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# Digital Equity from Concept to Enablement

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12/22/2023



# Module 1: Digital Equity as a Concept

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# Digital equity and digital inclusion definitions



## Digital Equity

The condition in which individuals and communities have the **information technology capacity** that is needed for **full participation** in the society and economy of the United States

## Digital Inclusion

The term "digital inclusion":

1. Means the activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals in the United States have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies, such as—
  - Reliable fixed and **wireless broadband internet service**;
  - Internet-enabled **devices** that meet the needs of the user; and
  - **Applications and online content** designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration; and
2. **Includes—**
  - Obtaining access to **digital literacy training**;
  - The provision of **quality technical support**; and
  - Obtaining basic awareness of measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity.

## Community Definition



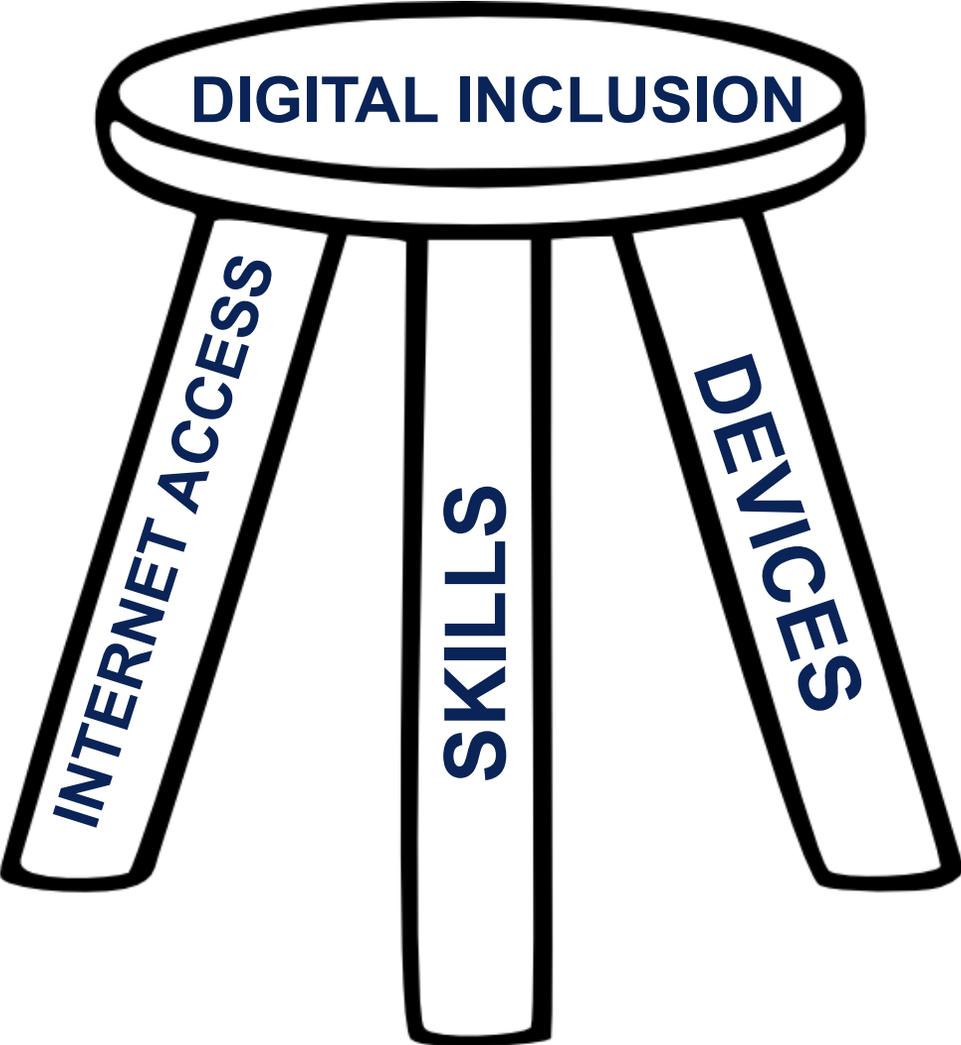
Note: Definitions above are from the Digital Equity Act Programs



