

IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN NORTH CAROLINA

At least 1.1 million North Carolina households lack access to high-speed internet, cannot afford it or do not have the skills needed to take advantage of the digital economy. Gov. Roy Cooper has prioritized closing the digital divide to achieve digital equity for all North Carolinians.



CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



Households with broadband internet access



Households with broadband internet subscriptions



Households with children with broadband internet subscriptions



Subscription rates across racial groups

- Native American
- Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- White

N.C. Today

N.C. 2025

"95.5%"

98%

73%

80%

81%

100%

57%

80%

64%

80%

68%

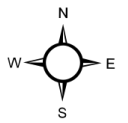
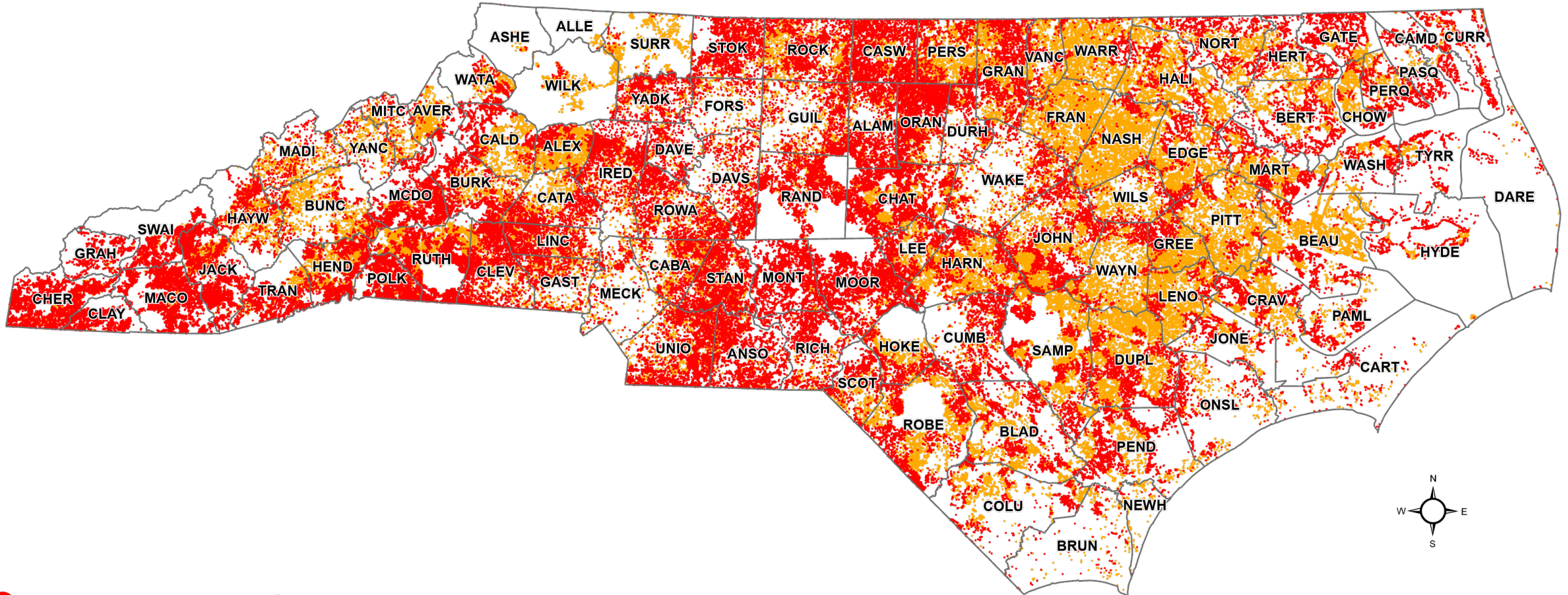
80%

76%

80%

NC BROADBAND PROFILE

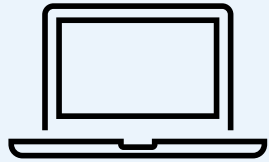
New FCC Broadband Data Collection Serviceable Location Fabric - **June 2022**



● Unserved Broadband Serviceable Location (Less Than 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload)
--253,409 Unserved BSLs

● Underserved Broadband Serviceable Location (Less Than 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload)
--266,998 Underserved BSLs

DIGITAL DEVICES, SKILLS & AFFORDABILITY



430,000

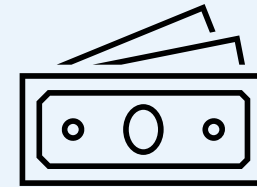
Estimated N.C. households without a home laptop or desktop computer

