

DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1 (OB1): Enhance broadband availability, and affordability for covered populations	
Strategies	Actions
<p>OB1-S1: Optimize broadband deployment in partnership with the OBD by sharing data regarding covered populations to inform the prioritization process and develop strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and collaborate with the OBD by providing necessary reports and other strategies as needed with regards to connectivity and affordability needs of covered populations. Creating covered population maps is one way the ELC/DWD already has begun to create data layers that may be useful to the OBD in prioritizing deployment resources. • Develop and distribute materials (newsletter, publication, social media, etc.) to provide updates on deployment among key digital equity stakeholders, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis. This information will help keep stakeholders informed while providing opportunities for feedback of ongoing local needs and/or opportunities. • Encourage statewide speed test initiatives in areas populated by covered populations, such as multi-dwelling units (MDUs), and support the analysis and distribution of the results. • Analyze data from the OBD and the Center for Rural Development (CRD) on statewide speed tests to determine internet usability in areas inhabited by covered populations.
<p>OB1-S2: Detect and alleviate obstacles and barriers preventing broadband expansion and adoption by facilities and communities that provide services to covered populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentionally locate and prioritize providing access to intermittent housing, group homes, assisted living facilities, MDUs, and homeless shelters in partnership with agencies such as the Department of Corrections, the Department of Aging and Independent Living, local nonprofits, and local workforce boards. • Leverage KYSTAT data collection, stakeholder engagements, and other resources to identify facilities that provide services to covered populations that may be unserved or underserved. • Promote the development of regional or county-level digital equity plans via regional events, newsletters, summits and other engagement opportunities since ELC/DWD was not able to find such plans.

<p>OB1-S3: Build a publicly accessible catalog of state and national subsidies on the digital equity website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and gather resources to promote available resources, particularly those that are free or low-cost, have low barriers to participation, and directly benefit the covered populations (for example, ISPs, local governments, and community-based organizations). These plans must meet or exceed the FCC’s definition for high-speed internet and cost no more than 2% of a household’s income. This catalog will include eligibility requirements, cost, and available discounts. It should also be updated quarterly and be easily accessible. • Track penetration rate over time and audit programs quarterly on participation rates. • Conduct regional convenings to promote digital equity throughout the state and encourage local communities to adopt the principles of digital equity.
<p>OB1-S4: Identify and increase participation rates in low-cost or affordable broadband programs such as the ACP in targeted communities that have lower participation rates than the national average.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make the most impact and efficiently support our covered populations, the ELC/DWD will collaborate with local partners, including school districts, libraries, and workforce development boards, to promote low-cost programs to increase participation in the rural counties and low-income communities experiencing low ACP adoption rates and high covered population concentration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 10% in the first year • Less than 20% in the second year • Less than 30% in the third year • Identify and highlight communities or organizations across the Commonwealth that are excelling at promoting affordable programs in creative and unique ways.
<p>OB1-S5: Promote community anchor institutions with free Wi-Fi or hot spot loan programs as a stopgap measure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote entities and programs such as the KDLA bookmobiles, equipment loan programs, school district programs, community-based organizations, and Learn Without Limits. • Collaborate with local Workforce Investment Boards serving covered populations to encourage device distribution or lending programs for people from covered populations.
<p>OB1-S6: Leverage existing funds in partnership with the OBD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate future grants, and utilize existing local Workforce Development grants, such as the Quality Equity, Strategy, and Training (QUEST) grant, and other discretionary funding sources.

