understanding social media, or being aware of who has access to their information.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: The transition to digital tools has been challenging for older Yavapai residents. There was mention of applications like digital permits, and the difficulties encountered by those who aren't tech-savvy. Many older individuals resist learning new

digital methods, with some refusing to use email or other online services. Some older individuals in Yavapai County perceive digital tools, like QR codes, as potential threats (e.g., viruses).

Barriers for Individuals who are members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: Members of racial or ethnic minority groups in Yavapai County encounter barriers in education, health-care, employment, and social services due to language barriers, cultural differences, and systemic inequalities.

Resources

Community Members

There's an emphasis on community-based conversations and grassroots movements in Yavapai County to identify and address challenges. The community members themselves play a significant role in identifying needs and potential solutions.

Devices

Libraries in Yavapai County lend out devices like Chromebooks and hotspots. However, there's a challenge with these devices not always being returned, with around 20 to 30% being never returned. This indicates a significant need in the community for such devices, and an opportunity to redesign lending programs to ensure that more residents have access to the devices they need.

Free Access

Libraries in Yavapai County provide free WiFi. For example, the library in Camp Verde offers free WiFi from 6 to 10 p.m., and people often park in the parking lot to access it. The town of Camp Verde has set a goal to provide free WiFi in all their parks. While they have faced challenges in achieving this, they have managed to cover the main street with free WiFi. Many businesses, including coffee shops and grocery stores, offer free WiFi hotspots for their customers.

Local Businesses & Local Government

Many businesses in Yavapai County, including coffee shops and grocery stores, provide free WiFi for their customers. Local Government bodies in Yavapai County have initiatives to provide free WiFi in public spaces like parks.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Address Rural Challenges

Consider the challenges faced by particular communities like the Yavapai-Apache Nation, which may lack basic infrastructure such as electricity and water.

Conduct Campaigns to Increase Digital Skills

Organize digital literacy campaigns within Yavapai County's schools, community centers, and libraries, covering essential topics like digital citizenship, computer skills, and social media awareness. Collect insights and knowledge from Yavapai County communities to understand their unique needs, considering the diverse requirements across different regions of Arizona.

Develop Public Safety Preparedness Plans

Develop specific emergency communication plans for Yavapai County, particularly for areas with limited or no internet access during crises like wildfires or floods.

Explore Options for Connecting the Community to the Internet

Prioritize the development of high-speed internet infrastructure throughout Yavapai County to ensure universal access. Address the challenge of slow and unreliable internet connections in certain areas of Yavapai County, known as the "turtle" effect. Explore alternative connectivity solutions, such as cellular networks or satellite internet, in areas with challenging terrains or limited options. Recognize the vital role of connectivity in Yavapai County's businesses and economy, addressing concerns about misleading coverage claims by ISPs.

Empower the Community and Preserve Rural Identity

Empower Yavapai County residents to advocate for their specific digital needs and concerns, fostering a sense of ownership and trust within the community. Respect and preserve the unique rural identity and independence valued by Yavapai County's communities while introducing modern services and connectivity.

Help People Learn to be Safe Online

Educate Yavapai County residents on data privacy, terms and conditions, and the implications of online data sharing to reduce hesitancy and inform residents about online safety.

Incentivize Participation

Offer incentives to encourage Yavapai County residents to engage with digital resources and offer programs and support to households that are financially disadvantaged.

Make Data-Informed Decisions

Collect insights and knowledge from Yavapai County communities to understand their unique needs, considering the diverse requirements across different regions of the county. Encourage ISPs to share data to identify coverage gaps and better address the digital needs of Yavapai County's communities.





Yuma County



Yuma County

Overview of Digital Equity Challenges in Yuma County

Yuma County is situated in the southwestern part of Arizona, sharing a border with California and Mexico. It is known for its desert landscape, characterized by arid plains and the Colorado River, which flows along its western edge. Yuma County is reliant upon agriculture, specifically the cultivation of crops for much of the country during the winter months.

Yuma County's population was 207,842 in 2022 and around 66% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. About 25% of the population is under the age of 18, and around 20% are aged 65 or above. Unlike many other counties in Arizona, Yuma County has a lower population of residents that identify as American Indian, with only 2.4% of the population in this group. In 2021, the median household income in the county was approximately \$53,000. Around 17% of the population lives in poverty.⁶¹

Barriers in Yuma County

Access, Reliability and Affordability

There is a lack of reliable internet in the county, particularly in rural parts of the region. This lack of access impacts educational opportunities, jobs, and the delivery of essential services like healthcare and benefit service enrollment. The high cost of the internet is also a significant barrier to internet adoption. Service monopolies limit choices and allow for high prices. Residents report issues of frequent disconnections and outages with service providers not based in Yuma County, with little support from customer service.

Awareness

Community members lack awareness of available digital equity programs, services, and resources. This lack of awareness is due, in part, to poor dissemination of information. This information barrier exacerbates issues related to trust which affects people's willingness to adopt digital solutions.

Quote From The County

"You have a lot of monopolies in Yuma. And I think it, they make you pay for it. I mean, you definitely pay out the nose for your internet service here and you only have a very, very selective view to choose from."

"If people don't have access to the internet, they don't have access to that online application, which if they have to wait to get a ride to come into and physically fill out an application, that means two more people who are on the internet has gotten that application and that job."

"I think access to the information, you know, where, where is the right distribution points? It probably should be at the WIC office. It probably should be at the economic security buildings, housing. It should be a part of every packet of information received in the county."

⁶¹ From QuickFacts. Yuma County, Arizona by U.S. Census Bureau. 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/yumacountyarizona,US/INC110221>

Language and Cultural Barriers

Cultural factors, such as language and familiarity with technology, also play a role. Older Hispanic individuals, for example, are reluctant to use digital applications and do not feel comfortable asking for help.

Digital Literacy and Skills Training

A lack of digital literacy and skills is a significant barrier, particularly among aging individuals and Hispanic communities in Yuma County. This gap hinders the ability of Yuma residents to fully utilize digital services and exposes them to risks like scams. While there are some skill training programs, not everyone is aware of them or can access them.

Specialized Needs

Groups, like individuals with a disability, veterans, and aging individuals, have specialized digital needs that are not being adequately addressed. For example, older adults, particularly veterans, face challenges in traveling great distances for medical appointments and accessing benefit services online.

Transportation Issues

The cost and availability of transit can be a barrier to accessing places with free internet like libraries and community centers.

Barriers for Covered Populations in Yuma County

Barriers for Individuals with Disabilities: Individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities experience challenges accessing the internet and resources in Yuma County. Their challenges are compounded by a lack of support systems that cater to their needs.

Barriers for Rural Areas: Information dissemination in Yuma County is hyper-local and often does not reach rural areas. Tribal elders in rural Yuma County areas still use flip phones and may need an additional source of information delivery.

Barriers in Education & Literacy: One of the biggest gaps in Yuma County is knowledge and education, thus widening the digital divide. Yuma County community members are not aware of available programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program. A good percentage of Yuma County community members don't have internet or even a device, affecting their ability to apply for services like home rehabilitation.

Barriers for Aging Individuals: Older adults in Yuma County are generally open to using the internet, although some aging individuals remain resistant to using computers. Aging Yuma County residents, particularly those looking into retirement, face challenges with insurance providers. There's also a discussion about older people embracing broadband for solutions like telehealth, especially since COVID-19. Older Hispanics are mentioned as being reluctant to use digital applications, partly due to fear of scams.

Barriers for Veterans: Veterans, particularly those who are older, have specialized digital needs that are not being adequately addressed. Because telehealth is not widely available, older veterans have to travel great distances for medical appointments.

Barriers for Individuals who are members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group: A large portion of the culture in Yuma County is Hispanic and older Hispanics are reluctant to use digital applications. They prefer not to use computers or phones for tasks like filling out applications and often rely on family members for help.

Resources

Access

Public places like libraries, Starbucks, and colleges offer free Wi-Fi. Some libraries have hotspots that Yuma County community members can borrow, although this program has faced challenges.

Cybersecurity Training

Yuma County and some local organizations offer cybersecurity training to help community members navigate online safely.

Libraries

Yuma County Libraries offer a range of services including technical training for people who struggle with devices. They also have "Gadget days" to teach people how to use new devices like phones or iPads. Libraries were identified as major providers of free internet, training, and device support.

Skill and Workforce Training

Arizona at Work and Goodwill offer skill and workforce training to Yuma County residents.

Technical Support

Some local internet companies offer in-home technical support to help Yuma County community members connect their devices to the internet, especially for older people.

Training Programs

Programs are available for skill and workforce training. These are offered by organizations like "Arizona at Work" and Goodwill. Some are free, while others may have a fee.

Recommendations from Lived Experts

Adapt to New Modes of Living and Working

Resilience in the digital age means more than just weathering storms; it means adapting to new modes of living and working. For the covered populations in Yuma County, such as disabled individuals and those with special needs, the lack of targeted information and services can be a significant barrier to resilience.

Address Affordability

Affordability is a recurring theme. From the high cost of internet services in monopolistic markets to the challenges of accessing affordable healthcare for veterans, the digital divide is as much an economic issue as it is a technological one.

Allow Remote Options for Learning

Allow more students to potentially "zoom into" their classes from home if they need to miss class due to illness or absence.

Create More Skill Training Centers

Partnering with existing organizations like Goodwill Industries to offer more skill training for Yuma County community members.

Help People Learn to Be Safe Online

The digital divide also has implications for public safety in Yuma County. Older adults who are not digitally literate are more susceptible to online scams and misinformation. Moreover, the lack of reliable internet in rural areas could hinder emergency services and disaster response efforts.

Improve Access to Healthcare

There's an emphasis on better access to healthcare for the aging population, veterans, and the general public. Due to the full schedules of doctors in Yuma, it often takes weeks to get an appointment, and residents believe telehealth could be a solution to this problem. The community sees potential in telehealth for addressing various needs, from routine check-ups to specialized care. This could be especially beneficial for those who have difficulty traveling or those who live in more remote areas.

Increase Awareness of Affordability Programs

Information about affordable internet programs should be distributed at places like WIC offices, economic security buildings, medical facilities, and on grocery store receipts. There is a lack of awareness about available programs and services, partly because information is not effectively disseminated, causing information barriers in Yuma County.

Support Community Partnerships

Create collaborations between local organizations, including the city and county, to form a strong coalition to advocate for funding and resources in Yuma County.

Prioritize Education for Everyone

Education is not just about schools; it's about lifelong learning and skills development. Yuma County has community members reluctant to use digital applications due to a lack of digital literacy. In rural areas, a lack of reliable internet access hampers educational opportunities for children and adults alike.

Support Telehealth for Veterans

Veterans often have to travel long distances to places like Tucson or Phoenix for specialized medical care. Telehealth could eliminate the need for these long trips, saving on costs like gas and hotel stays. There's a VA clinic for veterans, but for specialized needs they often have to travel to other cities. Telehealth could bridge this gap, providing specialized care without the need for travel.



4. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Outreach and awareness campaigns played a pivotal role in engaging the community, increasing participation in planning, increasing awareness about digital equity, and emphasizing the significance of digital inclusion. To effectively engage the community, the planning team developed a plan that outlined clear objectives, identified target audiences, and specified key messages and tactics to ensure a consistent and impactful approach across all channels.

The team created visually appealing and informative materials, including flyers and social media posts. Materials were tailored to each county, taking into consideration cultural diversity, rhetoric, and language. To maximize the reach and impact of the campaign, various communication channels, including social media platforms, websites, community newsletters, and local events were leveraged. By disseminating messages through these channels, the team engaged the full diversity of Arizona residents while fostering a sense of ownership and participation in planning.

The team established strong partnerships with local media outlets to amplify their reach and impact. The team collaborated with local newspapers, radio stations, and online platforms to share invitations to listening sessions, to share the survey, to conduct interviews, and shared stories of positive outcomes of digital equity initiatives as the Plan was implemented. By engaging with the media in this way, the team aimed to increase awareness of Digital Equity planning activity while generating public interest and enthusiasm in digital equity efforts across the region.

To ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement, the team organized in-person and virtual listening sessions which provided platforms for residents, community leaders, and key stakeholders to actively participate in discussions surrounding digital equity and the unique needs of their communities. During these interactive sessions, the facilitator encouraged dialogue and created a safe space for the participants to share their experiences and express concerns about the barriers and challenges that limit access and adoption of the internet.

The sessions were recorded and transcribed to ensure insights were captured and themes were identified and integrated into the plan. By inviting lived experts as well as subject matter experts, practitioners, and local leaders, the team created a wide aperture through which to identify barriers and challenges that impacted full and meaningful digital participation. Moreover, through the lens of the local community, the team could better identify potential solutions, local champions, and possible future collaborations.

