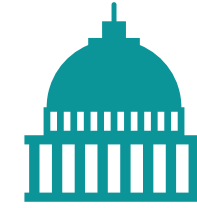


A decorative graphic in the top right corner consists of a series of overlapping, curved lines in a light blue color, creating a wireframe or mesh-like effect that tapers towards the right edge.

STATE OF DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THE STATES

A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consists of a series of overlapping, curved lines in a light blue color, creating a wireframe or mesh-like effect that tapers towards the bottom left edge.

Indicator 1: The state dedicates human or financial resources to digital inclusion



By dedicating human and financial resources to digital inclusion, state governments give institutional and tangible support to digital equity as a necessary condition for full civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

Digital inclusion staff can lead coordination between agencies and departments to align goals for improving digital access for residents and maximize the impact of state initiatives by reaching more residents efficiently. As key points of contact for a variety of stakeholders, digital inclusion staff are able to lead community engagement and gather data, allowing state governments to respond dynamically to the needs of communities.

39 STATES dedicate human or financial resources to digital inclusion

Dedicated state funding is crucial for the long-term sustainability of digital inclusion initiatives, as it provides stakeholders resources to advance digital inclusion that are not contingent on Federal priorities. While Federal funding remains an important contributor to state and local government initiatives, state governments are well-positioned to design funding opportunities that meet the specific digital inclusion needs of the state.

1.1 Does the state government have at least one dedicated staff person whose primary role is to advance digital inclusion initiatives?

39 States have at least one dedicated staff person whose primary role is to advance digital inclusion initiatives

1.2 Does the state have dedicated state funding to support local or state digital inclusion initiatives?

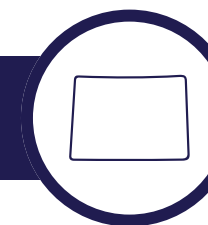
3 States have dedicated state funding to support local or state digital inclusion initiatives

NORTH CAROLINA



In 2021, North Carolina established the Office of Digital Equity and Literacy—the first of its kind in the United States. Building on prior pioneering efforts, the Office of Digital Equity leads engagement with local digital inclusion leaders and facilitates the administration of funding to advance digital equity in every county.

COLORADO



Colorado dedicated state funds to launch a digital navigator program to help individuals access digital skills training opportunities, affordable broadband, and devices. The investment was enhanced by additional sources of funding, giving the program greater capacity to reach more underserved areas of the state by embedding digital navigators where they are most needed.

Indicator 2: The state contributes to the digital inclusion ecosystem and has established a mechanism for ongoing public feedback



By proactively seeking opportunities for public engagement and feedback, states can ensure that digital inclusion initiatives they pursue are grounded in the experiences of those they serve.

Opportunities to gain community perspectives can take a variety of forms, but strong feedback mechanisms share important core characteristics: they invite perspectives from diverse stakeholders, operate in the public eye and on an ongoing basis, and explore all components of digital inclusion.

State leadership or participation in digital inclusion collaboratives, such as task forces, working groups, action teams, and coalitions, solidifies digital inclusion as an enduring priority. Because these collaboratives draw diverse stakeholders—such as local governments, libraries, housing authorities, educational institutions, social service and civic organizations—states can develop partnerships with organizations supporting populations with diverse needs. These partnerships can support successful implementation of state digital inclusion initiatives.

9 STATES contribute to the digital equity ecosystem and have established a mechanism for ongoing public feedback

2.1 . Does the state participate in a digital inclusion coalition?

7 States participate in a digital inclusion coalition.

2.2 Does the state have a public body (task force, commission, working group, action team, state-led coalition) focused solely on digital inclusion, that operates in the public eye?

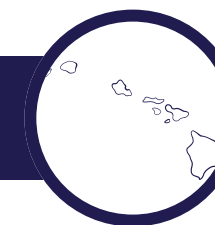
4 States have a public body (task force, commission, working group, action team, state-led coalition) focused solely on digital inclusion, that operates in the public eye.

CONNECTICUT



Led by the Connecticut State Library, CT Libraries and Partners for Digital Equity brings together community-based organizations, libraries, and government agencies to amplify community perspectives, discuss the outcomes of digital inclusion initiatives, and align strategies to increase digital access in communities across the state.

HAWAII



Established in 2020, the Broadband Hui collaborative brings together individuals representing community based organizations, nonprofits, local governments, schools, and businesses. Convened by the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office and Hawaii County, the group meets weekly and operates with transparency, publishing agendas and past recordings on their website, and openly encourages public participation.

Indicator 3: The state connects residents with digital skills resources for education and training opportunities



States can play a leading role in helping residents gain digital skills by uplifting resources on public platforms, connecting individuals to training opportunities, and by developing strategies to integrate digital skills training into workforce development programs.

Digital skills are foundational to navigating many domains for which states already provide public information and resources, including education, employment, health, and transportation. Including digital skills resources is a natural extension of state efforts to connect residents with helpful information. By uplifting and socializing digital skills resources on publicly accessible platforms, states can serve as a resource for digital inclusion practitioners serving communities, and directly support individuals seeking to advance their skills.

36 STATES connect residents with digital skills resources for education and training opportunities

By implementing strategies to integrate digital skills training in workforce development, states ensure that jobseekers or those interested in advancing their career obtain the skills they need to compete for a variety of jobs.

3.1 . Does the state share digital skills resources on publicly accessible platforms?