91%

of N.C. jobs require some digital skills

1/3

of U.S. workers don't have foundational digital skills



1.3M

N.C. households would have to pay more than 2% of their annual income to afford broadband cost of \$60/month

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING



INFRASTRUCTURE

\$971M

\$380M

\$400M

\$90M

\$100M

\$1M

Ensure availability of internet service at speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps for more than 98% of North Carolina households

- GREAT Grant (\$350M American Rescue Plan Act; \$30M SCIF)
- Completing Access to Broadband (CAB)
- Stop-Gap Solutions
- Broadband Pole Replacement Fund
- Broadband Mapping



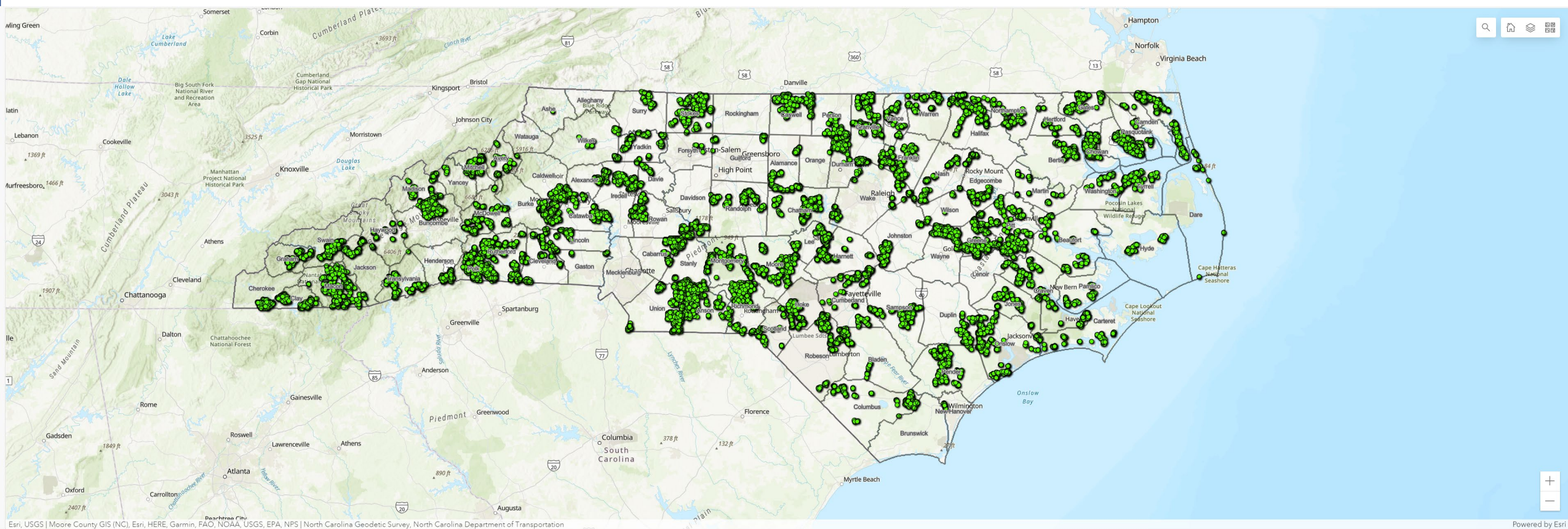
AWARENESS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

\$50M

Improve awareness and enable North Carolinians to realize the benefits of high-speed internet through digital literacy and upskilling aimed at accessing the digital economy.

- Increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program
- Increase access to devices for households
- Increase access to high quality digital literacy and skills training
- Build local digital equity capacity

GREAT GRANT CONTINGENT AWARDS



Esri, USGS | Moore County GIS (NC), Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS | North Carolina Geodetic Survey, North Carolina Department of Transportation

Powered by Esri

Contingent Award Locations

Total Project Cost
\$419.8M

Average Cost Per Location
\$4.8k

Total Grant Amount
\$272.2M

Total Match Amount
\$147.6M

Total Awarded Locations
113,613

Households Served
109,988

Businesses Served
3,626

ARPA FUNDED DIGITAL EQUITY GRANTS

Interagency Digital Equity Funding Program (Fall 2022) - \$9.9 million

- Large, scalable programs that support the entire state or a region
- Eligible entities included universities, community colleges, and state agencies
- Announced awards Jan. 18 for eight state government agency projects:
 - East Carolina University
 - N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services
 - N.C. Department of Adult Correction, Education Services
 - N.C. State University - Institute for Emerging Issues
 - N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Rural Health
 - N.C. Business Committee for Education, Inc.
 - N.C. Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights
 - N.C. Division of Historic Sites and Properties