Between June and August of 2023, the team visited each of Arizona's 15 counties, conducting a total of 35 in-person and virtual listening sessions targeted to members of each covered population. Additionally, a virtual all-county session was held for those people who were not able to attend on-site. To ensure the needs of covered populations were prioritized, listening sessions focused on veterans, aging individuals, people with disabilities, and incarcerated individuals were held. Qualitative feedback from each session, including barriers and challenges and proposed solutions, was leveraged to create the state Plan.

Recognizing the importance of reaching underserved communities, particularly Arizonans in rural, remote, and Tribal areas, the planning team participated in targeted outreach events in collaboration

with community centers, libraries, schools, and local organizations. These events provided opportunities to address specific needs and challenges unique to each county and region.

4.1. Coordination and Outreach Strategy

Arizona's outreach strategy was thoughtfully designed to employ both top-down and bottom-up approaches, employing a diverse range of communication methods to ensure that we effectively reached and included a broad spectrum of Arizonans in the planning process. The planning strategy is firmly grounded in the principles of trust-building, the creation of welcoming and inclusive spaces, and a steadfast commitment to forming and nurturing sustainable relationships.

Throughout this process, the digital equity team worked closely with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including individuals with lived experiences, community anchor institutions, organizations serving covered populations, state agencies, and local government bodies. These coordination and outreach activities took various forms, including listening sessions, in-person and remote interviews, as well as focus groups. Each of these processes was carefully designed for replication as the state transitions from the planning phase to capacity building implementation.

Recognizing the importance of inclusivity and ensuring that the voices of underserved communities take precedence, the outreach team in Arizona engaged in intentional collaborations with organizations deeply embedded in these communities. These collaborations played a pivotal role in fostering a more equitable approach to outreach.

Engagement with Lived Experts: The outreach team accorded top priority to engaging with individuals who possess firsthand experiences with digital inequity and marginalization. Through one-on-one interviews and focus groups with these lived experts, we gathered invaluable insights and personal stories that have greatly informed our initiatives. These interactions were instrumental in shaping the human-centered approach to addressing the myriad challenges experienced by covered populations. Barriers seen by these individuals helped shape the view of digital inequities in Arizona and are reflected in conjunction with national data presented in this plan.

Community Anchor Institutions and Organizations Serving Covered Populations: The team thoughtfully engaged with community anchor institutions throughout the planning process. Ahead of each listening session, we reached out to a wide range of entities, including teachers, superintendents, libraries, food banks, shelters, public housing agencies, faith-based groups, community centers, nonprofits, and local government entities. This engagement was conducted through email, personal phone calls, and word of mouth, ensuring a meaningful connection with the community. Before each listening tour, our engagement team visited the local region to post flyers, engage with residents, and identify trusted messengers and channels for effective communication.

State Agencies: Engaging with state agencies was of paramount importance in gaining an understanding of the broader policy landscape and leveraging available resources. The team reached out to state agencies such as the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Department of Education, the Department of Homeland Security, and others to align planning with state-level initiatives.

Local Government: Local governments played a pivotal role in the planning process and are likely to be key catalysts for successfully implementing and sustaining progress toward digital inclusion. In partnership with Governor Hobbs' staff, we consistently engaged with local governments, including city

councils and county boards of supervisors, to gain insights into regional needs and priorities and to foster an environment of open dialogue, active listening, and collaboration.

In addition to coordinating with community and stakeholder groups, we placed emphasis on listening sessions and interviews with organizations that serve covered populations, particularly those in rural and remote regions. This style of engagement was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by aging adults, veterans, people with disabilities, and incarcerated individuals, as well as the organizations that serve them.

Aging Adults: Aging adults may encounter barriers related to technology adoption and digital literacy. The outreach team proactively sought input from organizations dedicated to serving seniors and engaged directly with seniors themselves. We conducted targeted outreach to AARP, Area Agency on Aging, senior centers, organizations focused on elder care, and individuals over the age of 60.

Veterans: Arizona is home to a significant veteran population. We engaged with veterans' associations, veterans' affairs offices, and veteran support organizations. We conducted interviews and focus groups to understand the specific challenges and opportunities in delivering digital services and support to veterans.

People with Disabilities: Accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities were central to our efforts. We coordinated with disability advocacy groups, organizations serving individuals with disabilities, and state agencies like DES and Developmental Disability Advisory Council throughout the planning process to increase participation among people with disabilities in planning and dovetail with existing efforts and interventions.

Incarcerated Individuals: We worked closely with organizations supporting incarcerated individuals, both within correctional facilities and those whose work focuses on the reentry process including both with juveniles and with adults. We conducted a targeted listening session and targeted interviews to understand how best to meet the education, work, and technology needs of people during incarceration and throughout reentry. Included among the participants were the Arizona Department of Corrections, the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, and more.

Racial and Ethnic Minorities: The outreach team actively partnered with community-rooted organizations that had long-standing relationships and trust within underserved communities, particularly those serving low-income individuals, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and people with a language barrier. These organizations included local nonprofits, grassroots community groups, and cultural associations. Building trust was foundational to our coordination and outreach efforts. We invested time in building authentic relationships with community-rooted organizations, understanding their unique perspectives, and acknowledging their expertise in serving their communities.

Tribal communities: Tribal engagement was conducted with hybrid community roundtables that served as listening sessions, leadership to leadership meetings, webinars, and targeted outreach events in coordination with the National Tribal Telecommunications Association Broadband Summit and the Tribal Diabetes Health Summit where tribes received updates and information for both the BEAD and Digital Equity programs. This included the May 2023 Tribal Consultation led by Governor Hobbs, demonstrating her administration's strong commitment to broadband and tribal relations. The qualitative nature of the

feedback received from these engagements and roundtable discussions further informed the state’s outreach plan. Due to the considerable number of tribal members and its expansive geography spanning over 27,000 square miles, the SBO continues to meet bi-weekly with the Navajo Nation Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to stay apprised of its broadband plans and digital equity activities. Tribal communities are included in the NTIA's definition of covered populations under Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group. However, all Tribes are sovereign entities that govern themselves and we acknowledge the nature of the government-to-government relationship between the state of Arizona and the 22 tribes. The State Broadband Office and its Tribal Liaison continue to make a concerted effort to ensure tribes feel connected, informed, and engaged.

For a comprehensive list of organizations that participated in the planning process, please refer to the following Stakeholder Engagement section for a list of key contributors.

4.2. Stakeholder Engagement

The ACA Broadband Office recognizes the importance of ongoing community feedback to track the impact of execution strategies and planned activities, ensuring that the priorities identified in the plan are achieved. The ACA Office will be hiring a community engagement and outreach specialist to coordinate with the stakeholder engagement activities.

The stakeholder engagement process for the BEAD program in Arizona was developed to align with the requirements of the Digital Equity Plan Act and give a voice to communities with the greatest digital needs. The ACA Broadband Office recognizes the importance of ongoing community feedback to track the impact of execution strategies and planned activities, ensuring that the priorities identified in the plan are achieved.

Key Contributors

The Digital Equity Plan is a deeply collaborative effort. Several parties contributed to the writing and research including:

Arizona Commerce Authority	Administering Entity
Digital Equity Institute	Research Organization
Public Health Innovators, Inc	Telehealth and Social Determinants of Health Expertise
Project Over Zero	Subject Matter Expert, Language
Chicanos Por La Causa	Community Engagement – Low Income areas, Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities, People with a Language Barrier
SciTech Institute Arizona	Community Engagement – Rural Communities
AARP	Community Engagement – Aging Individuals
Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records, a Division of the Secretary of State	Subject Matter Expert, Library Services and Data, Community Engagement
Arizona State University	Community Engagement
United Way	Community Engagement

Mignonne Hollis	Subject Matter Expert, Rural Communities
Stacey Gandy, Ph.D.	Subject Matter Expert, Ageing Individuals
Ryan Murray	Subject Matter Expert, Cybersecurity

Thank you to the organizations around the state who graciously hosted and participated in our listening sessions.

Additionally, we extend a special thank you to the numerous organizations across the state who contributed their feedback to help inform the creation of Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan. Arizona Commerce Authority intends to include additional partners and stakeholders throughout the capacity building and implementation process.

Moving Forward

Statewide In-Person Outreach

Frequency: One-time

Activity: The State Broadband Director and the State Digital Equity Manager will engage with local government officials and community leaders in all fifteen counties to gather direct input on the unique challenges facing these individual communities. Through this outreach tour, we hope to increase the diversity of participants among covered populations to ensure representative feedback.

Engagements are intended to happen one-time and then evaluated to determine frequency thereafter.

Quarter 1

North-East Region – Apache County and Navajo County Northern Region – Coconino County

Quarter 2

Eastern Region - Gila County, Graham County, Greenlee County South-East Region – Cochise County and Santa Cruz County

Quarter 3

*South-West Region – Pima County and Yuma County
Central Region – Maricopa County and Pinal County*

Quarter 4

Western Region – La Paz County, Mohave County and Yavapai County

For Tribal Nations, the State Broadband Director, members of the SBO, including the Tribal Liaison will engage with Tribal leaders, tribal ISPs, and tribal stakeholders in all 22 sovereign nations to gather direct input in regard to barriers and opportunities. Engagements are intended to occur one-time and then evaluated to determine the frequency thereafter. At any point in time, tribal leaders or their delegates of authority can request a meeting, formal or informal, with the State Broadband Office.

Frequency: One-Time

Quarter 1

*North-East Region – Navajo Nation Shiprock Agency, Chinle Agency, and the Fort Defiance Agency
Northern Region – Navajo Nation Western Agency, Hopi Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute, and Havasupai Tribe*

Quarter 2

Eastern Region – White Mountain Apache Tribe, Tonto Apache Tribe, and San Carlos Apache Tribe

Quarter 3

*South-West Region – Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Tohono O’odham Nation, San Xavier District, Fort Yuma – Quechan Tribe, and Cocopah Tribe
Central Region – Ak-Chin Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Gila River Indian Community, and Fort McDowell Nation*

Quarter 4

Western Region – Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, and Kaibab-Paiute Tribe

[Arizona Commerce Authority Community Roundtable Conversations](#)

Frequency: Monthly

Activity: The ACA will continue hosting virtual Community Roundtable Conversations that bring together community and non-profit organizations (faith-based, school, library, health, housing, etc.), industry leaders, local governments, Tribal Nations, and other key stakeholder groups from around the state. The SBO will identify specific content around covered populations to strategically engage with community members and organizations to discuss specific goals and objectives towards implementation of the Digital Equity strategy and BEAD Deployment.

In the future, we plan to host roundtables:

- Community Roundtables dedicated to covered populations, and stakeholders that serve them
- Local Governments
- Dedicated to Tribal members and tribal specific topics
- ISP Roundtables (including Tribal ISPs)

To date, the Arizona Commerce Authority has hosted seven Community Roundtables:

	Date	Attendees
<i>May Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	05/16/2023	75
<i>June Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	6/20/2023	89

<i>July Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	7/18/2023	68
<i>August Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	8/15/2023	33
<i>September Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	9/19/2023	43
<i>October Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	10/17/2023	[CANCELED]
<i>November Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	11/21/2023	64
<i>December Community Roundtable Conversation</i>	12/19/2023	63

Additionally, we have also hosted a Formal Tribal Consultation with Governor Hobbs and three Tribal Broadband Community Roundtables:

	Date	Attendees
<i>Formal Tribal Consultation with Governor Hobbs</i>	05/19/2023	34
<i>Virtual Tribal Broadband Community Roundtable</i>	07/11/2023	44
<i>Northern Arizona Tribal Broadband Community Roundtable</i>	10/18/2023	26
<i>Southern Arizona Tribal Broadband Community Roundtable</i>	12/11/2023	33

Governor's Interagency and Community Broadband Advisory Council Interagency

Frequency: Quarterly

Activity: The Governor’s Office in coordination with the State Broadband Office will hold quarterly meetings to analyze and recommend strategies to advise the Governor to ensure universal connectivity to all households in rural, urban, suburban and tribal communities across Arizona. These groups will facilitate engagement on state broadband and digital inclusion, bringing together experts from the field.

Community Broadband Advisory Council Working Groups

Frequency: Monthly

Activity: Bringing together experts from the field to facilitate engagement in state broadband and digital inclusion dialogues. Working group members offer expertise, assist with stakeholder engagement, and contribute to other tasks that support the Council's objectives.

Working Group Name	Focus
<i>Infrastructure and Permitting</i>	Focuses on streamlining infrastructure projects and permitting processes for increased efficiency.
<i>Mapping</i>	Supports the creation and maintenance of geospatial data to support informed decision-making.
<i>Digital Inclusion</i>	Provides guidance to ensure equitable access to digital resources and technologies for all community members.
<i>Affordability</i>	Identifies solutions to make essential services more affordable and accessible to residents.
<i>Workforce</i>	Concentrates on strategies to enhance the local workforce, fostering economic growth and prosperity.
<i>Outreach</i>	Promote awareness and participation making sure the group engages with the community and stakeholders in our advisory group's initiatives.