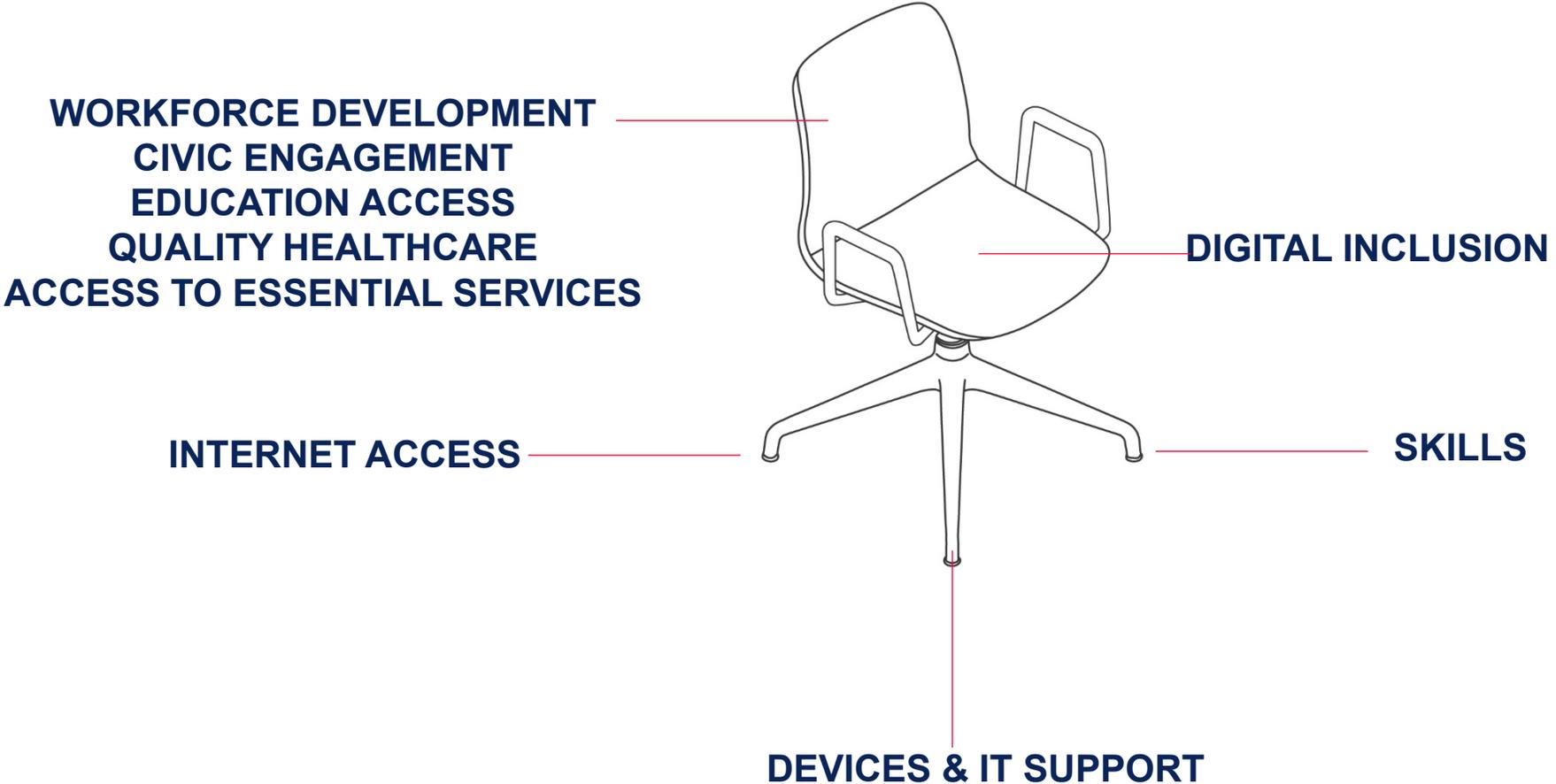
**How do you define  
Digital Equity?**