ARPA FUNDING NEXT STEPS

Additional GREAT awards

- Remove awarded locations from outstanding applications and rescore; award to highest-scoring statewide
- Award remaining ARPA funds and additional state funds in June

Completing Access to Broadband program

- Engaged county managers and commissioners in all 100 counties on process and mapping
- Draft Request for Proposals to prequalify internet providers issued for public comments until May 23
- Define unserved/underserved scopes of work with initial counties after remaining GREAT grant awards

Broadband Pole Replacement program: Publish draft program guidance for public feedback in Q2

Digital Champion Grant Program (2023) - \$14 million

- Build capacity to develop or expand digital equity programs in communities
- Eligible entities include local governments, non-profit organizations, higher education & regional agencies

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP)

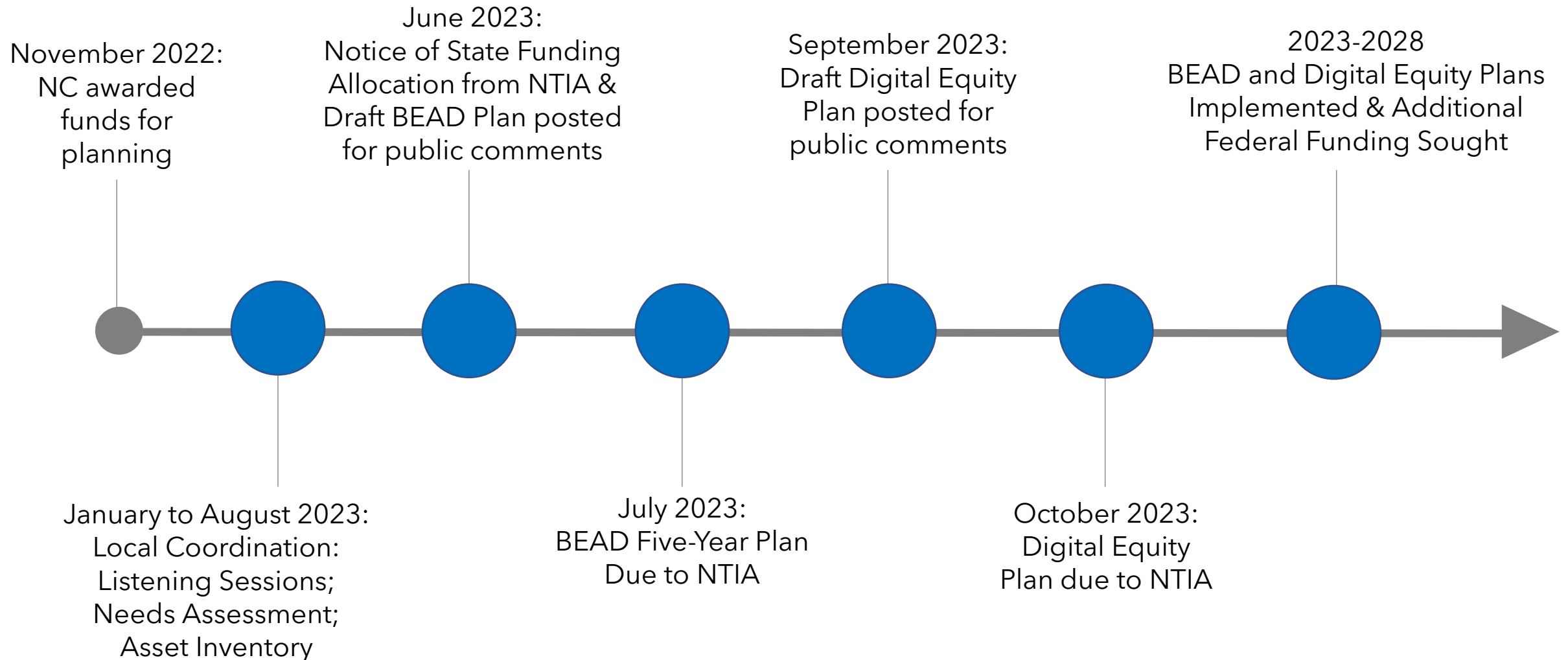
- The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) provides:
 - Up to a \$30 per month discount on internet services
 - Up to a \$75 per month discount for households on tribal lands
 - \$100 discount for a laptop, computer or tablet bought through a participating provider
- Goal for 1 million households to enroll by December 2023
- 744,631 households enrolled as of May 21
- Encouraging internet service providers to participate and provide \$30/month plan