State Agencies Interagency Coordination Meetings

Frequency: Quarterly

Activity: Coordination of state agencies’ activities related to infrastructure development, permitting, digital inclusion, use of broadband for improvement of health and education outcomes, workforce development and cybersecurity with a specific focus on state activities that address covered populations.

State Universities, Institutions of Higher Education, and LEA Coordination Meetings

Frequency: As Requested

Activity: The State Broadband Director and the State Digital Equity Manager will provide updates to State Universities, Institutions of Higher Education, and local educational agencies and collaborate to achieve the objectives of the Digital Equity Plan.

Tribal Colleges, Institutions of Higher Education, and Local Educational Agencies

Frequency: As Requested

Activity: The State Broadband Director and the Tribal Liaison will provide updates to tribal colleges, Institutions of Higher Education, and local educational agencies and collaborate to achieve the objectives of the Digital Equity Plan.

Arizona Council of Governments (COGS)

Frequency: One-time

Activity: The State Broadband Director and the State Digital Equity Manager will meet with each of Arizona's Council of Governments to provide updates on broadband activities and get feedback from the membership.

- Quarter 1: Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG)
- Quarter 2: Central Arizona Governments (CAG), Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)
- Quarter 3: South-Eastern Arizona Council of Government (SEAGO)
- Quarter 4: Western Arizona Council of Governments – (WACOG)

Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA)

Frequency: As Requested

Activity: The State Broadband Director and the Tribal Liaison will meet with ITCA leadership and its members to provide updates on BEAD and Digital Equity activities and get feedback from the membership.

Navajo Nation Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

Frequency: Bi-Weekly

Activity: The SBO, including the Tribal Liaison will continue to provide updates, share resources, and get feedback in their bi-weekly calls with the NNTRC to inform their outreach and engagement efforts.

Stakeholder Meetings

Frequency: As Requested

Activity: The ACA will provide updates to various stakeholder groups including Community Anchor Institutions, Non-profit Organizations that represent covered populations, Digital Inclusion Coalitions, homeless continuum of care providers, labor unions and organizations and local public housing associations. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network
- Arizona Digital Inclusion Network
- Arizona Telecommunications & Information Council
- Southwest Cable Communications Association
- Apache County Coal Communities Economic Development
- Maricopa County Broadband Task Force
- County Supervisors Association
- League of Arizona Cities and Towns
- Workforce Arizona Council
- Indigenous Digital Inclusion Working Group
- Alliance for Navajo Broadband
- Arizona Tribal Broadband Working Group
- American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Arizona

Broadband Newsletter

Frequency: Quarterly

Activity: The Arizona Commerce Authority State Broadband Office will publish and widely distribute a newsletter to stakeholders and post it on their website. The newsletter will include updates on broadband infrastructure deployment progress, State and Federal Policy and Legislative Updates, Digital Inclusion and Broadband Success Stories, Community Spotlights, Tribal Corner, and a Calendar of Events.

Broadband Website

Frequency: Ongoing

Activity: The ACA State Broadband Office will redesign and build a public-facing website that engages and updates stakeholders across sectors on Broadband and Digital Equity information. The following information identified as best practices will be more easily found including:

- Zoom links for meetings
- Important deadlines
- Recordings of past meetings

Social Media

Frequency: Ongoing

Activity: The ACA State Broadband Office will develop a robust social media strategy and actively utilize various social media platforms to share timely and relevant information about Digital Equity and Broadband activities.

The stakeholder engagement plan for the Digital Equity Program is comprehensive and considers the unique needs of different regions, tribes and communities in Arizona. By leveraging stakeholder engagement and prioritizing key areas of focus, ACA intends to overcome barriers and maximize the impact of the Digital Equity and BEAD programs, ultimately achieving its goal of universal broadband access in a way that is also conducive to advancing digital equity more broadly. This stakeholder engagement plan will only be possible with the combined efforts of ACA, Governor Hobbs, stakeholders, subgrantees, local and tribal governments, and the NTIA.

5. Implementation

5.1. Implementation Strategy & Core Activities

Goal 1: Increase access and affordability of reliable broadband Internet.

Arizona's digital landscape presents unique challenges and opportunities. The first goal focuses on increasing access and affordability of reliable broadband Internet, a foundational step towards digital equity. To achieve this, the Digital Equity Plan will support the BEAD Program to first achieve universal access to high-speed broadband internet. The plan also proposes increasing support for Digital Navigators and collaborations with Internet Service Providers (ISPs), especially in promoting the low-cost and affordable internet options. These efforts are complemented by targeted campaigns to raise awareness of low-cost plans and specialized training for local and Tribal Digital Navigators. The emphasis is on prioritizing outreach in areas with high concentrations of covered populations, recognizing the diverse needs across Arizona's urban and rural landscapes.

Core Activities:

- Identify areas in the state where high-speed internet access does not meet the BEAD minimum broadband requirement of 100/20 Mbps.
- Coordinate with all levels of government and utility providers to streamline permitting and right of way processes.
- Develop and execute a data driven grant program that invests in new broadband infrastructure to meet BEAD minimum broadband standards
- Increase support for Digital Navigators, and leverage them to support enrollment in ACP or its successor
- Increase collaboration with ISPs providing ACP, and encourage those not currently offering ACP to participate in the program, or its successor
- Increase awareness of ACP (or successor programs) through targeted campaigns and collaborations
- If ACP is no longer an option, we will continue to increase awareness of all low-cost options
- Increase awareness of CAIs that offer free access to high-speed internet to their communities
- Ensure low-cost plans are represented on Low-Cost Internet Plans and Offers in Arizona list, maintained by Connect Arizona
- Inform local and Tribal Digital Navigators of low-cost plan
- Prioritize outreach in areas with high volume of covered populations

Goal 2: Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services

Goal two addresses the inclusivity and accessibility of public resources and services. Recognizing that digital equity is not only about access but also about ensuring that digital tools and resources are inclusive and accessible to members of covered populations. The plan advocates for supporting nonprofits and Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) in delivering tailored digital literacy and skills

programs. It emphasizes the importance of accessible devices and technologies, partnering with workforce agencies to make job application processes more accessible, and investing in library resources. A novel aspect of this goal is understanding and integrating the perspectives of Tribes in viewing language and cultural preservation through a digital equity lens, thereby respecting and embracing Arizona's rich cultural diversity.

Core Activities:

- Collaborate with Experts and Advocacy Groups; form a task force with accessibility experts and disability advocates to identify and integrate best practices for digital accessibility.
- Partner with ADOA-ASET: Develop guidelines and training programs in partnership with the Arizona Department of Administration/Arizona Strategic Enterprise Technology) ADOA-ASET to improve understanding of accessibility needs and standards in public state offices and organizations receiving state funding.
- Develop a toolkit defining accessibility standards and providing support and resources for state agencies to implement accessible functionality and language translations within their websites, where appropriate. For example, providing guidance on offering online bill payment options.
- Work with local and tribal governments or a delegate of their choosing to identify a Digital Equity Specialists
- Create cohorts of Digital Equity Specialists and create regular cadence of meetings to coordinate with State Broadband Office
- Identify possible certifications or trainings for Digital Equity Specialists
- Support Digital Equity Specialists completing certification or training
- Leverage Maricopa and Pima County's expertise in creating local Digital Equity plans
- Provide tribes, counties, or local communities assistance in creating their own digital equity plans
- Create an online dashboard that depicts local and Tribal digital equity resources
- Position tribes, counties, or local communities for subsequent digital equity success and grant opportunities
- Provide outreach and education campaigns in tribal and local communities to increase awareness of TAPs and Digital Health Navigators.
- Provide support to local partners to establish TAPs and Digital Health Navigators, including Spanish bilingual Digital Health Navigators.

Goal 3: Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations

Goal three is dedicated to providing relevant digital literacy and skills training tailored to the needs of covered populations. It acknowledges the critical role of digital literacy in empowering individuals to navigate and leverage digital technologies effectively. This goal is operationalized through increasing awareness and capacity of Digital Navigator programs, incorporating monitoring into intake forms, and enhancing support for organizations that offer digital skills training. The plan also emphasizes the availability of digital skills learning platforms in multiple languages and formats, reflecting the diversity of Arizona's population. Collaborations with Arizona@Work, BuilditAZ Apprenticeship initiative, local workforce boards, and the Workforce Arizona Council are pivotal to this goal.

Core Activities:

- Conduct a gap analysis of digital literacy skills training opportunities targeted to the covered populations
- Work with existing Digital Navigator programs to assess digital literacy skills and monitor growth through repeated interaction and assessment
- Partner with Arizona Department of Corrections (ADOC) to ensure programs are provided to incarcerated individuals. Develop a “train the trainer” program to increase support to organizations serving individuals across covered populations that provide informal and formal digital skills training.
- Increase awareness of digital skills learning platforms and resources
- Increase awareness of Digital Navigator programs around the state.
- Increase capacity of Digital Navigator and skill building programs
- Facilitate a Digital Navigator network to incorporate targeted resources available to people across covered populations and craft measurement tools, such as Digital Navigator intake forms
- Ensure digital skills learning platforms and resources are available in multiple languages and formats as reflected by individuals across covered populations
- Conduct a gap analysis of higher education institutions currently providing training opportunities to covered populations, in coordination with BEAD Program team workforce planning
- Support institutions of higher education, State agencies, and organizations to implement training
- Provide workforce development opportunities to individuals who will play a vital role in the implementation of the BEAD program.
- Increase awareness of workforce development opportunities with targeted outreach to covered populations
- Coordinate with Arizona@Work and BuildItAZ Apprenticeship initiative
- Coordinate with local workforce boards and the Workforce Arizona Council, established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Work with the Arizona Department of Education to identify parameters and metrics for the State Digital Literacy Seal
- Work with the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADOC) to provide programming in prisons and track number of incarcerated participants pursuing high school degrees in juvenile correction facilities or incarcerated adult learners working to complete General Education Development (GED)
- Increase awareness of this program across the state, especially in school districts that serve families that fall into one of the covered populations

Goal 4: Enhance the Safety and Security of Arizona’s Digital Spaces

The fourth goal focuses on enhancing the safety and security of Arizona's digital spaces. In an era where cyber threats are prevalent, this goal underscores the importance of cybersecurity awareness and training. Partnering with the Arizona Department of Homeland Security, higher education, and other stakeholders, the plan envisions a robust framework to increase cyber preparedness, especially for

businesses, community anchor institutions, and among covered populations. This goal also involves enhancing information sharing among stakeholders to reduce risk.

Core Activities:

- Increase awareness and use of online safety training and cybersecurity resources
- Partner with AZDOHS to conduct online safety and cybersecurity training for Community Anchor Institutions and community members.
- Ensure increased awareness campaign is conducted with intentional contact with Tribal communities and government through in-person meetings with leadership, administration, and community members.
- Share information through multiple channels such as AM/FM radio, billboards, fliers, and announcements at other public forums.

Goal 5: Ensure Arizonans Have an Affordable Device That Meets Their Unique Needs

Goal five is centered around ensuring that Arizonans have affordable devices that meet their unique needs. This goal addresses the often-overlooked aspect of device affordability and appropriateness. It involves launching public awareness campaigns, setting up community distribution centers, identifying successful device distribution programs, and forming partnerships for device donations and subsidies. The plan also focuses on establishing state benchmarks and best practices for device affordability and accessibility, emphasizing the importance of device refurbishment as a sustainable and cost-effective solution.

Core Activities:

- Determine criteria for local centers, including targeted services to each covered population, and establish the benchmark for affordability
- Map local centers of these resources across the state and share via county dashboards.
- Use various communication channels, including social media, community events, and local media.
- Coordinate with organizations that provide devices to user, especially those focused on covered populations, including re-entry resources for incarcerated individuals
- Highlight the benefits of refurbishing devices, emphasizing their affordability, reduced environmental impact, and alignment with various user needs.

5.1.1. State Agencies, Community-Based Organizations, and Higher Education

Representatives from state agencies, workforce organizations, community-based organizations and higher education institutions thoughtfully participated throughout the planning process. Their qualitative and quantitative feedback is integrated throughout the state plan. As the state moves into the implementation phase of digital equity planning, the continued involvement of these entities is vital. These organizations are Subject Matter Experts and will be invited to participate in Working Group meetings, and other engagements as appropriate.