33

States share digital skills resources on publicly accessible platforms

3.2 Does the state have a strategy to integrate digital skills training into state workforce development programs?

8

States have a strategy to integrate digital skills training into state workforce development programs

3.3 Does the state uplift information about in-person and virtual guided opportunities for digital skills development?

8

States uplift information about virtual and in-person guided opportunities for digital skills development

IDAHO



Through Digital Access for All Idahoans, the Idaho Commission for Libraries links individuals to digital navigator services and curated resources that provide online digital skills learning modules. The lessons cover a range of technical concepts and practical applications, including computer basics, internet security and privacy, social media, telehealth, Google and Microsoft products, online shopping, and enrolling in government benefits.

Indicator 4: The state creates and contributes to pathways for device access or low-cost device ownership



Access to internet-enabled devices is essential for full participation in the digital world, and states can create pathways for device access and ownership by contributing to the supply, preparation, and deployment of devices to communities.

Through legislation, administrative policies, and direct funding opportunities, states can support community organizations and anchor institutions in providing devices for public use, and help individuals gain ownership of affordable devices that meet their needs.

State surplus policies (i.e., how states distribute property they no longer need) can be designed to prioritize allocation to entities that serve the public or refurbish devices. States can also consider non-monetary support, such as leveraging state assets to support the storage and transportation of devices to eligible organizations.

States can also design funding opportunities to include entities that prepare computers for low-cost resale, or provide devices directly to households in need.

14

STATES

create and contribute to pathways for device access or low-cost device ownership

4.1 Does the state contribute to the supply, preparation, or deployment of devices for public benefit?

13

States contribute to the supply, preparation, or deployment of devices for public benefit.

4.2 Does the state allocate funding to help low-income households obtain an internet-enabled device?

2

States allocate funding to help low-income households obtain an internet-enabled device.

ILLINOIS



Through the Connect Illinois Computer Equity Network, the Illinois Office of Broadband collaborated with device refurbishers, counties, and community partners to accept and refurbish device donations for redistribution to qualifying households in need of a computer. As of January 2023, over 18,000 refurbished computers had been distributed to eligible households in nearly every county.

MARYLAND



The Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband launched the Connected Devices Program to promote device ownership among households without home access to a computer. Through partnerships with technology companies and trusted community organizations, the program distributed over 130,000 chromebooks to qualifying households and connected recipients to digital navigator services.

Indicator 5: The state supports affordability through competition and consumer assistance

State governments can promote broadband affordability by enacting policies that promote competition among internet service providers (ISPs), requiring or incentivizing ISPs to participate in consumer assistance programs, and by providing direct support to low-income households.

State governments can promote broadband competition by removing barriers that limit market participation of municipally-owned broadband or other nontraditional ISPs. Additional options for broadband services encourages competition among providers, which may result in lower prices and better quality of service for consumers.

States can also promote broadband affordability in the administration of grants or other funding opportunities. By prioritizing proposals from ISPs that participate in broadband consumer assistance programs, state governments increase affordable broadband options for low-income households. By allocating state or Federal dollars to create a broadband subsidy program that lowers the cost of broadband service for low-income households, states can bring affordable broadband within reach for those facing the most severe economic hardships.

35 STATES support affordability through competition and consumer assistance

5.1 . Does the state allow public providers, public-private provider partnerships, and cooperatively organized providers to deliver broadband service without imposing significant regulatory barriers?

35

States permit public providers, public-private provider partnerships, and cooperatively organized providers to deliver broadband service without imposing significant regulatory barriers

5.2 Does the state allocate funds to administer a supplemental internet service subsidy program for low-income households?

1

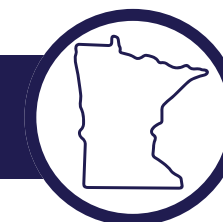
State allocates funds to administer a supplemental internet service subsidy program for low-income households

5.3 Does the state require or incentivize internet service providers to participate in consumer assistance programs on any networks supported partially or wholly with state funds?

1

State requires or incentivizes internet service providers to participate in consumer assistance programs on networks supported partially or wholly with state funds

MINNESOTA



The Minnesota State legislature recently repealed barriers to local governments seeking to provide broadband services to residents. The new law removes requirements for municipalities to obtain supermajority approval via a local referendum to purchase or construct networks. The law also allows municipalities to provide broadband service in areas where other providers offer comparable service, which will promote market competition.

Indicator 6: The state shares digital inclusion data with the community and uses it to inform its work



Access to data is essential for understanding the digital inclusion needs of communities, creating measurable goals, and tracking progress towards those goals. States can support digital inclusion practitioners and other stakeholders by consolidating digital inclusion data and making it available on public platforms in a format that allows for rich analyses.

11 STATES share digital equity data with the community and uses it to inform its work

Well-designed data visualization tools shed light on where digital access gaps exist and the demographics of the communities most impacted. Understanding the social determinants of digital equity, such as disability, education level, and income, is critical for designing targeted strategies to address digital equity barriers.

The most impactful digital inclusion strategies are informed by routine collection and evaluation of data.

6.1 . Does the state host publicly accessible demographic data or data visualizations related to the social determinant of digital equity?

11

States host publicly available demographic data or data visualizations related to the social determinants of digital equity

6.2 Does the state have a process for using ongoing data collection and analyses to inform digital inclusion strategies?

3

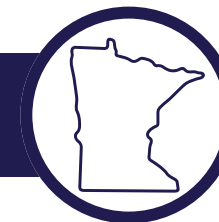
States have a process for using ongoing data collection and analyses to inform digital inclusion strategies

WASHINGTON



Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO) hosts digital equity data through Equity Dashboards that allow the public to access credible and authoritative information about digital access trends across the state. The interactive maps allow users to explore relationships between demographic variables of interest and quality of internet service, broadband deployment, and funding across geographic areas.

MINNESOTA



The Minnesota Department of Education annually collects digital inclusion data for all K-12 districts and charter schools in the state. The data is publicly available and gives a breakdown of internet and device access along regional, economic, and other demographic variables.