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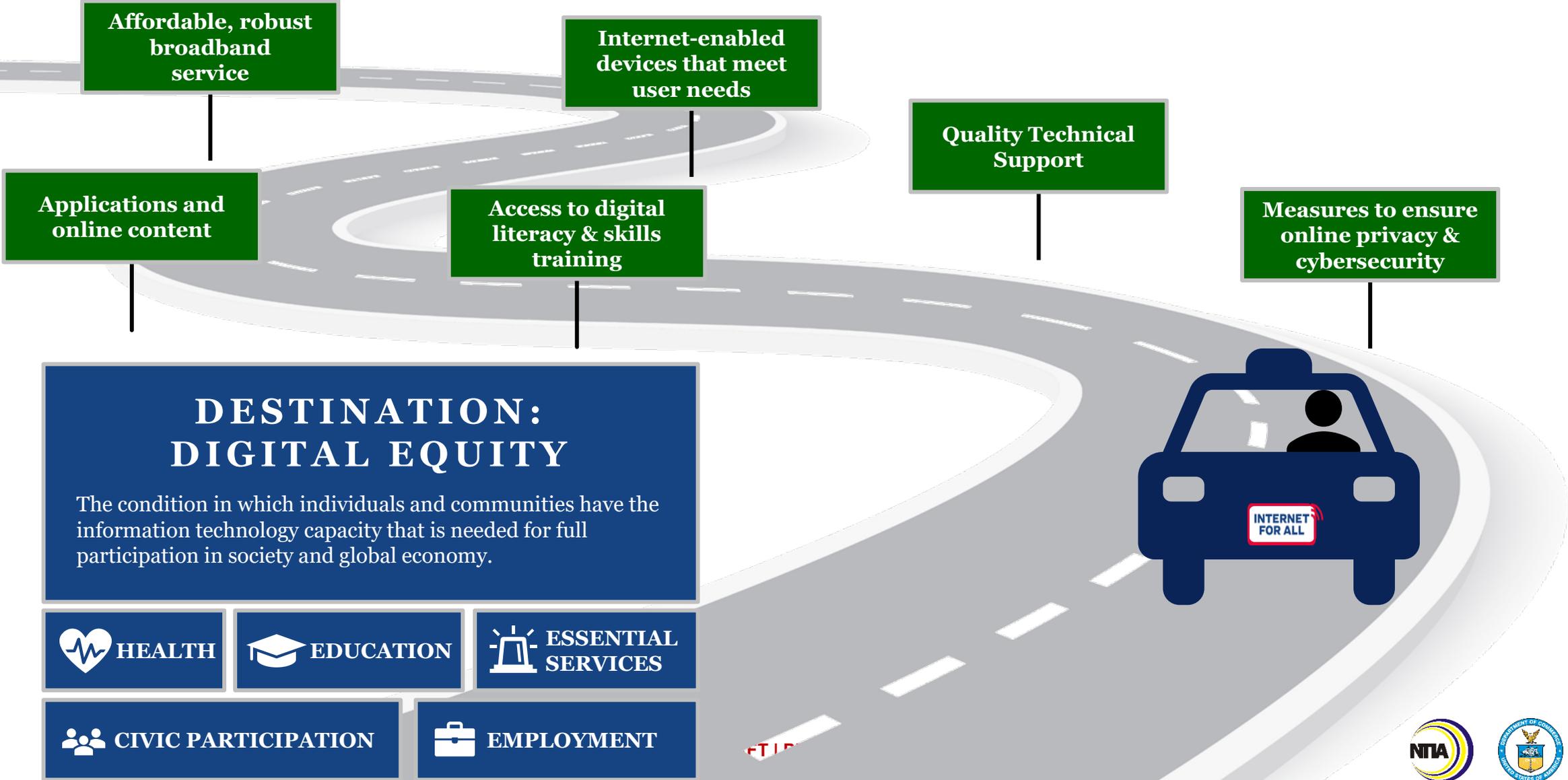
# Pillars of Digital Equity