Engagement will include the following groups:

- State and Local Workforce Agencies and Workforce Organizations: Partnering with these organizations is a crucial step in breaking down barriers to digital equity. By working together on a digital equity plan, we ensure that members of covered populations gain access to the digital skills and resources needed to thrive in today's job market. This alignment with workforce development goals fosters a more inclusive and competitive workforce.
- Labor Organizations and Community-Based Organizations (including nonprofits): Collaborating with labor organizations and community-based nonprofits is essential for dismantling barriers to digital equity. These groups have deep connections with covered populations and understand their unique challenges, enabling us to tailor digital equity initiatives to specific community needs. This approach empowers grassroots efforts to address digital disparities.
- Institutions of Higher Learning (State Universities and Community Colleges), and Educational Organizations: Collaborating with higher education institutions and educational organizations is a pivotal step in breaking down barriers to digital equity and supporting with project evaluation and baseline data. This partnership extends beyond just access; it also involves the creation of educational materials and harnessing research in the field of digital equity. Together, we ensure that students from covered population communities not only gain access to high-quality digital education and resources but also benefit from tailor-made educational content.
- Internet Service Providers, Tech Companies, and Device Manufacturers: Joining forces with internet service providers, tech companies, and device manufacturers is a key strategy in eliminating barriers to digital equity. Their infrastructure and technological resources are vital for expanding access to the internet, devices, and digital services. Through partnerships, they can offer discounted services and affordable devices, supporting digital inclusion initiatives. This collaboration benefits both underserved populations and the industry, making digital resources and opportunities more accessible.

5.2. Timeline

The Arizona Commerce Authority plans to leverage Digital Equity Capacity Grant Funding to ensure every Arizonan has the information technology capacity to participate in every aspect of society, democracy, and the economy. Once the Notice of Funding Opportunity is released, the Arizona Commerce Authority Broadband and Digital Equity Teams will coordinate to identify Arizona-specific timelines, and processes. These guidelines will be shared with stakeholders to ensure ample opportunity for organizations to apply for Capacity Grant Funding, to amplify, and expand Digital Equity activities in the state.

The Digital Equity team will collaborate with BEAD stakeholders throughout the capacity building phase to ensure programmatic alignment, accelerate access and adoption of broadband infrastructure, increase impact, and identify opportunities for increased efficiency.

For example, Arizona's BEAD Volume II lays out succinct goals to address Broadband Deployment, Closing the Digital Divide, Addressing Access, Affordability Equity and Adoption and Workforce needs as related to the nearly 1-billion dollars allocated to the state. In the table below, we hope to illustrate the ways in which the Digital Equity Plan will work in concert with the BEAD program.

Topic	Objectives
<i>Broadband Deployment</i>	<p>Provide universal connectivity to unserved and underserved areas and ensure high-speed internet access is available to every household, business, eligible CAI, tribe, and community in Arizona.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas in the state where high-speed internet access does not meet the minimum broadband requirement of 100/20 Mbps. • Identify and mitigate obstacles and barriers preventing broadband expansion and adoption. • Remove regulatory barriers that hinder investment in broadband infrastructure. • Coordinate with all levels of government and utility providers to streamline permitting and right of way processes. • Develop and execute a data driven grant program that invests in new broadband infrastructure to meet minimum broadband standards. <p>Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan addresses broadband deployment support in Goal 1, Objective 1 and provides additional support in Objectives 2 and 3 for the availability and awareness of low-cost plans provided by Internet Service Providers (as a part of the BEAD Program.)</p>
<i>Closing the Digital Divide</i>	<p>Promote digital equity and inclusion through increased digital skills and access to devices for all Arizona residents including tribes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate and strengthen partnerships with local and national stakeholders to enhance current and planned digital equity programs. • Develop and implement programs to promote digital literacy and digital skills. • DE Plan Alignment: Support Digital Navigator and Health Navigator programs, create Digital Equity Specialist cohorts. • Ensure Arizonans have the resources and support necessary to obtain and utilize affordable devices. • Create and maintain a publicly available Digital Equity Asset Inventory. • Integrate broadband infrastructure investments with healthcare, education, public safety, workforce, and economic development initiatives, both statewide and within tribal lands.

Addressing Access, Affordability, Equity, or Adoption Issues

- Leverage the Statewide Middle-Mile program and other federal and state funded programs to ensure that all residents have access to 100/20 Mbps or higher speed internet.
- Leverage the state universities work via the Sun Corridor Network and partner with community colleges to expand broadband infrastructure across the state.
- Enhance and coordinate with other investments in social programs, telehealth education, and economic equity and development to increase broadband deployment, affordability and adoption.

Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan addresses strategies to close the digital divide throughout the named goals and objectives, most specifically through Goal 2, Objective 2: Establish Local and Tribal designated Digital Equity Specialists, Goal 2, Objective 3: Support Local and Tribal capacity for Digital Equity Planning and Activities, Goal 2, Objective 4: Increase Telehealth Access Points and Support Health Navigator Services, and all of Goal 3: Goal 3: Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations.

Promote broadband service pricing that is affordable to all Arizonans including tribes.

- Encourage internet service providers to offer affordable plans for low-income households and create programs to make broadband services and affordability programs more accessible.
- Promote programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and other programs that offer subsidies that reduce the cost of internet service to low-income households.
- DE Plan Alignment: Support Digital Navigator programs, ACP Cohort model (via Education Superhighway)
- Encourage competition in the market and provide incentives for service to high cost unserved and underserved locations.

Arizona’s Digital Equity Plan address access, affordability and adoption through increased support for low-cost high speed internet options (Goal 1), and Digital Navigator service awareness and support (Goal 2 and Goal 3).

Enhancing Economic Growth and Job Creation

Ensure a 21st century-ready workforce where Arizonans and tribes can succeed in the rapidly evolving job market where the state helps create, grow, and attract high wage businesses to increase economic development.

- Utilize the Arizona Commerce Authority’s extensive business development expertise and the Office of Economic Opportunity to create

workforce development programs focusing on technology to support the new digital economy.

- Coordinate with Arizona institutions of higher education to develop and enhance programs with K-12, community colleges, universities and technology and vocational schools to provide real world opportunities for students to qualify for technology jobs.
- DE Plan Alignment: Provide workforce development opportunities to individuals who will play a vital role in the implementation of the BEAD program.
- Coordinate with Arizona@Work and BuilditAZ Apprenticeship initiative.
- Coordinate with local workforce boards and the Workforce Arizona Council, established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Collaborate with agencies and organizations to create and improve programs that provide reskilling and upskilling opportunities for individuals who have been displaced or dislocated from the workforce

Arizona's Digital Equity Plan addresses economic growth and workforce development through Goal 3, Objective 3: Ensure Workforce Development opportunities for people within the covered populations to prepare for jobs created by the BEAD program.

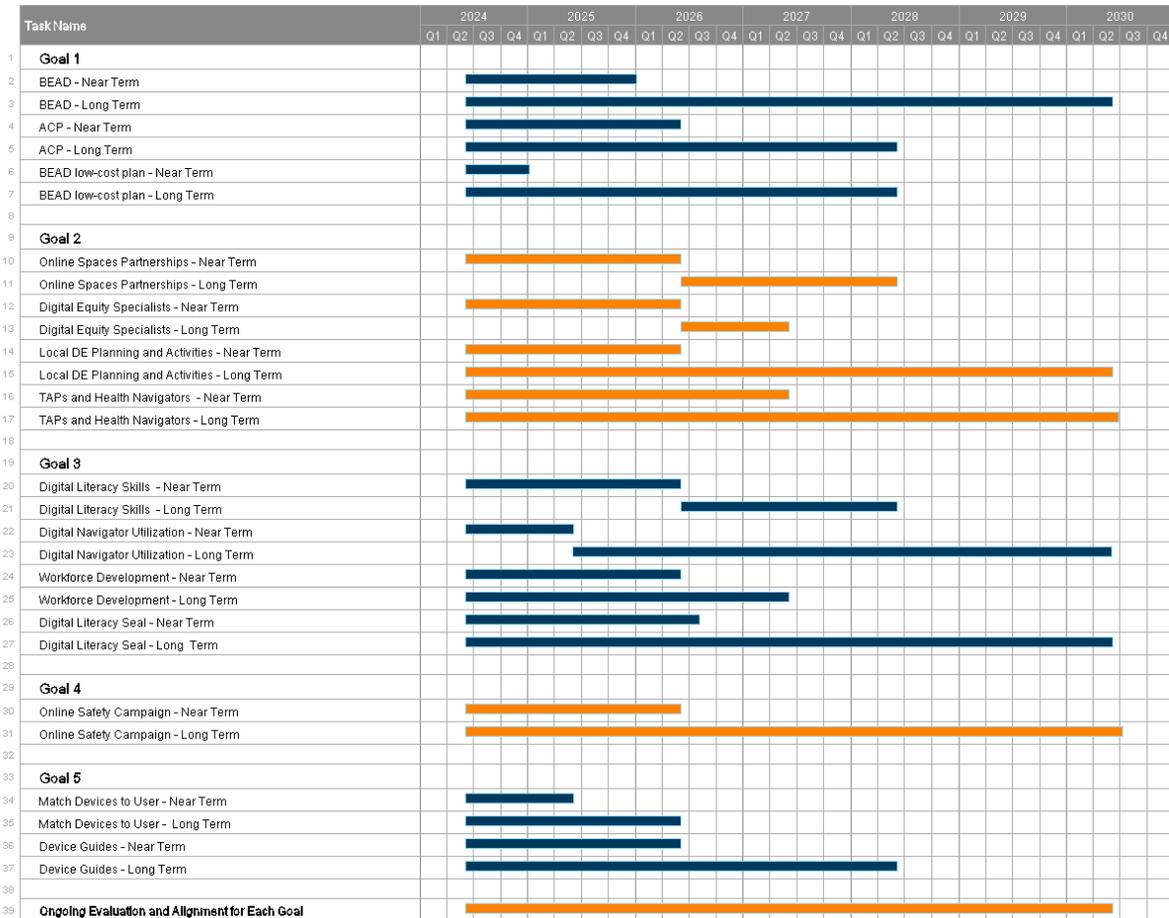
Coordination of Funding

The goals laid out by the Digital Equity Plan will allow stakeholders in the BEAD process to engage in further partnerships and potential funding opportunities can stretch further through these collaborations. Additional funding sources will be identified and leveraged where possible for the benefit of accomplishing program goal. The Arizona Commerce Authority plans to create a space for tracking the availability of additional local, state and federal funding sources on our website and will share opportunities with stakeholders as appropriate. The Broadband Office coordinates both the Digital Equity and BEAD programs and will ensure alignment in usage of funds.

Sustainability and Effectiveness

To ensure sustainability and effectiveness of the work we begin during the Digital Equity Act implementation, we will continue to engage and support our Digital Equity Specialist cohort, and other national, state and local partners. Our Digital Equity Program Manager will maintain working relationships with counterparts in other states to leverage their lessons learned and incorporate best practices. Additionally, the work done towards local and tribal Digital Equity planning and activities will set the state up for continued success.

The following is a good faith estimate of the timeline for implementation. It designed to position the state to successfully achieve the goals laid out in this Digital Equity Plan.



Year 0 (2024): Secure funding, create parameters for Digital Equity Capacity Grant, establish and strengthen partnerships.

- Q1-Q4: Establish baseline data where necessary, continue to assess existing programs and organizations add to Asset Inventory, begin collating additional local resources, evaluate current communication channels, expand existing website, and integrate information into County Dashboards. Pre-work towards the Goals and Objectives set forth in this Digital Equity Plan that can be implemented, will be. See Section 2.3 for a complete description of Goals and Objectives. Continued collaboration with the ACA and BEAD Stakeholders will ensure program alignment and control duplication of efforts. Evaluate success of current work done toward completing objectives.

Year 1 (2025): Detailed activities across all quarters, focusing on stakeholder meetings, enrollment campaigns, feedback loops, partnerships, and pilot programs.

- Q1-Q4: Initiate quarterly BEAD/Digital Equity stakeholder meetings (focus on low-income, rural communities), conduct community listening sessions in each county (participation from covered populations), establish collaborations with Digital Equity Specialists and NGOs for accessibility best practices.

- Q2-Q4: Begin statewide ACP enrollment campaign (target 10,000 household increase, focus on covered populations), partner with higher education and workforce agencies (align training with high- wage job requirements).
- Q2: Establish feedback loops with business, industry, and higher education.
- Q3: Partner with higher education and workforce agencies for workforce training, begin consultations with tech companies for refresh plans.
- Q4: Work with partners to determine best mechanisms for device support for covered households, update digital priorities based on year 1 feedback.
- Q4: Evaluate success of current work done toward completing objectives.

Year 2 (2026): Emphasis on strengthening collaborations, continuing existing programs, and introducing new initiatives like tech centers and specialized navigator roles.