Objective 2 (OB2): Ensure access to affordable devices for all Kentuckians	
Strategies	Actions
<p>OB2-S1: Create a sustainable device ecosystem in alignment with local digital equity plans, particularly in areas with low device ownership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing partners including the City of Louisville, Simmons College of Kentucky and SOAR and other organizations to determine common needs and practices within the first year. • Identify any policy barriers to device refurbishments and collaborate with policymakers to remove them. • Determine best practices to develop a “Learn and Earn” program that provides free devices upon successful completion of digital skills training. • Partner with key community stakeholders to promote low-cost devices ownership among ethnic minorities to increase the current rate of 72.4% by 2 % each year.
<p>OB2-S2: Identify and promote device refresh programs to deploy/sell low-cost refurbished devices to covered populations in collaboration with local governments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with government agencies and schools to develop a framework to sustainably handle the “refresh cycles” (devices nearing the end of their use within the agency but can still be utilized). This will prepare them to become available for safe distribution to covered populations. • Encourage colleges, universities, area technology centers, and local vocational programs to be involved in the refurbishment of devices. • Explore opportunities with the Registered Apprenticeship program under the Kentucky Career Center’s Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services to expand the workforce available to support device refurbishing. • Identify, support, and promote nonprofit electronic refurbishing programs in Kentucky to have the capacity to both refurbish and properly recycle devices (end of life e-cycle program) throughout the life of the Digital Equity Act funding. • Prioritize outreach and awareness activities in rural areas or counties with more than 15% of households lacking household devices.
<p>OB2-S3: Capitalize on funding to drive impact while balancing urgency, universality, and equity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote local grant writers to include device funding in grant requests to anticipate device needs when working with covered populations. • Support local partners on how to apply for waivers from FCC for non-providers to purchase devices for ACP program and recoup a portion or all device cost through the program/voucher. • Support device upgrades to incarcerated individuals in partnership with DOC.

Objective 3 (OB3): Increase application accessibility and inclusivity to state and local government programs	
Strategies	Actions
<p>OB3-S1: Conduct an accessibility study on critical state programs that are most frequently used by the covered populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the most visited and critical state-run programs that serve covered populations. Partner with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to conduct accessibility studies to determine the trends in accessibility of critical state government websites and/or resources every other year of the grant period. • Make available the known resources in design and user testing to promote user-friendly design and consistency in government websites, programs, and applications, making digital equity a priority in design. • Encourage state agencies and nonprofits to create culturally sensitive materials in multiple formats and languages that reflect the communities they serve. • Conduct open forums for state agencies and local organizations representing individuals with language barriers to share best practices on enhancing accessibility and inclusivity of applications, at least every other year.
<p>OB3-S2: Make it easier for covered populations to access government resources and programs online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with workforce agencies in developing statewide digital navigator and promote their presence at community events. • Support community organizations to utilize readily available government websites for community work and serving covered populations. • Encourage Kentucky state agencies and local governments to prioritize accessibility, transparency, user-friendliness, when deploying resources and services online.
<p>OB3-S3: Identify and/or develop an assessment tool for local governments to improve citizens' overall experience in accessing government services online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate city and county governments to have active, accessible, and easily understandable websites. • Encourage beta testing websites with ADA experts and digital navigator, providing resources when available and necessary. • Develop resources and periodic communications that quantify what constitutes a positive digital experience for individuals with disabilities.
<p>OB3-S4: Improve civic and social engagement - for covered populations on virtual platforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local community leaders on the importance of inclusivity for civic and social engagement. • Promote Digital Inclusion in local culture as a platform for advancing online civic and social engagement for covered populations. • Work to reduce stigma for covered populations utilizing online resources.