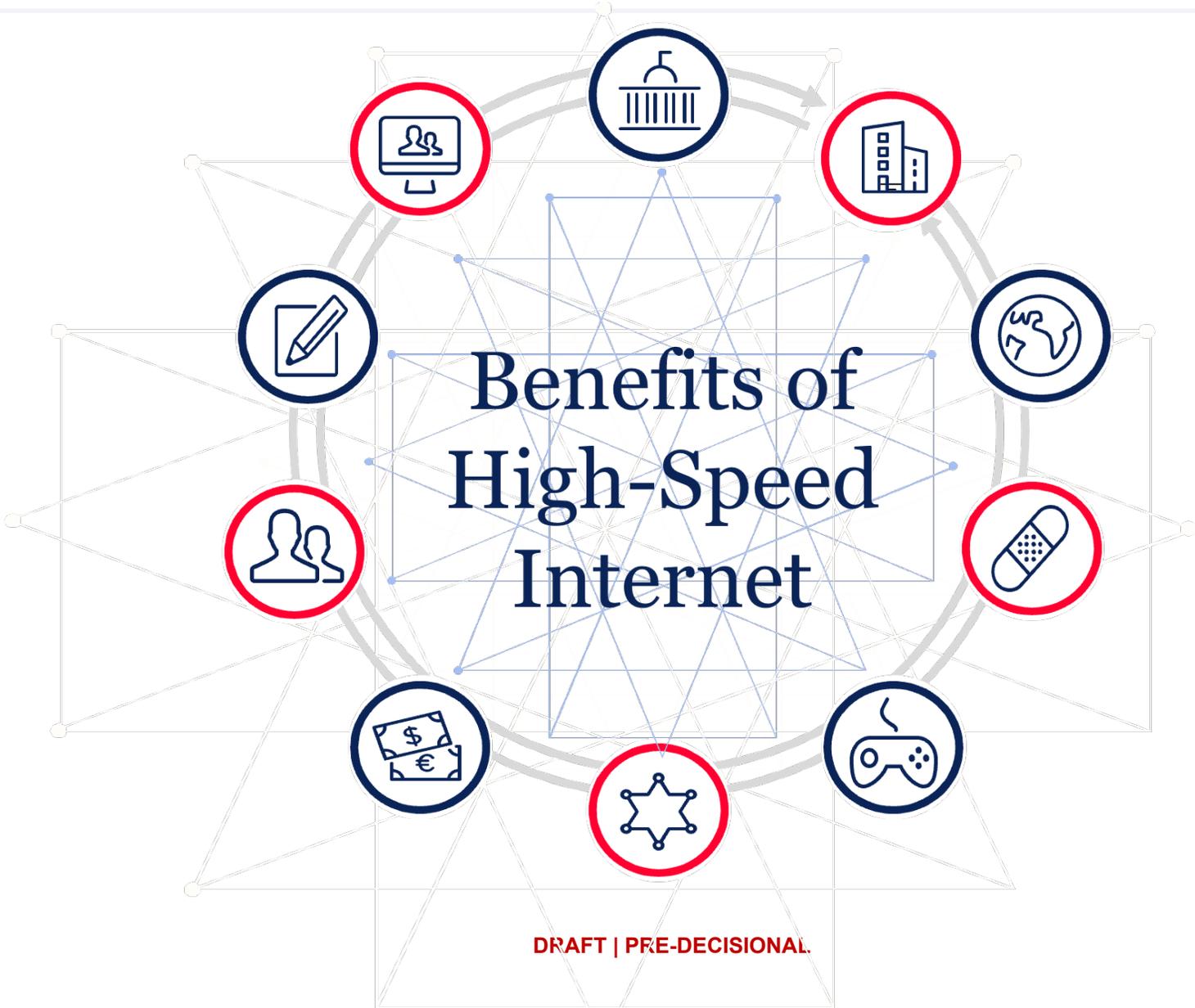
# Pillars of Digital Equity (continued)



# Digital inclusion activities collectively build to advance and ensure digital equity & improve outcomes for unconnected communities



# Why Does Having Access to High-Speed Internet Matter?



# Why High-Speed Internet Matters



## Government Services

High-Speed Internet helps government agencies improve quality, lower costs and increase transparency by improving internal operations and making it easier for residents to interact with them online.

## Telework

High-Speed Internet allows teleworkers opportunities to more readily live and work in locations of their own choosing, without having to be within commuting distance of a corporate center or another base location.

## Education

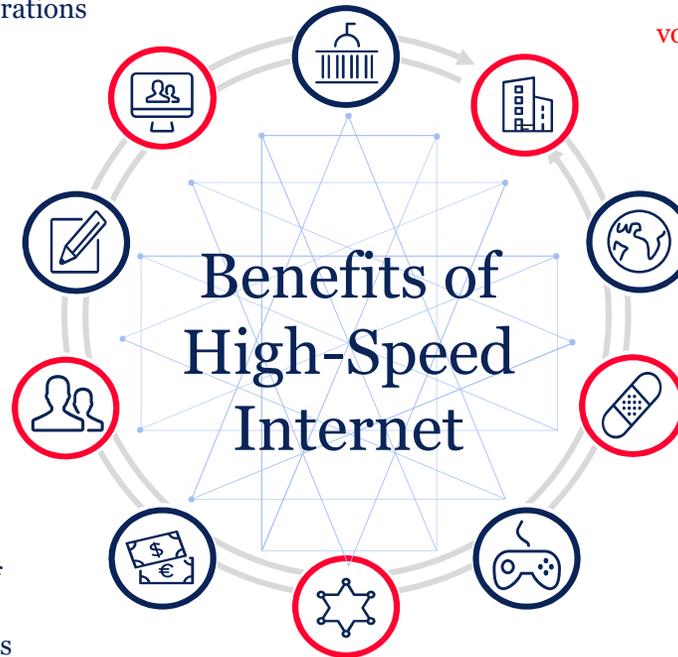
High-Speed Internet networks enhance educational experiences by providing students and teachers with access to an array of resources and the opportunity for distance learning.

## Accessibility

High-Speed Internet is an important tool to address the needs of people with disabilities. Through various broadband-based applications and supporting technologies, people with disabilities have access to a new array of smart devices improving quality of life.

## Economic Development

High-Speed Internet enables local communities, regions and nations to develop, attract, retain and expand job-creating businesses and institutions.



## Community Development

High-Speed internet enables communities to come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common issues such as voting, registering to vote, volunteerism/community service, advocacy and activism, as well as engaging in city wide projects.