- Q1-Q4: Strengthen BEAD collaboration (integrate more local leaders), continue partnerships with ISPs for affordable internet, continue quarterly stakeholder meetings (identify strategies for ACP uptake), conduct second series of annual community listening sessions.
- Q1: Partner with CAIs (libraries, nonprofits, higher education) for culturally responsive digital literacy and skills programs, deploy online safety training modules (tailored for covered populations), establish partnerships for telehealth access expansion.
- Q2: Fund initial tech centers in marginalized communities (access to Digital Navigators), establish pathways from digital skill building into higher education.
- Q3-Q4: Introduce specialized navigator roles (focus on aging, telehealth, disability support), launch workforce development workshops (target jobseekers from covered populations), develop telehealth resource repository.
- Q4: Assess increase in ACP enrollment, adjust strategies, update digital priorities based on year 2 feedback.
- Q4: Evaluate success of current work done toward completing objectives.

Year 3 (2027): Focus on assessing enrollments, compliance, program monitoring, and expanding initiatives like cybersecurity courses.

- Q1-Q4: Assess progress towards 50,000 additional ACP enrollments, monitor digital literacy and skills program completion, collaborate for advanced cybersecurity courses (establish community cybersecurity response teams).
- Q2: Launch programs celebrating local digital achievements and partnerships.
- Q3: Expand accessibility initiatives (focus on user feedback, emerging assistive technologies).
- Q4: Update digital priorities based on year 3 feedback.
- Q4: Evaluate success of current work done toward completing objectives.

Year 4 (2028): Continued partnerships, program expansions, community sessions, and setting specific coverage goals.

- Q1-Q4: Continue BEAD and Digital Equity program alignment (support, safety training, skill building as regions gain internet access), implement changes to improve ACP enrollment, expand local tech centers (increase Digital Navigator services), support distribution of 20,000 accessible devices, conduct fourth round of community listening sessions, partner with higher education, workforce agencies, and business for specialized courses on emerging technologies.

- Q4: Achieve 40% coverage of the state's baseline for underserved areas with digital infrastructure, update digital priorities based on year 4 feedback.
- Q4: Evaluate success of work done toward completing objectives

Year 5 (2029): Final push for enrollment targets, celebrating achievements, evaluating programs, and updating plans based on feedback.

- Q1-Q4: Final push to meet 50,000 ACP enrollment target, continue partnership with BEAD, support digital equity capacity building of local CAIs, improve and expand digital skill building initiatives (partnerships with nonprofits and higher education), maintain and enhance online safety training, review and adjust device distribution and refresh plans, expand telehealth training and resources, conduct final round of community listening sessions and plan updates.
- Q2-Q4: Celebrate state's digital diversity (events, showcases), focus on long-term industry partnerships, identify current community needs and gaps.
- Q3-Q4: Evaluate impact of navigator programs, conduct comprehensive review of all accessibility initiatives, evaluate impact of cybersecurity initiatives, plan for continuous updates to cybersecurity training modules.
- Q4: Evaluate success of work done toward completing objectives

6. Conclusion

The Digital Equity Plan is not merely about creating systems and structures that support digital access but about ensuring every Arizonan can actively and meaningfully engage in an increasingly digital world. Central to this strategy is a vision of a digitally inclusive Arizona where access is ubiquitous, and participation is affordable. It's not just about laying down infrastructure; it's about listening to each community, identifying their unique barriers, and finding creative and collaborative ways to break down the barriers for good. Every Arizonan, particularly the most vulnerable—covered households, aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, racial and ethnic minorities, rural inhabitants, and tribal communities—should have access to affordable and reliable internet service, devices that meet their unique needs, support systems to help navigate challenges, and the digital skills needed to thrive.

Collaboration is this plan's bedrock. We acknowledge the vital role of partnership, particularly with anchor institutions, state and local government, nonprofits, higher education, and tech companies in achieving success. We support and encourage the exchange of information through collaborative problem-solving that is unique in their own communities. Additionally, by aligning with Arizona's Governor's priorities and integrating initiatives from local and Tribal governments, we ensure a unified, resource-efficient approach.

Achieving digital equity in Arizona is no small feat. The intricacies and challenges demand not just strategic planning but also substantial financial investment. While the state's commitment is unwavering, the scale of the endeavor necessitates a deep dive into funding avenues.

This journey towards digital inclusivity is a marathon, not a sprint. It requires foresight, persistence, and a thoughtful commitment that extends beyond mere implementation. As we chart this course, securing robust funding isn't just a recommendation—it's an imperative.

As we look to the future, this plan is our roadmap for the next half-decade and beyond. Arizona is not just aiming to bridge the digital divide; we aspire to be the gold standard in digital equity.

7. Appendices

7.1. Glossary

Term	Definition
Accessibility	Digital accessibility is an extension of ADA principles to the use of assistive or adaptive technology. For example, closed captioning of video helps deaf and hard-of-hearing people read what is being said, and audiobooks turn text to speech to assist blind or partially sighted people.
Access	Access is the ability to fully participate in a digital society. It includes access to tools and technologies, such as internet and computers, that allow for full participation
Affordability	Addressing affordability involves ensuring that the cost of internet access, devices, and related services is affordable. Addressing affordability involves ensuring that the cost of obtaining and maintaining internet connectivity, devices, and related services is within reach of all individuals, regardless of their income level or socioeconomic status.
Broadband	Broadband, as defined by the United States government, refers to any high-speed internet access that is always on and meets minimum benchmark speed criteria for advanced telecommunications capability defined by the FCC, which are updated periodically. The US Census includes cellular service as a type of broadband because it differentiates broadband as anything other than dial-up internet service. The current speed standards for “high-speed” broadband is 100 Mbps download, 20 Mbps upload or “100/20”. The prior speed benchmark was 25 Mbps download, 3 Mbps upload (25/3) which is still considered broadband but does not meet the benchmark for the advanced telecommunications capability in BEAD.

Cybersecurity	Cybersecurity refers to the practice of protecting computer systems, networks, and data from theft, damage, unauthorized access, or disruption. It encompasses a broad range of technologies, processes, and practices designed to safeguard digital information and infrastructure from cyber threats
Devices	Refers to the availability of computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and other digital devices that enable individuals to engage online. Access to devices is essential to ensure that individuals have the necessary tools to connect, communicate, learn, and participate.
Digital Divide	The gap between those who have access to technology, the internet and digital literacy training and those who do not.
Digital Equity	The condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy.
Digital Equity Specialist	Digital Equity Specialists are points of contact within communities (Counties, tribes, etc) that have completed formal training or a certification and have a similar Digital Equity and Inclusion framework.
Digital Literacy and Skill-Building	Digital literacy and skill-building focuses on developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to use digital technologies safely and effectively. It encompasses various aspects such as basic computer skills, internet usage, online safety, information literacy, and responsible digital citizenship.
Digital Navigator	Trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, telehealth navigation and ACP application support.
Financial Literacy	Financial literacy programs cover topics such as online banking, budgeting, digital payment systems, and identity theft prevention,

	empowering individuals to make informed financial decisions in the digital space.
Infrastructure	The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, power supplies, internet) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.
Internet access	The availability and ability to connect to the internet.
Subject Matter Expert	An individual who possesses a high level of expertise, knowledge, and experience in a specific field, subject, or area. SMEs are recognized as authorities in their respective domains due to their in-depth understanding and practical insights.
STEM	Stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. It is an educational and professional acronym used to refer to the academic disciplines and fields of study that are collectively focused on these four key areas.
Sustainability	The practice of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses various aspects, including environmental, social, and economic considerations.
Tech support	Organizations provide technical assistance and support services to address technological challenges and ensure individuals can overcome barriers to digital access. Services can include troubleshooting issues, providing guidance on device usage, and resolving connectivity problems.
Telehealth	The distribution of health-related services and information via electronic information and telecommunication technologies. It allows long-distance patient and clinician contact, care, advice, reminders, education, intervention, monitoring, and remote admissions.
Underserved locations	Locations that have reliable access to broadband at minimum speeds of 25/3 but lower than 100/20.

Unserved locations	Locations that lack reliable access to broadband at minimum speeds of 25/3.
Vulnerable populations	Groups of people who are at a higher risk of experiencing negative health, social, or economic outcomes due to various factors. These factors can include socioeconomic status, age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and access to resources and services.
Wi-Fi	The ability to connect to the internet through a wireless connection through a Wi-Fi “hotspot” which may or may not be free to the user.
Workforce Development or Upskilling	Workforce development or upskilling initiatives aim to enhance individuals' skills and capabilities for the current job market and future employment opportunities. Program offerings can include job training, career counseling, vocational education, and the skill-scaffolding required in the evolving workforce.

7.2. Arizona’s Stakeholder Asset and Resource Map

Arizona’s Stakeholder Asset and Resource Map is an invaluable tool for fostering collaboration and driving meaningful change. As a resource, the map fosters capacity building, knowledge-sharing, coordination, and collective action. Moreover, it shows the breadth and depth of expertise and services available throughout Arizona. The table format is used to organize and make information about programs and services easily accessible.

Key:

Symbol	Covered Population	Description
	Covered Households	Individuals who live in households with incomes below 150% of the poverty threshold
	Individual with a Disability	Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity
	Incarcerated Individuals	Inmates confined or recently released from a prison or jail, other than those in a federal correction facility
	Rural Residents	Any town with less than 50,000 residents and not an urbanized areas next to a town with 50,000 or more residents
	Aging Individuals	Individuals aged 60 years and older
	Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group	Individuals who are Black, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
	Veterans	Individuals who served in the active military, navy, or air service and were honorably discharged or released
	Individual with a language barrier	Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners with a low level of literacy
	*Tribal communities are included in the NTIA’s definition of covered populations under Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority Group. However, all tribes are sovereign entities that govern themselves and we acknowledge the nature of the government-to-government relationship between the state of Arizona and the 22 tribes. To represent the organizations that serve tribes, we have added an additional symbol for tribal community-serving.	

Organization	Covered Population					Internet Access	Devices	Digital Navigators	Digital Literacy	Workforce Development	Affordability	Telehealth
AARP				A			X	X	X	X	X	X
Ability 360	D					X			X	X		
AireBeam			R			X					X	
Ajo Unified	L	D	R	M	E	X			X			
Alexander's Abilities		D		M					X			
Alhambra Elementary School District	L	D		M	E	X			X			
ALL in Education	L			M	E				X			
Alliance for Navajo Broadband			R	M	E	X			X	X	X	
Allo			R			X				X	X	
AmArizonaon	D			M			X			X	X	
American Indian Policy Institute			R	M						X		
Amerind			R	M				X		X	X	
AMVets			R		V				X	X		
Anodyne Independent Living	D						X	X	X			
Apache County Town Hall			R			X						
Apple	D				E		X		X	X		
Area Agency on Aging				A			X		X			
Arivaca Community Center	L		R	A		X						
AZ-1	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X
Arizona @ Work	L				V				X	X		
Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Healthcare			R	M	E							X
Arizona Association for Economic Development			R							X		
Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network			R			X						
Arizona Center for Civic Leadership (Flinn)				M						X		
Arizona Center for the Deaf and Blind	D						X		X	X		
Arizona Center on Aging				A				X				X
Arizona Coalition for Military Families					V					X		
Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of hearing	D								X	X		
Arizona Common Ground	L		I			X						
Arizona Community Action Association	L										X	
Arizona Community Foundation	L	D	R	A	M	V	E		X		X	
Arizona Department for Veteran Services					V		X			X		
Arizona Department of Administration	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E			X	
Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation &	L		I						X	X		
Arizona Department of Economic Opportunity	L		R				X		X	X	X	

Arizona Department of Economic Security	L	D	R	A	M	V	E		X				X		
Arizona Department of Education	L	D	R	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Arizona Department of Education (Adult Education)	L	D	R	A	M	V	E	X	X		X	X			
Arizona Department of Education (Educational)	L	D	R		M		E				X				
Arizona Department of Education (Office of Digital Teaching and Learning)	L	D	R		M		E	X	X					X	
Arizona Department of Education (Tribal school)	L	D	R		M		E	X			X	X			
Arizona Department of Education (Information)	L	D	R		M		E	X	X					X	
Arizona Department of Health Services	L	D	R		M		E				X				X
Arizona Department of Homeland Security			R								X	X			
Arizona Department of Housing	L		R					X	X		X	X	X		
Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections			I								X	X			
Arizona Department of Transportation			R		M			X				X			
Arizona DES Division of Developmental Disabilities		D									X	X			
Arizona Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council		D										X			
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System	L				M		E		X					X	
Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce					M						X	X			
Arizona Kinship Support Services Children of	L		I					X							
Arizona LeadingAge		D			A										
Arizona Literacy & Learning Center					M		E		X	X	X	X			
Arizona PBS/EC Workforce Registry & Scholarships	L				M						X	X			
Arizona Public Libraries, Archives and Public Records (*services vary by library please see appendix)	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arizona Rural Development Council	L		R		M							X			
Arizona Rural Schools Association (ARSA)	L		R				E	X	X		X	X	X		
Arizona State Land Department								X							
Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records (a Division of the Secretary of State)	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Arizona State Parks	L	D	R	A	M	V	E	X							
Arizona State University (ASU Online)	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E		X	X	X	X	X	
Arizona State University (ASU)	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Arizona Technology Access Program (ArizonaTAP)	L	D						X	X		X	X	X		
Arizona Technology Council			R		M				X		X	X			
Arizona Technology in Education Association	L				M				X		X	X			
Arizona Telemedicine Program			R	A				X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Arizona Western College	L		R		M	V	E	X			X	X			
Arizona Western College; Southwest Technical Education of Yuma	L		R		M	V	E	X			X	X			
ArizonaNext	L	D	R		M	V	E						X		

