Working with Libraries
A guide for States and Territories on leveraging libraries in digital inclusion efforts

INTERNET FOR ALL

OVERVIEW

Libraries play a central role in supporting and advancing digital equity, literacy, and inclusion. NTIA encourages States to involve both state and local libraries in the planning processes and implementation for both the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program as well as Digital Equity Act Programs.

THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES

In the Planning Process

- ☐ Work closely with state library agencies to disseminate information on the broadband planning process.

- ☐ Engage with local libraries during the stakeholder engagement process to help understand community needs.

- ☐ Consider library buildings as a central site for local coordination and community engagement.

- ☐ Utilize data from national library support organizations, state libraries, and local libraries to identify local assets for asset mapping and needs assessments.

- ☐ Establish relationships with librarians and library staff who focus on digital inclusion, including to identify and engage lived experts who have experienced digital inequities.

Through Five-Year Action Plans & Digital Equity Plans

- ☐ Plan to direct funding to libraries supporting free access to high-speed internet, device and hotspot lending programs, or/and internet beyond library walls.

- ☐ Plan outreach campaigns for programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program that engage with local libraries to disseminate information, because they are trusted institutions in their communities.[1]

- ☐ Plan rollout of digital literacy and skills training programs that work with libraries as sites for accessing trained staff (i.e. librarians), getting the word out, and hosting workshops. This includes training on cybersecurity.

- ☐ Include libraries in infrastructure upgrades, as community anchor institutions.

LIBRARIES AND EQUITY OUTCOMES

The programs listed below are examples of how libraries can partner with community organizations or implement programs that feed into digital equity outcomes named in the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Health	**Access to Telehealth:** Libraries can establish relationships with local health care providers and provide dedicated space for telehealth appointments.[2]
Essential Services	**Access to high-speed Internet:** Libraries can offer free public access to high-speed Internet.[3]
Employment	**Workforce Development Programs:** Libraries can establish training programs that emphasize digital skills.[4]
Civic Engagement	**Voter Education:** Libraries can offer reliable and nonpartisan information to their patrons during local, state, and federal elections.[5]
Education	**Build Digital Literacy:** Libraries can partner with local colleges and universities to provide free digital literacy classes in the evenings and on weekends.[6]

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EXAMPLES OF LIBRARIES SUPPORTING DIGITAL INCLUSION

DIGITAL NAVIGATORS
- Many communities have instituted the use of Digital Navigators. Digital Navigators provide resources to low-cost internet access, basic internet skills, and computer needs and are trusted members of their community.[7]

UPSKILLING
- The Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma Tribal Library offers free GED classes and online career building skills to its members.[8]

DEVICE LENDING
- The Dallas Public Library and other city departments created a Checkout Program for wi-fi hotspots, laptops, and Chromebooks so that residents can access internet without a fixed connection. Four library branches in the Dallas area also installed parking lot-based Wi-fi Stations.[9]

OUTREACH TO RETURNING CITIZENS
- Transitioning from correctional facilities back into society can be challenging. Funded by a CARES Act Grant, Queens Public Library partnered with Queens Defenders to equip individuals recently released from prison with smartphones, online resources, and services to ease re-entry and reduce the risk of recidivism.[10] Gwinnett County Public Library in Georgia runs a New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator (NSEI), which is a six-month program for community members who have served time in jail or prison.[11]

SUPPORT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
- Newton Public Library has an English Language Learning and Literacy program that includes classes, conversation groups, and one-on one tutoring.[12]

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
- The Los Angeles Public Library system has computer stations with assistive technology located throughout the Library for those with low vision, including television magnifiers and technology that enlarges and reads text aloud.[13]

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

DigitalLearn
DigitalLearn is an online hub for digital literacy support and training, featuring a collection of self-directed tutorials that can be adapted for instructor-led environments. It was developed by the Public Library Association with support from public library staff.[14]

Public Library Technology Survey Summary Report
The 2020 Public Library Technology Survey produced results that indicated libraries of all sizes continue to serve their communities as hubs for digital equity.[16]

Leverage Libraries to Achieve Digital Equity for All
ALA produced a report to amplify work in libraries across the country to highlight how libraries can support digital inclusion activities & digital equity planning.[15]

Digital Equity Resources for Libraries
The American Library Association (ALA) shared a list of resources on how libraries specifically can leverage funding from the Internet for All programs.[17]

LIBRARIES AND FEDERAL FUNDS

Libraries are "Community Anchor Institutions" as defined by the BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and the State Digital Equity Planning Grant NOFO. Consider libraries as key partners in plan development and/or deployment.

Digital Equity Act Programs

Within the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program, libraries may receive subgrants to assist in the development of the Plan or otherwise be considered key stakeholders to collaborate with. In addition, libraries will be eligible to receive implementation funds under the State Digital Equity Capacity and Competitive Grants.[18]

The BEAD Program

Libraries may be considered "eligible community anchor institutions" if they lack access to symmetrical Gigabit-level broadband service– and thus Eligible Entities may allocate grant funds to deploy and/or upgrade broadband network facilities to provide or improve service.[19]

Use NTIA's [Broadband USA Federal Funding site](#) to locate other funding opportunities that support broadband planning, digital inclusion, and deployment projects, including from Regional Commissions.[20] State libraries may also offer grants to local libraries.

Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

IMLS is the primary federal grantor for libraries. In 2021, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded $425.7 million through grantmaking, research and policy.[21] States and Territories can use the data IMLS collects, and find out whether libraries in their State or Territory received CARES Act funding to inform future planning with and for libraries.

The below resources may be useful for State Broadband Office reference:

- **[Public Libraries Survey](#)**
  This Public Libraries Survey (PLS) is a voluntary census survey that contains annual data of public libraries conducted by IMLS. For access to the restricted use data file, contact research@imls.gov[22]
- **[How Public Libraries Adapted to Serve their Communities at the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)**
  IMLS analyzed findings from 2,616 public libraries in 23 states to understand public libraries' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.[23]
- **[Understanding the Social Wellbeing Impacts of the Nation's Libraries and Museums](#)**
  This 2021 IMLS report identifies associations between the presence and usage of libraries and museums and multiple dimensions of social wellbeing when economic standing and racial/ethnic composition are taken into consideration. It also details site visits of 24 public libraries and museums across the nation.[24]

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

Eligible schools and libraries, including tribal libraries, may receive discounts on telecommunications, telecommunications services, and Internet access, as well as internal connections, managed internal broadband services, and basic maintenance of internal connections through the [FCC E-Rate Program](#).[25]

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