## Environmental Sustainability

High-Speed Internet enables buildings to communicate with utilities and the energy market. Smart buildings and smart grids, hold great promise for greater efficiencies in energy consumption.

## Healthcare

High-Speed Internet makes remote access to clinical services possible and cost-effective. It also allows physicians to monitor their patients through innovative home health devices.

## Entertainment

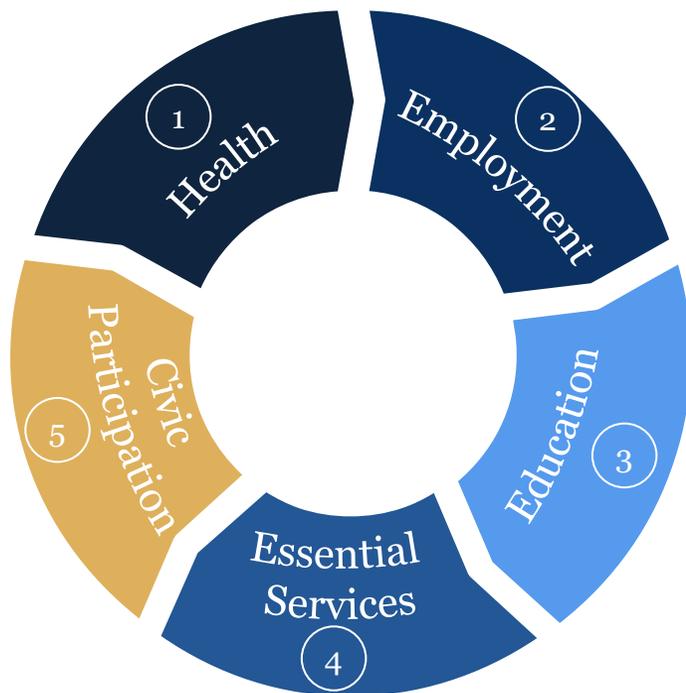
High-Speed Internet is essential to enjoy 21st-century entertainment. Streaming video, online gaming and connecting with friends and relatives via social media are only possible because of broadband.

## Public Safety

Wireless broadband, is becoming indispensable to the interoperability of police, fire, health and other government entities in both day-to-day and crisis situations.



# Defining Equity and Inclusion | Digital Equity is necessary for full society participation



- 1 Increases social connectedness & enables telehealth, improving patient outcomes *For example: Telehealth helps **reduce emergency department visits** <sup>1</sup>*
- 2 Advances employment by facilitating job seeking and improving digital skills *For example: People without high-speed Internet are more likely to have difficulty **finding jobs** in their area<sup>2</sup>*
- 3 Promotes education access through hybrid/online schooling and adult education *For example: Most U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> graders use the **Internet every day or almost every day** for their **homework**<sup>3</sup>*
- 4 Improves access to essential services, like public safety and transportation *For example: Enabling comparisons of cost, time, and distance across **public transport options***
- 5 Enables online civic engagement, like connecting with state/local representatives *For example: Virtual townhalls connected **elected officials and constituents** during COVID<sup>4</sup>*

Illustrative, non-exhaustive

1. Barton, J. (2018). *Promising telehealth initiatives highlight the need to close the digital divide*. Federal Reserve Bank of Texas. <https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/pubs/2018/telehealth> 2. Smith, A. (2015). *Lack of broadband can be a key obstacle, especially for job seekers*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/28/lack-of-broadband-can-be-a-key-obstacle-especially-for-job-seekers/> 3. Auxier, B. & Anderson, M. (2020). *As school close due to the coronavirus, some U.S. students face a digital 'homework gap.'* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/16/as-schools-close-due-to-the-coronavirus-some-u-s-students-face-a-digital-homework-gap/> 4. Lacelle-Webster, A., Landry, J., & Smith, A. M. D. (2021). *Citizen voice in the pandemic response: Democratic innovations from around the world*. In G. Smith, T. Hughes, L. Adams, & C. Obijiaku (Eds.), *Democracy in a pandemic* (pp. 155-168). University of Westminster Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctv1v3gqz6.24.pdf>



# Digital Equity and the Social Determinants of Health



## DE & BEAD

### Covered Populations and **Underrepresented Communities**

*Identity groups and communities disproportionately impacted by digital inequity*

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  Low-income households    |  Indigenous and Native American persons     |  People with language barriers                                   |
|  Aging individuals        |  Members of ethnic and religious minorities |  Racial and ethnic minorities                                    |
|  Incarcerated individuals |  Women                                      |  Rural inhabitants   |
|  Veterans                |  LGBTQI+ persons                           |  Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality |
|  Persons of Color       |  Persons with disabilities                |   |