City of Gilbert	L			A	M	V	E	X				X		
City of Glendale	L			A	M	V	E	X		X		X		
City of Goodyear	L			A	M	V	E	X				X		
City of Kingman	L			R	A	M	V	E	X			X		
City of Mesa	L	D		A	M	V	E	X	X	X		X	X	
City of Page	L			R				X				X		
City of Peoria	L				M	V		X		X		X		
City of Phoenix	L	D	I	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	
City of Queen Creek	L			A	M	V	E	X				X		
City of Safford	L			R	A	M	V	E	X			X		
City of Scottsdale	L			A	M	V		X				X		
City of Sierra Vista	L			R	A	M	V	E	X			X		X
City of Surprise	L			A	M	V	E	X				X		
City of Tempe	L	D		A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	
City of Tolleson	L			A	M		E	X				X		
City of Tucson	L	D	I	A	M	V	E	X				X		
City of Tucson Housing & Community Development	L	D		A	M		E	X			X	X	X	
Clifton Community Center	L			R	A									
Clifton Community Center @ Historic Train Depot	L			R				X						
Cochise College	L			R		M	V	E	X		X	X		
Cochise County	L			R				X				X		
Cochise County reentry program			I					X				X		
Coconino Department of Health and Human Services	L	D		R	A	M		E	X		X			X
College Connect Tempe	L				M			X						
College of Health Solutions	L	D			M			X		X		X		X
Comcast	L			R				X						
Common Sense Media	L	D		R		M		E			X	X	X	
Compudopt Mesa	L				M		E	X	X		X			
Connect Pima	L	D		R	A	M		E	X	X	X	X	X	X
ConnectArizona	L			R	A	M				X				X
Conrad Foundation	L			R		M					X	X		
Consumer Reports												X		
Cox Communications	L			R		M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curator Solutions				R				E			X	X		
CVS Health	L	D		R	A	M	V	E						X
DELL (Dell Technologies)		D		R	A				X					
Deloitte	L				M				X		X	X		

Department of Veterans Affairs	L		A	V					X			
Department of Veterans Services			A	V					X	X	X	
Desert Heights Charter School				M		X	X		X			
Developmental Enrichment Centers (DEC)		D				X			X			
Digital Connect	L		R	A	M	E	X	X	X	X	X	X
Digital Equity Institute	L	D	R	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X
Digital Payson			R				X				X	
Dine College	L		R		M		X	X		X	X	
Direct Advocacy & Resource Center	L	D					X					
Disability Resource Center at Arizona State University		D					X	X				
Disability Resource Center at Northern Arizona Univ		D					X	X				
Disability Resource Center at University of Arizona		D					X	X				
Disabled American Veterans		D			M	V	X	X			X	
Division of Developmental Disabilities (DES)		D							X	X		X
Duet: Partners in Health & Aging		D			A				X			X
Eastern Arizona College	L	D	R	A	M	V	E	X			X	
Edgagement		D			A	M					X	X
Epilepsy Foundation							X			X		
Equality Health Foundation	L	D			A	M	E					X
EveryoneOn Arizona			R				E	X	X	X		X
Expect More Arizona	L											X
Financial Empowerment Foundation									X	X		
Finding Balance	L	D	R	A	M	E			X	X	X	X
Flagstaff Unified School District	L	D			A	M	E	X		X	X	
Flinn Foundation											X	
Flowing Wells Unified School District	L	D	R		M	E	X					
Fortinet												X
Foundation for Blind Children		D						X	X			
Friendly House Adult Education					A				X	X		
Friends of Daisy Mountain Trails							X					
Friends of the Paulden Library			R				X	X			X	
Future Stars	L				M			X				
GateWay Community College	L	D			M	V	E	X		X	X	
Geeks 2 You					A				X			
Gila County			R				E	X	X		X	X
Gila County Communiy College	L	D	R		M	V	E	X	X		X	X
Gila Valley YMCA	L		R		M		E	X				

Girl Scouts of Arizona	L	I	M	E		X	X	X		
Glendale Community College			M	E	X			X		
GoEducate	L		M					X		
Gonzales Group			M		X					
Goodwill (Reentry Services)	L	I	M		X			X		
Goodwill of Central and Northern Arizona	L		M	E			X	X		
Google Cloud	L				X			X	X	
Google Fiber	L				X					
Gorman USA	L		M	E	X					
Graham County Chamber of Commerce			R		X			X		
Greasewood Springs Community School			R	M			X	X		
Greater Phoenix Economic Council			M					X		
Greater Phoenix Leadership			M					X		
Greater Phoenix Urban League	L		M					X		
Greater Vail Community ReSources	L		R	A	X					
Greenlee County Community Action	L		R				X			
Grow with Google	L		M	E	X			X		
Healthy Communities, Vitalyst Health Foundation	L		R	M						X
Helios Education Foundation	L		R	M	E	X		X		
Hesperus	L		R	M	V					
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce			M		X			X		
Hope's Crossing	L		M				X	X		
HP	L	D	R	A	M	V	E	X		
Indian Hills Community Center	L		R	M		X				
Inmate Programs and Reentry Arizona Department of	L	I	M					X		
InsideOut Network	L	I						X		
Intel	L		R	A	M		X	X		
Interfaith Community Services	L	D	A	M		X		X		
Isaac School District	L	D	M	E	X	X		X		
Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council				V	X			X		
JMA Wireless					X					
Job Path	L		M		X			X		
Komputer Kids	L		M			X		X		
League for Innovation in the Community College			M	E				X		
League of Cities and Towns			R	M				X		
Learning.com	L		M	E			X			
Litchfield Elementary School District	L	D	M	E	X					

Parker Police Department			I					X						X		
Partnership for Economic Innovation						M								X		
Phoenix Chamber of Commerce	L	D				M		X								
Phoenix College	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E	X	X				X		
Phoenix Community Alliance									X					X		
Phoenix Elementary School (District #1)	L	D				M		E	X	X						
Phoenix Indian Center	L				A	M		E	X							
Phoenix Oasis Reentry Services			I											X		
Phoenix Public Housing	L	D	I	A	M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Phoenix Sister Cities									X			X	X			
Phoenix VA Healthcare System							V					X				X
Pima Community College	L	D				M	V	E	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Pima County Community Action Agency	L								X					X		
Pima County Government	L	D		R	A	M		E	X					X		
Pinal County Schools	L	D		R		M		E	X	X						
Pipeline Arizona	L			R		M		E						X		
Prescott Chamber of Commerce				R					X					X		
Primavera Foundation PREP Program	L	D				M		E				X	X			
Promise Arizona						M		E								
Pueblo del Sol K-8 School	L	D				M		E	X							
Puente			I			M		E				X				
Quartzsite Community Center	L			R	A				X			X				
Rainbow Housing Assistance	L			R		M			X							
Read Better Be Better	L					M			X			X				
RefurbIT	L	D	I	R	A	M	V	E		X					X	
Regional Economic Development Center at				R					X	X				X		
RISE		D							X					X		
Saavi Services for the Blind		D							X			X	X			
Safford Senior Center					A							X				
Sahuarita Food Bank	L	D		R	A	M	V	E	X	X		X	X			
Saint Michael Indian School	L			R		M						X	X			
Salt River Project	L			R		M							X			
Sanders Unified Schools	L	D		R		M		E	X							
Santa Cruz Community Foundation	L			R	A	M		E	X					X		
Santa Cruz Training Programs		D												X		
School Connect Arizona				R		M						X				
SciTech Institute	L			R								X	X			

Scottsdale Unified School District #18	L	D			M		X	X						
Senita Valley Elementary	L	D			M		E	X						
Services Maximizing Independent Living & Siklu		D						X			X	X		
Skyline Education, Inc.	L	D			M									
Sonoran Schools	L	D			M		E	X			X			
Southside Community Association	L										X	X		
Southwest Human Development		D			M						X	X		
Special Olympics		D		R	M		E		X			X		X
Spectrum Healthcare (Prescott)	L			R	M			X						X
Springerville Town Hall				R				X				X		
St John's High School	L			R	M			X	X			X		
St Johns County Health Center	L	D		R	A	M								X
Step Up Schools Mesa	L	D			M			X	X		X			
Student Success Innovations (ASU Office of the Provost)	L	D			M			X						
Summit Healthcare Clinic	L	D			M									X
Sun Corridor Network	L			R	A	M		E	X		X			X
Sunnyside Unified School District	L	D			M			X	X		X			
T-Mobile	L							X	X		X	X	X	
Take Charge America	L										X			
Tanque Verde High School	L	D			M		E	X			X	X		
Tech Launch Arizona					M			X				X		
TechBridge Arizona	L				M		E				X	X		
TechSupport Arizona	L	D		A	M		E			X				
Tek Compass								X						
Tempe Elementary School District	L	D			M		E	X	X		X			
Tempe Union High School District	L	D			M		E	X	X					
TGen North								X				X		
The Arc of Arizona		D						X			X			
The Arizona Justice Project			I								X	X		
Ting Wireless	L			R				X						
Tohono O'odham Community College	L			R	M		E	X			X	X		
Tohono O'odham Utility Authority	L			R	M			X					X	
Town of Camp Verde	L			R	M			X				X		
Town of Clarkdale				R				X				X		
Town of Clarkdale				R				X				X		
Town of Eager	L			R	M			X				X		

7.2.1. Arizona's Public Libraries, a report compiled by the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records

As referenced throughout the Arizona Digital Equity Plan, below is a report on the locations and services of Public Libraries throughout Arizona, compiled by the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records (a Division of the Secretary of State). There is also a further description of the activities of the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public

ARIZONA LIBRARIES

Arizona's 233 public and tribal libraries have always played an important role in supporting digital equity and inclusion for all portions of the population including aging individuals, individuals who live at or below the Federal Poverty Line, recently incarcerated individuals who are reentering society, veterans and their families, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier such as English Language Learners, or those with low text literacy, individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and individuals who primarily reside in a rural area. Libraries in Arizona seek to serve the entire community and meet people where they are; connecting them with the resources and help they need to live full and engaged lives.

Libraries often provide public access computers, access to the internet and wi-fi, access to electronic resources and databases, along with digital literacy skills training for people of all backgrounds. From the youngest patrons using apps to enhance early literacy skills to senior citizens learning to use devices and connect online, the ability to use technology is critical for full participation in modern society.

More importantly, public library staff often function as technical support and digital skill educators for members of their communities. The services provided are free, allowing patrons to gain access to help without cost being a barrier.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES BY COUNTY

Information on Arizona's public libraries comes from data collected by the State Library on behalf of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) as part of the annual Public Libraries Survey (PLS).

Public Libraries Survey data is intended to be a snapshot of the state of public libraries as of the end of the state's fiscal year, and as such, information presented may have changed since its collection. Not all libraries submit PLS data, and data included in this document is meant to be reflective of Arizona's public libraries as of June 30, 2022.

ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITIES AND OUTLETS

The PLS collects data at the administrative entity and outlet level. An administrative entity is a governmentally independent library or library system, while an outlet is a permanent physical location or bookmobile.

As of June 30, 2022, Arizona has 90 administrative entities and 233 outlets.

Apache County

Population: 66,848

There are 8 public and tribal libraries in Apache County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, and

21 public computers. The service area of the Navajo Nation Library, which has branches in its chapter houses, is located in Apache and Navajo Counties and extends into New Mexico.

Apache County Library District	30 S 2nd W, St. Johns, AZ 85936
• Alpine Public Library	17 Cr 2061, Alpine, AZ 85920
• Concho Public Library	18 Cr 5101, Concho, AZ 85924
• Greer Memorial Library	74 A Cr 1120, Greer, AZ 85927
• Round Valley Public Library	179 S Main St, Eagar, AZ
• Sanders Public Library	I-40 Exit 339 N Frontage Rd E, Sanders, AZ 86512
• St. Johns Public Library	35 s 3rd w, St. Johns, AZ 85936
• Vernon Public Library	26 Cr 3142, Vernon, AZ 85940
• Navajo Nation Library	Hwy 264, Post Office Loop Rd, Window Rock, AZ 86515

Cochise County

Population: 126,648

There are 13 public libraries in Cochise County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 137 public computers.