<p>OB3-S5: Enhance the delivery of other essential services, such as emergency management alert efforts for covered populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing digital training/education/awareness for service providers, local and state government services. Bring awareness to programs such as the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’s emergency kits for the hard of hearing for use during emergencies. • Support a multi-pronged approach to communication efforts. • Provide support to libraries and trusted community partners to ensure they have the appropriate information, supplies, and community knowledge to provide help to patrons and individuals from covered populations. • Encourage partnership with the public service commission and the United Way of Kentucky to explore how to authorize 211 and referral hotline available 24/7 year-round in all Kentucky counties.
<p>Objective 4 (OB4): Ensure that all Kentuckians are equipped to navigate the internet safely</p>	
<p>Strategies</p>	<p>Actions</p>
<p>OB4-S1: Identify existing and/or develop and deliver basic internet safety and fundamental online resources and post them on the digital equity website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local partners to utilize curriculum and create pathways to certifications and program completion in areas like basic skills and internet safety. • Partner with organizations supporting justice-involved individuals including Goodwill Industries of Kentucky to encourage pathways to teach digital skills and literacy, including certificate of completion upon release to assist with re-entry. • Collaborate with K-12 institutions to engage community efforts to teach digital skills and literacy.
<p>OB4-S2: Create and distribute publicly accessible internet safety protocol documents and posters at places where covered populations frequently use public computers and Wi-Fi such as libraries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the local community to distribute internet safety information in existing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School correspondence • Grocery stores • “Welcome to Community” packets, a welcome wagon at DMVs • Laundromats, community centers, story times with libraries • Bookmobiles • Barber shops/beauty salons • Job fair packets • Local chamber of commerce groups • Develop ways to incorporate internet safety training for accessing public Wi-Fi. • Encourage a “hard-to-ignore” sign-in screen to promote internet safety. • Encourage the practice of having distributed devices come with pre-installed icons that link to a helpdesk or digital navigator portal installed on the desktop for easy access. • Produce public service announcements (PSAs) around internet safety and security.

<p>OB4-S3: Collaborate with the Kentucky Office of Cybersecurity to identify and/or develop and/or promote best practice resources on internet safety targeting covered populations in their communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with experts at the Kentucky Homeland Security’s Fusion Center, libraries, and community partners to develop statewide cybersecurity resources. • Promote free online tools such as firewalls, antivirus, or full-suite software. • Collaborate with experts from the Kentucky Office of Cybersecurity to develop countermeasures needed against cyber threats that affect covered populations. • Promote the adoption of internet of things (IoT) security measures as a standard methodology.
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Objective 5 (OB5): Improve digital literacy for all covered populations in Kentucky

Strategies	Actions
<p>OB5-S1: Define digital citizenship in the Commonwealth and roll out with key stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with digital equity stakeholders and trusted partners including the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), to develop the framework surrounding digital citizenship for the state as a whole. At present, KDE provides digital citizenship curriculum only accessible by students and adults associated with a school district. However, this could serve as the foundation for a statewide definition of digital citizenship. • Explore how to standardize digital skills and literacy through recognized credentials, much like how GED and high school diplomas are standardized. • Promote the practice of celebrating achievements through a public ceremony to empower citizens and inspire others.
<p>OB5-S2: Improve Kentuckians’ digital literacy via private-public partnerships to promote or enhance existing programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage entities such as Area Development Districts (ADDs), Workforce Boards, County Extension Offices and other nonprofit networks to continue offering digital inclusion resources and community outreach. • Facilitate meetings with key education and training partners, community-based organizations and stakeholders around developing core digital skills/certifications requirements as needed and share best practices. • Leverage agencies within the Department of Workforce Development as well as community partners to incorporate digital equity into registered apprenticeships, re-entry, and other workforce talent pipelines. • Continue the Asset Inventory to capture new and expanding programs across the Commonwealth.

<p>OB5-S3: Build an interactive digital inclusion map so all Kentuckians can find training resources and support near them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the interactive digital inclusion map managed by the ELC/DWD to allow for research and longitudinal data opportunities. • Partner with digital inclusion organizations to develop a tool to incorporate the interactive digital inclusion map to determine user experience or skill level. • Continue ongoing data collection to gather the work being done in communities by ongoing promotion of the asset inventory instrument and interactive digital inclusion map. • Require that partners complete the asset inventory instrument when applying for future grant opportunities through the Digital Equity Act.
<p>OB5-S4: Enhance the digital aptitude and self-assurance of covered populations in Kentucky by implementing an enhanced program through our collaborative partnership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local digital inclusion practitioners and digital equity stakeholders to develop or adopt modules that follow a tiered approach to teach digital skills and offer incentives such as certificates of completion. • Identify opportunities that support digital navigators and/or having a digital citizenship transcript that records every tier, program, or course completed. • Support the development and growth of peer-to-peer support programs to continue sharing knowledge within communities, with the goal of engaging local lived experts in the programs.
<p>Objective 6 (OB6): Help Kentuckians develop the digital skills necessary for work and life</p>	
<p>Strategies</p>	<p>Actions</p>
<p>OB6-S1: Offer personal digital skills assessments and certifications in Kentucky to all who wish to achieve their goals or attain a basic digital skill level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer all covered populations digital skills and literacy education platforms through Cabinet opportunities, including the Kentucky Career Center, within the ELC/DWD. • Utilize the Kentucky Office of Adult Education’s local provider network that currently offers digital literacy assessments, certificates, and upskilling through the Northstar Digital Literacy platform. • Connect outcomes to baseline data to inform grant requirements for community- based organizations. • Utilize pre-assessments to focus on areas of opportunity and growth and record of completion. • Explore the feasibility of connecting digital citizenship milestones to a longitudinal database to track progress and success.