DRAFT | PRE-DECISIONAL

**Who is missing?**

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# Factors that contribute to Inequities in digital adoption



Illustrative, non-exhaustive



## Devices access

*For example:*

**People of color** are ~**10-15%** less likely to own a computer than white populations<sup>1</sup>



## Affordability

*For example:*

**34%** of lower income households<sup>2</sup> have had trouble paying for high-speed internet during the coronavirus outbreak<sup>3</sup>



## Perceived value

*For example:*

**70%** of Seniors (65+) who are not online at home say they "don't need (it) or not interested"<sup>1</sup>



## Existing inequities

*For example:*

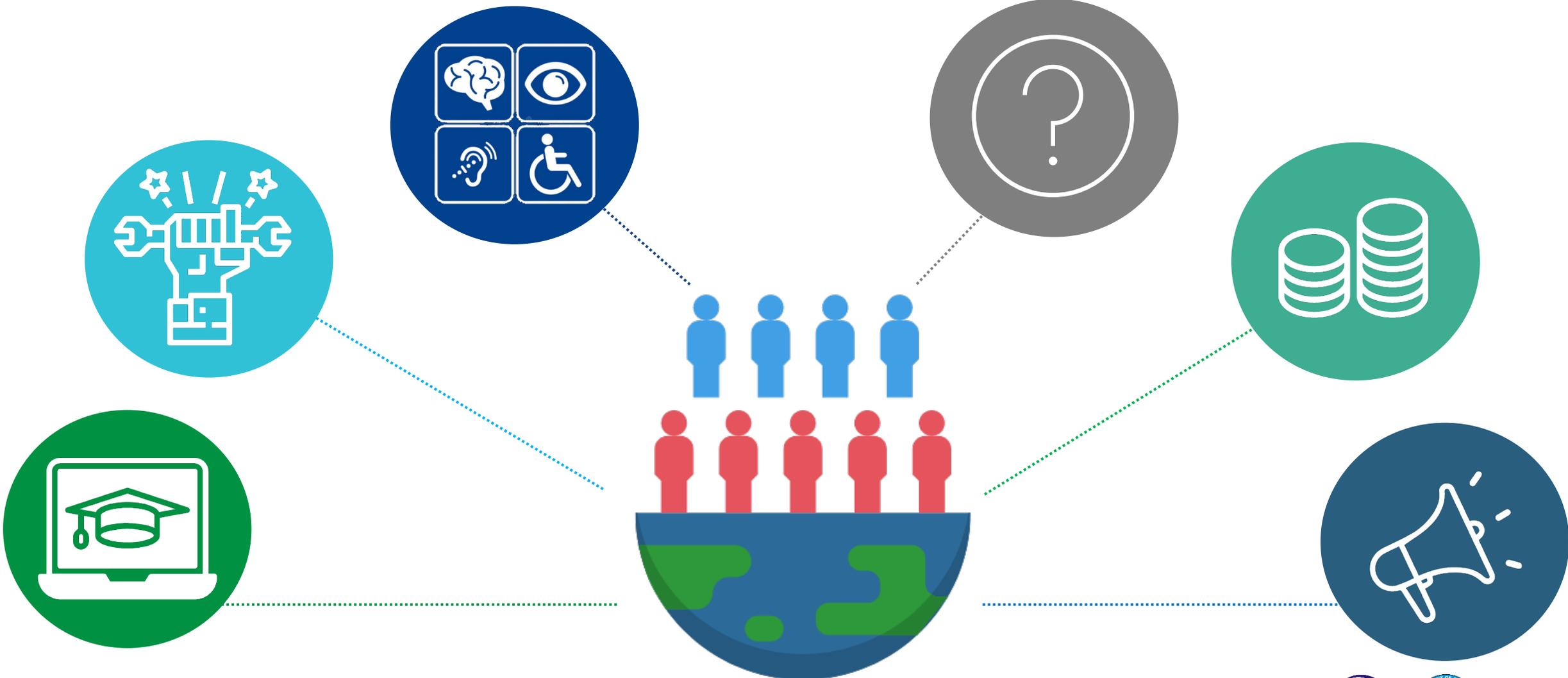
Years of policies have limited generational wealth accrual in marginalized communities, driving **digital red-lining**<sup>4</sup>

**Exact factors vary community to community—engage in localized research to understand the specific, unique drivers in your context**