• Benson Public Library	300 S Huachuca St, Benson, AZ 85602
• Cochise County Library District	1415 W Melody Ln, Bldg C, Bisbee, AZ 85603
○ Alice Woods Sunizona Library (Ash Creek School)	6460 E Hwy, Pearce, AZ 85625
○ Elfrida Library 10552	N Hwy 191, Elfrida, AZ 85610
○ Jimmie Libhart Branch Library	201 N Central Ave, Bowie, AZ 85605
○ Myrtle Kraft Library	2393 S Rock House Rd, Portal, AZ 85632
○ Sunsites Community Library	210 N Ford Rd, Pearce, AZ 85625
• Copper Queen Library	6 Main St, Bisbee, AZ 85603
• Douglas Public Library	560 E 10th St, Douglas, AZ 85607
• Elsie S. Hogan Community Library	100 N Curtis Ave, Willcox, AZ 85643
• Huachuca City Public Library	506 N Gonzales Blvd, Huachuca City, AZ 85616
• Sierra Vista Public Library	2600 E Tacoma St, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
• Tombstone City Library	210 S 4th St, Tombstone, AZ 85638

Coconino County

Population: 149,647

There are 10 public libraries in Coconino County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 212 public computers. The Tuba City branch library is located on the Navajo Nation with the Hopi town of Moenkopi close by.

• Flagstaff City-Coconino County Public Library	300 W Aspen Ave, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
○ Coconino County Bookmobile	300 W Aspen Ave, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
○ PALSmobile	300 W Aspen Ave, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
○ East Flagstaff Community Library	3000 N 4th St Ste 5, Flagstaff, AZ 86004
○ Forest Lakes Community Library	417 Old Rim Rd, Forest Lakes, AZ 85931
○ Grand Canyon Community Library	208 Navajo St, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023
○ Tuba City Public Library	78 Main St, Tuba City, AZ 86045

- Fredonia Public Library 130 N Main St, Fredonia, AZ 86022
- Page Public Library 479 S Lake Powell Blvd, Page, AZ 86040
- Williams Public Library 113 S 1st St, Williams, AZ 86046

Gila County

Population: 53,838

There are 9 public and tribal libraries in Gila County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 86 public computers.

- Gila County Library District 1400 E Ash St, Globe, AZ 85501
- Globe Public Library 339 S Broad St, Globe, AZ 85501
- Hayden Public Library 219 W 5th Ave, Hayden, AZ 85135
- Isabelle Hunt Memorial Public Library 6124 W Randall Place, Pine, AZ 85544
- Miami Memorial Library 282 S Adonis Ave, Miami, AZ 85539
- Payson Public Library 328 N McLane Rd, Payson, AZ 85541
- San Carlos Public Library 89 San Carlos Ave, San Carlos, AZ 85550
- Tonto Basin Public Library 415 Old Hwy 188, Tonto Basin, AZ 85553
- Young Public Library 124 S Midway Ave, Young, AZ 85554

Graham County

Population: 39,010

There are 2 public libraries in Graham County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 26 public computers.

- Pima Public Library 50 S 200 W, Pima, AZ 85543
- Safford City-Graham County Library 808 S 7th Ave, Safford, AZ 85546

Greenlee County

Population: 9,652

There are 4 public libraries in Greenlee County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 22 public computers.

- Clifton Public Library 588 Turner Ave, Clifton, AZ 85533
- Duncan Public Library 122 N Hwy 75, Duncan, AZ 85534
- Greenlee County Library System 253 5th St, Clifton, AZ 85533
 - Blue Public Library PO Box 50, Blue, AZ 85922

La Paz County

Population: 16,860

There are 5 public and tribal libraries in La Paz County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 64 public computers.

- Colorado River Indian Tribes Library/Archives 26600 Mohave Rd, Parker, AZ 85344
- La Paz County Services PO Box 309, Salome, AZ 85348
 - Bouse Public Library 44031 Plomosa Rd, Bouse, AZ 85325
 - Centennial Public Library 69725 Centennial Park Rd, Salome, AZ 85348
- Parker Public Library 1001 S Navajo Ave, Parker, AZ 85344

- Quartzsite Public Library 465 N Plymouth Ave, Quartzsite, AZ 85346

Maricopa County

Population: 4,586,431

There are 65 public and tribal libraries in Maricopa County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 2,646 public computers.

- Avondale Public Library 11350 N Civic Ctr Dr, Avondale, AZ 85323
 - Sam Garcia Western Avenue Library 495 E Western Ave, Avondale, AZ 85323
- Buckeye Public Library
 - Buckeye Public Library - Downtown 310 N 6th St, Buckeye, AZ 85326
 - Buckeye Public Library Bookmobile 21699 W Yuma Rd Ste 116, Buckeye, AZ 85326
 - Coyote Branch 21699 W Yuma Rd, Ste 116, Buckeye, AZ 85326
- Chandler Public Library 22 S Delaware St, Chandler, AZ 85225
 - Basha Library 5990 S Val Vista Dr, Chandler, AZ 85249
 - Hamilton Library 3700 S Arizona Ave, Chandler, AZ 85248
 - Sunset Library 4930 W Ray Rd, Chandler, AZ 85226
- Desert Foothills Library 38443 N Schoolhouse Rd, Cave Creek, AZ 85331
- Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation Tribal Library 16708 N Fort McDowell Rd, Fort McDowell, AZ 85264
- Glendale Public Library 5959 W Brown St, Glendale, AZ 85302
 - Foothills Branch Library 19055 N 57th Ave, Glendale, AZ 85308
 - Heroes Regional Park Library 6075 N 83rd Ave, Glendale, AZ 85303
 - Velma Teague Branch Library 7010 N 58th Ave, Glendale, AZ 85301
- Maricopa County Library District Office 9330 E Riggs Rd, Sun Lakes, AZ 85248
 - Aguila Branch Library 51300 W U.S. 60, Aguila, AZ 85320
 - Asante Branch Library * 16755 W Vereda Solana Dr, Surprise, 85378
 - Ed Robson Branch Library 9330 E Riggs Rd, Sun Lakes, AZ 85248
 - El Mirage Branch Library 14011 N 1st Ave, El Mirage, AZ 85335
 - Fairway Branch Library 10600 W Peoria Ave, Sun City, AZ 85351
 - Fountain Hills Branch Library 12901 N La Montana Dr, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268
 - Gila Bend Branch Library 777 N Logan Ave, Gila Bend, AZ 85337
 - Goodyear Branch Library 14455 W Van Buren St C-101, Goodyear, AZ 85338
 - Guadalupe Branch Library 9241 S Avenida Del Yaqui, Guadalupe, AZ 85283
 - Hollyhock Branch Library * 15844 N Hollyhock St, Surprise, AZ 85374
 - Litchfield Park Branch Library 101 W Wigwam Blvd, Litchfield Park, 85340
 - North Valley Regional Library 40410 N Gavilan Peak Parkway, Anthem, AZ 85086
 - Northwest Regional Library * 16089 N Bullard Ave, Surprise, AZ 85374
 - Perry Branch Library 1965 E Queen Creek Rd, Gilbert, AZ 85296
 - Queen Creek Branch Library 21802 S Ellsworth Rd, Queen Creek, AZ 85242
 - Southeast Regional Library 775 N Greenfield Rd, Gilbert, AZ 85234
 - Sun City Branch Library 16828 N 99th Ave, Sun City, AZ 85351

- White Tank Branch Library 20304 W White Tank Mountain Blvd, Waddell, AZ 85355
- Mesa Public Library 64 E 1st St, Mesa, AZ 85201
 - City Of Mesa Red Mountain Library 635 N Power Rd, Mesa, AZ 85205
 - Dobson Ranch Library 2425 S Dobson Rd, Mesa, AZ 85202
- Peoria Public Library System 8463 W Monroe St, Peoria, AZ 85345
 - Sunrise Mountain Branch Library 21109 N 98th Ave, Peoria, AZ 85382
- Phoenix Public Library 1221 N Central Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85004
 - Acacia Library 750 E Townley Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85020
 - Agave Library 23550 N 36th Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85310
 - Burton Barr Central Library 1221 N Central Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85004
 - Century Library 1750 E Highland Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85016
 - Cesar Chavez Library 3635 W Baseline Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85339
 - Cholla Library 10050 Metro Parkway E, Phoenix, AZ 85051
 - Desert Broom Library 29710 N Cave Creek Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85331
 - Desert Sage Library 7602 W Encanto Blvd, Phoenix, AZ 85035
 - Harmon Library 1325 S 5th Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85003
 - Ironwood Library 4333 E Chandler Blvd, Phoenix, AZ 85048
 - Juniper Library 1825 W Union Hills Dr, Phoenix, AZ 85027
 - Mesquite Library 4525 Paradise Village Parkway N, Phoenix, AZ 85032
 - Ocotillo Library 102 W Southern Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85041
 - Palo Verde Library 4402 N 51st Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85031
 - Saguaro Library 2808 N 46th St, Phoenix, AZ 85008
 - South Mountain Community Library 7050 S 24th St, Phoenix, AZ 85042
 - Yucca Library 5648 N 15th Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85015
- Salt River Tribal Library 11725 E Indian School Rd, Scottsdale, AZ 85256
- San Lucy Library 1125 C St, Gila Bend, AZ 85337
- Scottsdale Public Library – Civic Center 3839 N Drinkwater Blvd, Scottsdale, AZ 85251
 - Appaloosa Library 7377 E Silverstone Dr, Scottsdale, AZ 85255
 - Arabian Library 10215 E McDowell Mountain Ranch, Scottsdale, AZ 85255
 - Mustang Library 10101 N 90th St, Scottsdale, AZ 85258
- Tempe Public Library 3500 S Rural Rd, Tempe, AZ 85282
- Tolleson Public Library 9555 W Van Buren St, Tolleson, AZ 85353
- Wickenburg Public Library 164 E Apache St, Wickenburg, AZ 85390
- Youngtown Public Library 12035 N Club House Sq, Youngtown, AZ 85363

*In July 2023, administration of these libraries transferred to the City of Surprise

Mohave County

Population: 221,105

There are 14 public and tribal libraries in Mohave County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 162 public computers.

- Ava Ich Asiit Tribal Library 1605 Plantation Rd, Mohave Valley, AZ 86440
- Kaibab Paiute Tribal Library 1 N Pipe Springs Rd, Fredonia, AZ 86022
- Mohave County Library District
 - Bullhead City Branch Library 1170 E Hancock Rd, Bullhead City, AZ 86442
 - Chloride Community Library 4901 Pay Roll, Chloride, AZ 86431
 - Dolan Springs Library 16140 Pierce Ferry Rd, Dolan Springs, AZ 86441
 - Golden Shores/Topock Community Library 13136 S Golden Shores Parkway, Topock, AZ 86436
 - Golden Valley Community Library 3417 N Verde Rd, Golden Valley, AZ 86413
 - Lake Havasu Branch Library 1770 N MacCulloch Blvd, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403
 - MCLD Bookmobile 3269 N Burbank St, Kingman, AZ 86409
 - Meadview Community Library 149 E Meadview Blvd, Meadview, AZ 86444
 - South Mohave Valley Community Library 5744 Hwy 95, Ste 102, Fort Mohave, AZ 86426
 - Valle Vista Community Library 7264 Concho Dr, Ste B, Kingman, AZ 86401
- The Edward McElwain Memorial Library 460 Hualapai Way, Peach Springs, AZ 86434

Navajo County

Population: 108,580

There are 15 public and tribal libraries in Navajo County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 119 public computers.

- Holbrook Public Library 403 Park St, Holbrook, AZ 86025
- Hopi Public Library 1 Main St, Hopi Education Dept, Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039
- Navajo County Library District
 - Clay Springs Public Library 2106 Granite Rd, Clay Springs, AZ 85923
 - Pinedale Public Library 1264 Pinedale Rd, Pinedale, AZ 85934
 - Rim Community Library 3404 Mustang Ave, Heber, AZ 85928
 - Woodruff Community Library 6414 W 1st St, Woodruff, AZ 85942
- Pinetop-Lakeside Public Library 1595 Johnson Dr, Pinetop-Lakeside, AZ 85929
- Show Low Public Library 181 N 9th St, Show Low, AZ 85901
- Snowflake-Taylor Public Library 418 S 4th W, Snowflake, AZ 85937
- Whiteriver Public Library 100 E Walnut St, Whiteriver, AZ 85941
 - Cibecue Community Library 6 W 3rd St, Cibecue, AZ 85911
 - Kayenta Community Library Hwy 163 1 Mile W Of Hwy, Kayenta, AZ 86033
 - McNary Community Library 208 W Pine St, McNary, AZ 85930
- Winslow Public Library 420 W Gilmore St, Winslow, AZ 86047

Pima County

Population: 1,072,298

There are 31 public and tribal libraries in Pima County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 1,008 public computers.