<p>OB6-S2: Incorporate digital skills training into existing education, training, and workforce development programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with existing workforce programs including skills development and reentry programs run through the Kentucky Career Center and its partner to determine whether or not the digital skills development is included to meet today’s skills requirements. • Partner with state and local agencies to create incentives for businesses to build in or adapt digital skills into training programs. • Partner with DOC to advance educational programs including WIN, Stride Learning Solutions, FuelEd, Fast Forward, and Digital Literacy.
<p>OB6-S3: Expand covered populations’ participation in and completion of online targeted-sector training in alignment with Kentucky’s economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase capacity to supplement anchor institutions like libraries, education and training entities and Kentucky Career Centers to support and expand online targeted sector training that includes digital skills. The Kentucky Career Centers currently offer Digital Literacy Courseware and the Digital Literacy Credentials focused on building technology skills needed for success across all careers in Kentucky via the WIN Career Readiness System. • Integrate digital literacy skill development into reading, math, and English language instruction for adults through Kentucky Adult Education courses. Kentucky Adult Education currently includes digital upskilling as a component of all Integrated Education and Training (IET) and Workplace Literacy programs. • Work with trusted community partners and educational institutions to encourage digital skills and digital literacy as part of GED 62 curriculum (or credit hours) rather than stand- alone certificates that support the needs of the covered populations. • Explore incentives and support for people coming from covered populations who wish to rejoin the workforce. This includes promoting the readily available Work Ready Scholarships available via the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). • Partner with the Department of Corrections, through initiatives like Jobs on Day One, to increase the individuals participating in digital skills and literacy programs each year by 2% for formerly incarcerated individuals. • Partner with Simmons College of Kentucky, Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), Louisville Metro Council, and any other community with a digital inclusion plan to promote their digital inclusion plans and strategies.

<p>OB6-S4: Enhance educational outcomes of covered populations through engagement in online learning platforms along the education continuum from preschool to postsecondary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore models such as the “digital backpack” and the positive impact it can have on P-20 (preschool through graduate school) with targeted covered populations. • Encourage match funding from public and private entities for advancing digital equity, such as the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), private foundation funding, corporate sponsorships, etc.
<p>OB6-S5: Positively impact the outcome and equity gaps for covered populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services to develop registered apprenticeship programs leading to digital jobs, such as digital navigator, to drive their presence in every county/region. • Create a digital equity outcomes dashboard that captures the outcomes for covered populations. • Create clear pathways and incentives to promote remote working, particularly in Eastern Kentucky. • Encourage employers, industry partnerships and intermediary to develop registered apprenticeship programs sponsorships to develop registered apprenticeship programs for their digital jobs. • Explore how to partner with WIOA, KTAP and SNAP participants wrap-around support to low-income individuals pursuing digital skills and address any policy issues to combat the benefit cliff. • Promote best practices by encouraging existing and prospective businesses to hire from covered populations with incentives like the Work Opportunity Tax Credits at the federal level and support for people coming from covered populations who wish to join the workforce.
<p>OB6-S6: Increase participation in telehealth services resulting in improved health outcomes of covered populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to promote telehealth services in rural areas. • Develop maps, data analysis, and other resources to provide health and community- based organizations with supportive technologies. • Promote the practice of collecting and promoting testimonials of success in managing illness through technology throughout the life of the Digital Equity Act to build interest, engagement, and adoption.