1. National Telecommunications and Information Administration. (2022). Digital nation data explorer. NTIA.gov. <https://ntia.gov/other-publication/2022/digital-nation-data-explorer#sel=laptopUser&demo=race&pc=prop&disp=chart> 2. Households making <\$30K annually 3. McClain, C. (2021). 34% of lower-income home broadband users have had trouble paying for their service amid COVID-19. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/06/03/34-of-lower-income-home-broadband-users-have-had-trouble-paying-for-their-service-amid-covid-19/> 4. Communications Workers of America and National Digital Inclusion Alliance. (2020). AT&T's digital redlining: Leaving communities behind for profit. DigitalInclusion.org. [https://www.digitalinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2020/10/ATTs-Digital-Redlining-Leaving-Communities-Behind-for-Profit.pdf](https://www.digitalinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2020/10/ATTs-Digital-Redlining-Leaving-Communities-Behind-for-Profit.pdf)



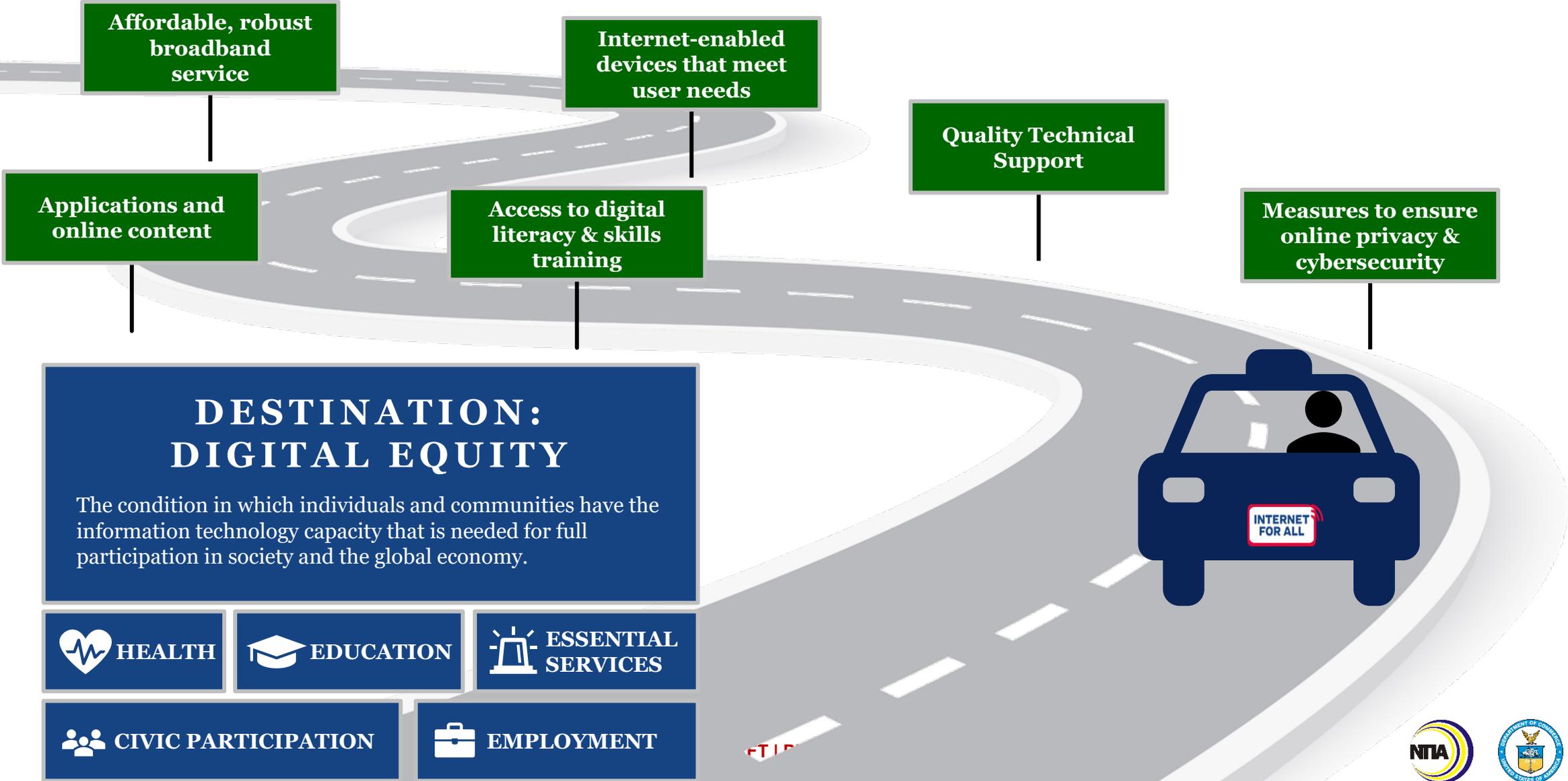
# Citizenship in the Digital Age



# Module 2: Enablement of Digital Equity

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# Digital inclusion activities collectively build to advance and ensure digital equity & improve outcomes for unconnected communities



# Breakout Activity



**If you had to select one album to be  
your playlist, what would it be?**

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# Questions to Consider

- Can you think of any albums that relate to the 5 measurable objectives for DE plans?
  - Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes
  - Educational outcomes
  - Health outcomes
  - Civic and social engagement; and
  - Delivery of other essential services.