- Dr. Fernando Escalante Tribal Library 5100 W Calle Tetakusim, Tucson, AZ 85757
- Pima County Public Library 101 N Stone Ave, Tucson, AZ 85701
 - Bookmobile - Readrunners 202 W Valencia Rd, Tucson, 85706
 - Caviglia-Arivaca Branch Library 17050 W Arivaca Rd, Arivaca, 85601
 - Dewhirst-Catalina Branch Library 15631 N Oracle Rd No. 199, Catalina 85739
 - Dusenberry-River Branch Library 5605 E River Rd No. 105, Tucson, AZ 85750
 - Eckstrom-Columbus Branch Library 4350 E 22nd St, Tucson, AZ 85711
 - El Pueblo Branch Library 101 W Irvington Rd, Tucson, AZ 85714
 - El Rio Branch Library 1390 W Speedway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85745
 - Flowing Wells Branch Library 1730 W Wetmore Rd, Tucson, AZ 85705
 - Himmel Park Branch Library 1035 N Treat Ave, Tucson, AZ 85716
 - Joyner-Green Valley Branch Library 601 N La Canada Dr, Green Valley, AZ 85614
 - Kirk-Bear Canyon Branch Library 8959 E Tanque Verde Rd, Tucson, AZ 85749
 - Martha Cooper Branch Library 1377 N Catalina Ave, Tucson, AZ 85712
 - Miller-Golf Links Branch Library 9640 E Golf Links Rd, Tucson, AZ 85730
 - Mission Branch Library 3770 S Mission Rd, Tucson, AZ 85713
 - Murphy-Wilmot Branch Library 530 N Wilmot Rd, Tucson, AZ 85711
 - Nanini Branch Library 7300 N Shannon Rd, Tucson, AZ 85741
 - Oro Valley Branch Library 1305 W Naranja Dr, Oro Valley, AZ 85737
 - Quincie Douglas Branch Library 1585 E 36th St, Tucson, AZ 85713
 - Sahuarita Branch Library 670 W Sahuarita Rd, Sahuarita, AZ 85629
 - Salazar-Ajo Branch Library 15 W Plaza St #179, Ajo, AZ 85321
 - Sam Lena - South Tucson Branch Library 1607 S 6th Ave, Tucson, AZ 85713
 - Santa Rosa Branch Library 1075 S 10th Ave, Tucson, AZ 85701
 - Southwest Branch Library 6855 S Mark Rd, Tucson, AZ 85757
 - Valencia Branch Library 202 W Valencia Rd, Tucson, AZ 85706
 - W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Library 10931 E Mary Ann Cleveland Way, Tucson, AZ 85747
 - Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr. Branch Library 7800 N Schisler Dr, Tucson, AZ 85743
 - Woods Memorial Branch Library 3455 N 1st Ave, Tucson, AZ 85719
- San Xavier Learning Center Library 1960 W Wa:k Lane, Tucson, AZ 85746
- Venito Garcia Library and Archives Main St, Tribal Bldg, Sells, AZ 85634

Pinal County

Population: 453,924

There are 19 public and tribal libraries in Pinal County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 236 public computers.

- Ak-Chin Indian Community Library 46521 W Farrell Rd, Maricopa, AZ 85139
- Apache Junction Public Library 1177 N Idaho Rd, Apache Junction, AZ 85119
 - Bookmobile 1177 N Idaho Rd, Apache Junction, AZ 85119
- Casa Grande Public Library 449 N Drylake St, Casa Grande, AZ 85122
 - Casa Grande Public Library Bookmobile 1556 N Arizola Rd, Casa Grande, 85122
 - Vista Grande Library 1556 N Arizola Rd, Casa Grande, 85122
- Coolidge Public Library 160 W Central Ave, Coolidge, AZ 85128

- Eloy Santa Cruz Library 1000 N Main St, Eloy, AZ 85131
- Florence Community Library 778 N Main St, Florence, AZ 85132
- Ira H. Hayes Memorial Library 94 N Church St, Sacaton, AZ 85147
- Kearny Public Library 912-A Tilbury Rd, Kearny, AZ 85137
- Mammoth Public Library 125 N Clark St, Mammoth, AZ 85618
- Maricopa Library & Cultural Center 18160 N Maya Angelou Dr, Maricopa, AZ 85138
- Pinal County Library District 92 W Butte Ave, Florence, AZ 85132
 - Arizona City Community Library 13254 Sunland Gin Rd, Arizona City, AZ 85123
 - Oracle Public Library 565 E American Ave, Oracle, AZ 85623
 - San Manuel Public Library 108 5th Ave, San Manuel, AZ 85631
- Superior Public Library 99 N Kellner Ave, Superior, AZ 85173

Santa Cruz County

Population: 49,039

There are 5 public libraries in Santa Cruz County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 40 public computers.

- Nogales/Santa Cruz County Public Library 518 N Grand Ave, Nogales, AZ 85621
 - Rio Rico Library 275 Rio Rico Dr, Rio Rico, AZ 85648
 - Sonoita Library 3147 State Hwy 83, Sonoita, AZ 85637
 - Tubac Library 50 Bridge Rd, Tubac, AZ 85640
- Patagonia Public Library 346 Duquesne Ave, Patagonia, AZ 85624

Yavapai County

Population: 245,389

There are 24 public and tribal libraries in Yavapai County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 343 public computers. In addition, the Yavapai Library Network connects over fifty public, academic, K-12 and special libraries through a shared integrated library system that allows patrons to borrow materials from any member library.

- Camp Verde Community Library 130 Black Bridge Rd, Camp Verde, AZ 86322
- Chino Valley Public Library 1020 W Palomino Rd, Chino Valley, AZ 86323
- Cottonwood Public Library 100 S 6th St, Cottonwood, AZ 86326
- Jerome Public Library 600 Clark St, Jerome, AZ 86331
- Prescott Public Library 215 E Goodwin St, Prescott, AZ 86303
- Prescott Valley Public Library 7401 E Skoog Blvd, Prescott Valley, AZ 86314
- Sedona Public Library 3250 White Bear Rd, Sedona, AZ 86336
 - Village of Oak Creek 51 Bell Rock Plaza, Ste 51A, Sedona, AZ 86351
- Yavapai County Free Library District 1971 Commerce Ctr Cir, Ste D, Prescott, AZ 86301
 - Ash Fork Public Library 450 W Lewis Ave, Ash Fork, AZ 86320
 - Bagdad Public Library 700 Palo Verde Rd #C, Bagdad, AZ 86321
 - Beaver Creek Public School Library 4810 E Beaver Creek Rd, Rimrock, AZ 86335
 - Black Canyon City Community Library 34701 S Old Black Canyon Hwy, Black Canyon City, AZ 85324

- Clark Memorial Library 39 N Ninth St, Clarkdale, AZ 86324
- Congress Public Library 26750 Santa Fe Rd, Congress, AZ 85332
- Cordes Lakes Public Library 15989 Cordes Lakes Drive, Mayer, AZ 86333
- Crown King Public Library 23550 S Towers Mountain Rd, Crown King, AZ 86343
- Dewey-Humboldt Town Library 2735 S Corral St, Humboldt, AZ86329
- Mayer Public Library 10004 Wicks Ave, Mayer, AZ 86333
- Paulden Public Library 16 W Big Chino Road, Paulden, AZ 86334
- Seligman Public Library 54170 N Floyd St, Seligman, AZ 86337
- Spring Valley Library 17320 E Mule Deer Drive, Mayer, AZ 86333
- Wilhoit Public Library 9325 S Donegal Dr, Ste B, Wilhoit, AZ 86332
- Yarnell Public Library 22278 Hwy 89, Yarnell, AZ 85362
- Yavapai-Prescott Tribal Library 530 E Merritt St, Prescott, AZ 86301

Yuma County

Population: 209,920

There are 9 public and tribal libraries in Yuma County. Libraries offer free internet and wi-fi access, electronic device lending, and 284 public computers.

- Cocopah Tribal Library 14250 S Ave I, Somerton, AZ 85350
- Yuma County Library District 2951 S 21st Dr, Yuma, AZ 85364
 - Dateland Branch Library Dateland School, 1300 S. Ave 64e, Dateland, AZ 85333
 - Foothills Branch Library 13226 S Frontage Rd, Yuma, AZ 85367
 - Heritage Branch Library 350 3rd Ave, Yuma, AZ 85364
 - Roll Branch Library 5151 S Ave 39e, Roll, AZ 85347
 - San Luis Branch Library 1075 N 6th Ave, San Luis, AZ 85349
 - Somerton Branch Library 240 Canal St, Somerton, AZ 85350
 - Wellton Branch Library 28790 San Jose Ave, Wellton, AZ 85356

ADDITIONAL ARIZONA LIBRARY INFORMATION

The Arizona State Library keeps a public-facing directory of libraries in the state. This includes not only public library information, but also academic, school, special and tribal libraries.

To access the State Library’s public library directory, please visit <https://azlibrary.gov/library-directory>.

ARIZONA PUBLIC LIBRARY CONNECTIVITY DATA

The Arizona State Library includes state-level technology and connectivity-related questions in the Public Libraries Survey, which is reported at the outlet level. This includes:

- Number of Public Internet Computers
- Type of Public Internet Connectivity
- Speed of Public Internet Connection
- Number of Staff Internet Computers
- Type of Staff Internet Connectivity
- Speed of Staff Internet Connectivity

- Availability of Wireless Internet
- Overall Availability of Wireless Internet
- Wireless Download Speed
- Circulation of Electronic Devices (including hot spots)

Please see the Arizona Public Library Statistics and State Library Annual Report for more information.

For technical data such as connectivity speed, it is best to use the collected data in conjunction with other sources, including [USAC's E-rate Open Data](#).

ARIZONA STATE LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & PUBLIC RECORDS

The State Library is committed to providing Arizonans access to information about their government, their state, and their world by offering content in a variety of formats, preserving Arizona's history for future generations, and empowering local institutions to engage their communities in learning. The State Library values accessibility, preservation, customer service, community engagement, and collaboration.

With support from federal and state funding, many services are provided to Arizona residents through the branches:

- Archives and Records Management collects, preserves, and makes available to the public and all branches of government, permanent public records, historical manuscripts, photographs, and other materials that contribute to the understanding of Arizona history. It also helps public bodies manage the entire lifecycle of records, paper and born-digital.
- Arizona Talking Book Library provides books, newspapers, magazines, and other library resources in multiple formats to meet the needs of eligible users at no cost.
- Library, Archives & Public Records Administration preserves Arizona and provides access to empower all Arizonans now and in the future; expands the State Library's impact through grants, e-rate support, and partnerships; makes informed decisions to provide stewardship and service to Arizona; and grows leaders and innovators who embrace changes that lead to superior service.
- Library Development empowers Arizona libraries to offer excellent customer service through consulting, grant funding, resources, and training. Team members specializing in Digital Inclusion, Tribal Libraries, Continuing Education, and Youth & Adult Services customize support for libraries to meet changing local needs and increase capacity for them to offer digital services.
- State of Arizona Research Library connects Arizonans and people around the world to unique Arizona materials, including books, newspapers, periodicals, and maps available in print and online in the Digital Arizona Library.

Digital inclusion work is threaded throughout the State Library's services, but most notably through expanded digital access to collections, services to the visually and text disabled through the Arizona Talking Book Library, and grants and training offered by Library Development with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The most recent addition has been funding for piloting library telemedicine projects.

CONNECT ARIZONA – A Service of the Library Development Branch of the Arizona State Library

Recent scholarship has called digital literacy and access to affordable, reliable internet a “super social determinant of health,” however, many individuals in Arizona face significant challenges in accessing and utilizing these resources.

Born as an early-pandemic response, [Connect Arizona](#), a service of the Library Development Branch of the State Library, strives to help Arizonans overcome those challenges through a Digital Navigator program.

The Connect Arizona Digital Navigator program is modeled after the National Digital Inclusion Alliance's Digital Navigator model and provides a proven framework to address these challenges effectively. By implementing this model, the State Library is working to help close the Digital Divide and to empower individuals to leverage technology for personal, educational, and professional purposes.

People across the state have access to on-demand technology tutoring, troubleshooting, digital literacy upskilling, help finding affordable internet and devices, and more through this program supported with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Connect Arizona Digital Navigators offer help and educational opportunities to Arizonans virtually, over the phone, and through text and email, enabling services to be provided throughout the state. Since its creation, Connect Arizona has completed over 4,000 tickets, helping people in eleven of Arizona's fifteen counties on a wide range of topics, including many requests for assistance signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

RELEVANT LINKS

Arizona Public Library Statistics and State Library Annual Report - <https://azlibrary.gov/libdev/programsservices-and-tools/arizona-public-library-statistics>

Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records - <https://azlibrary.gov/>

Connect Arizona - <https://connect-arizona.com/>

Library Directory - <https://azlibrary.gov/library-directory>

Universal Service Administrative Co. (USAC Open Data) - <https://opendata.usac.org/>

ARIZONA
COMMERCE AUTHORITY