BEAD AND DIGITAL EQUITY OVERVIEW

- Received \$1.4 million in planning funds for the Digital Equity program and \$5 million in planning funds for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration
- Using planning grants to engage and solicit feedback from a variety of broadband and digital equity stakeholders across the state to ensure that the state's comprehensive plans to address high-speed internet access and digital equity are inclusive of all N.C. communities and populations' needs and build upon our existing work to close the digital divide
- Will use data from all outreach efforts to create comprehensive BEAD and Digital Equity program plans to guide subsequent investments from both programs
 - Estimates suggest North Carolina will receive approximately \$1 billion for BEAD and \$25 million for Digital Equity

BEAD & DIGITAL EQUITY TIMELINE



ELIGIBLE USES OF BEAD FUNDING

- Infrastructure for homes and businesses
- Upgrades to infrastructure for Community Anchor Institutions
- Mapping and data collection
- Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure for multi-family residential buildings
- Broadband adoption, including affordable internet capable devices and sign-up assistance
- Training and workforce development
- Digital equity programs such as digital safety training, remote learning and telehealth services, digital literacy and upskilling, cybersecurity education programs, and other activities from the Digital Equity plan.
- Education for individuals who are incarcerated
- Digital navigators
- Direct subsidies for internet subscription

STATE PLANNING

Year-long state broadband and digital equity planning process to set policy priorities for next five years

- Identify barriers to digital equity for general and covered populations
- Develop measurable objectives for overcoming barriers
- Asset Inventory and Needs Assessment
- Integrate local digital inclusion plans into the state plan
- Interagency coordination
- Workforce planning
- Mapping



COVERED POPULATIONS

These programs jointly cover the needs of all North Carolinians with focus on these populations, according to federal guidelines:

- Aging individuals
- Immigrants
- Individuals who live in households at or below 150% of Federal poverty level
- Individuals with disabilities
- 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
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility
- LGBTQI+ people
- Veterans

OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE INPUT

- Hosting quarterly webinars: Next one June 8
- Closing the Digital Divide: From Mountains to Coast Regional Sessions
- Listening sessions with partner organizations for covered populations
- Surveys
- Interagency coordination
- Today's event
- Website: www.ncbroadband.gov/BEAD

THEMES WE'VE HEARD SO FAR

Three Biggest Community Broadband Issues



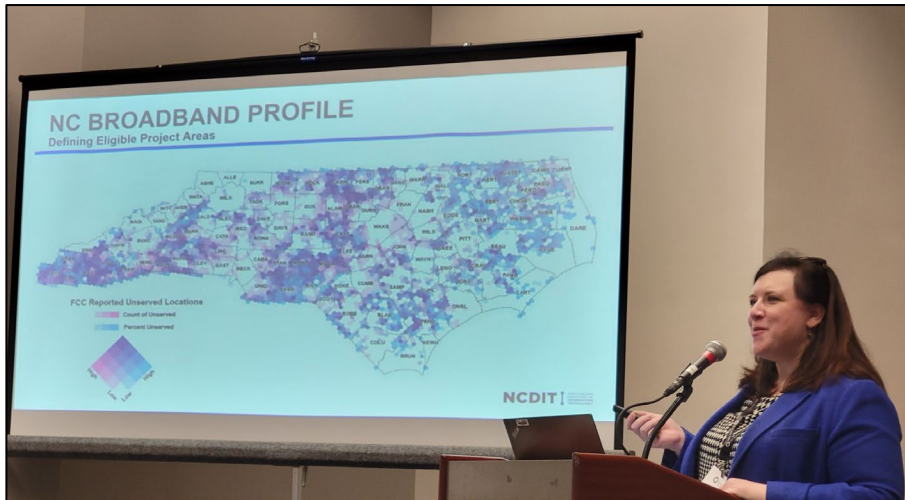
Feedback received from attendees at 8 regional sessions & the Rural Summit

COMMON ASSETS

- Libraries
- Hospitals (including device loans through Veterans facilities)
- Community centers, senior centers, churches
- Local and national businesses
- Parks, schools, downtowns
- Community colleges & universities
- Nonprofits and social service providers
- 4H Tech Changemakers
- Goodwill Industries, NC Works
- N.C. Cooperative Extension
- Northstar Digital Literacy
- Councils of Government, Aging Services
- Kramden Institute/E2D



CONCERNS & CHALLENGES



- Affordability of internet
- Access to internet (speed, cost, and reliability)
- Access to devices
- Last mile infrastructure
- What internet service providers say vs. actual service
- Poverty
- Transportation to get free Wi-Fi
- Phishing/cybersecurity knowledge
- Tech support
- Confidence & trust
- Stigma of assistance programs
- Matching funds for grants
- Bilingual services for literacy training
- Telehealth