**What is your first stop?**

# Questions to Consider

- What are your primary areas of focus based on:
  - Challenges heard from community
  - Existing barriers to adoption
  - State/ Territory goals and priorities
- What are your secondary areas of focus?
  - Local coordination and outreach strategy
  - Tribal engagement
  - Asset mapping / needs assessment



**Who do you need to visit while  
there?**

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# Eligible entities are required to engage with key stakeholders as a part of developing digital equity plans

## Key stakeholder groups may include:

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- Community anchor institutions
- County and municipal governments
- Local educational agencies
- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations, where applicable
- Nonprofit organizations
- Organizations that represent covered populations
- Civil rights organizations
- Entities that carry out workforce development programs
- State agencies that administer or supervise adult education or literacy activities
- Public housing authorities

**What are your rest stops?**

# Questions to Consider

- What are the **solutions, strategies, and feedback** that will help develop the plan?
- What are the anticipated **challenges or barriers**?
- What are the **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR)** that can help your state reach its destination?
- How will your state **identify and communicate with the local organizations** that are doing digital equity work?



**What souvenirs are you  
bringing back?**

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# Questions to Consider

- What are some of **best practices, tools, connections, stories**, etc. that will help inform your plan?
- How do you plan to **co-build** the plan with stakeholders?
- What are the solutions or strategies you would like to see incorporated in the DE State Plan?
- How will your state collaborate with stakeholders to **identify and prioritize policy outcomes** in the areas of **workforce development, education, health, civic & social engagement, and delivery of essential services**?



# Conclusion

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# 3 Key Activities to Drive Equity and Inclusion Across BIL Programs



## Collaborate, engage, and conduct outreach

- Create an inclusive stakeholder engagement plan
- Be intentional with your language and the details
- Engage diverse communities
- Meet people where they are—literally



## Develop knowledge and capabilities to execute

- Learn from individuals from covered populations and historically disconnected communities
- Use a holistic data collection approach
- Build state digital equity capacity
- Build/partner with digital equity and inclusion coalitions



## Digital inclusion programs

- Digital skills training
- Affordability programs
- Digital equity ecosystem mapping
- Digital support programs (e.g., Digital Navigation)
- Digital participation in society



# Be Intentional with the Language and the Details



We intentionally avoid the language ‘equity lens,’ because a lens can be taken off. Equity should be a forever understanding

—Ernie Rasmussen, Digital Equity Manager, Washington State Broadband Office, WA Department of Commerce

## SPEAK WITH INTENTION

- Use language that **signals equity** is central to your work (e.g., “*Leading with equity*” vs. “*equity lens*”)
- Create **simple and accessible content** (i.e., not exceeding 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level), translated into the state’s predominant languages
- Ensure targeted outreach is **culturally appropriate**
- Translate and publish materials into **accessible formats** for all (incl. those with limited vision, hearing)

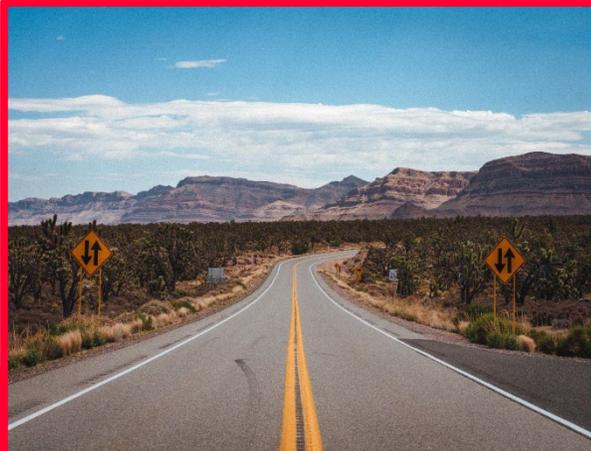


## ACT WITH INTENTION

- **Ask, don’t assume** (e.g. what do you want to use the internet for?)
- Ensure leaders **prioritize DE&I** (e.g., attend both BEAD and Digital Equity listening sessions)
- Select **event dates and times best for a diversity of individuals** (e.g., working adults, parents)
- Ensure outreach events **reach the disconnected and underserved**
- **Consider event accessibility** (e.g., are locations accessible by public transport, is there childcare)



# Wrapping Up



Digital Divide



Digital Inclusion



Digital Empowerment/Equity