HOW TO DEPLOY RESOURCES

- Subsidies to individuals
- Subsidies to providers
- Use fiber and cell towers
- Do more to promote Affordable Connectivity Program and make it easier to apply
- Tech support
- Entities that will refurbish and distribute used technology
- Advocates/digital navigators
- Infrastructure such as fiber that is “future proof” for upgrades
- Resource guides (digital and print) for counties/prosperity regions
- Coordination with state education system
- “Zoom rooms” at libraries, community centers (for telehealth, interviews, etc.)
- Free “digital help center” in every county



STATE'S FIRST DIGITAL EQUITY SURVEY

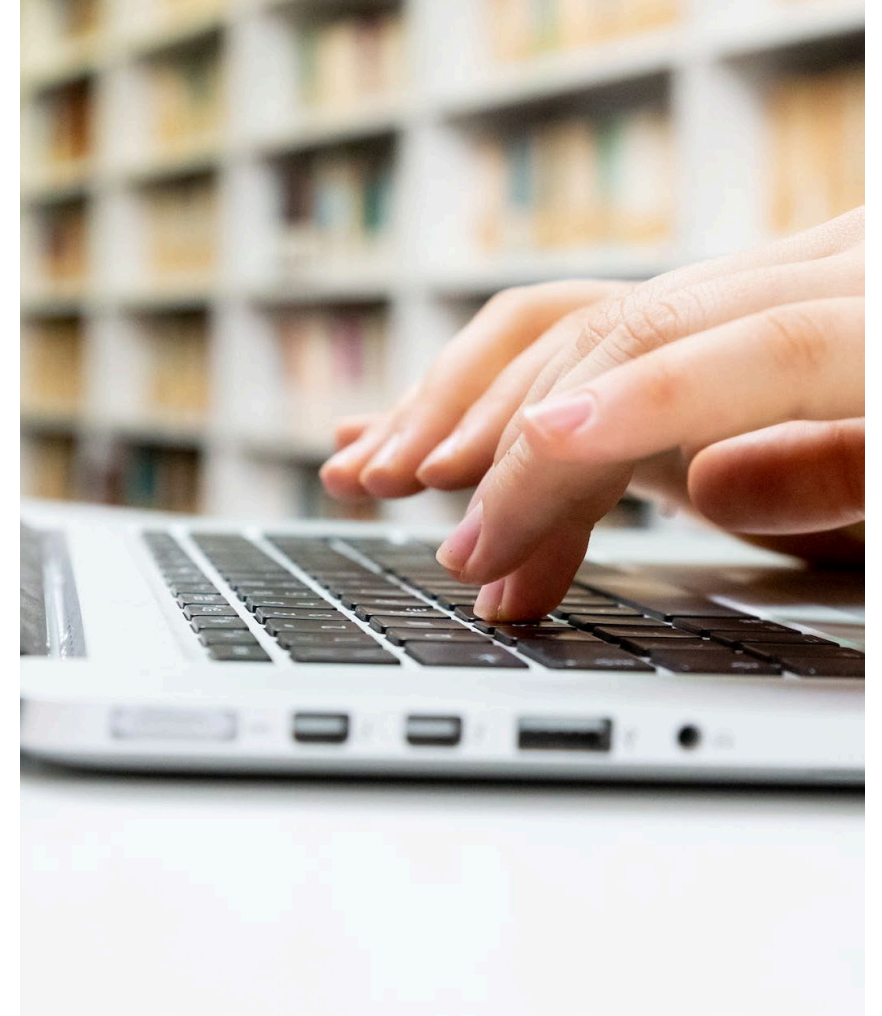
- Share individual needs for accessibility and affordability of digital devices and the internet as well as digital skills needed to safely access online resources
- Will help the state create a Digital Equity Plan that best meets the needs of all North Carolinians
- Takes approximately 10 minutes to complete; no data will be released or used that can identify participants
- Available in top languages/dialects spoken in the state
- Paper copies will be available



<https://go.ncsu.edu/DESurvey>

RESOURCES

- BEAD and Digital Equity planning information:
<https://www.ncbroadband.gov/BEAD>
- Digital Equity Survey
<https://go.ncsu.edu/DESurvey>
- Broadband Mapping & Data:
<https://www.nconemap.gov/pages/broadband>
- Affordable Connectivity Program materials:
<https://www.ncbroadband.gov/ACP>
- Challenges to the FCC maps:
<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/location-summary/fixed>
- FCC Broadband Funding Map:
<https://fundingmap.fcc.gov/home>



CONTACT INFORMATION

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Visit the Division's website to learn more and see additional resources:

www.ncbroadband.gov/BEAD