

Serving Veterans

INTERNET
FOR ALL

A guide that shares effective digital inclusion practices that support Veterans across the country

OVERVIEW

Veterans are one of the eight Covered Populations defined in the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). According to the NOFO, the term “veteran” means a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.¹

The [NTIA Internet Use Survey](#)², last conducted in November 2021, shows that:

78.1%

non-veterans use internet at home






76.5%

veterans use internet at home

High-speed Internet can play an essential role in supporting veterans by providing access to services and helping them to establish stable and fulfilling civilian lives.

DIGITAL EQUITY OUTCOMES

In the State Digital Equity Plans, States must present measurable objectives for documenting and promoting digital inclusion for each Covered Population in that State. These measurable objectives should impact and interact with the State’s equity outcomes named in NOFO Section IV.C.1.b.i.3. Examples of investments in digital inclusion that align with the [equity outcomes](#)³ are listed below.

Digital Equity Outcomes	Digital Inclusion Activities
 Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced need for travel for healthcare appointments due to VA telehealth capabilities, particularly for those in rural areas• Increased choice to access mental health providers via telehealth for those experiencing PTSD and other issues
 Essential Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information and enrollment in public and Veteran specific benefit programs• Access to digital skills trainings to help obtain and maintain service benefits
 Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to virtual job training & remote work opportunities to aid in workforce transitions• Empowering veterans to start their own businesses with the necessary digital skills
 Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to reliable information from trusted sources to combat disinformation that may target Veterans• Providing opportunities to volunteer and serve in local communities (i.e., Becoming a digital navigator)
 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizing university Veteran outreach centers to aid transition back into college• Understanding education benefits like tuition and scholarship opportunities

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RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Resources

- [The Office of Connected Care](#)⁴ and [VA Telehealth](#)⁵
Expands Veterans' access to care through telehealth technologies. Additionally, through the [Digital Divide Consult](#)⁶ process, the VA can help determine if Veterans are eligible to receive internet connectivity services or technology needed for VA telehealth.
 - [Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations \(ATLAS\)](#)⁷
ATLAS provides a private appointment space equipped for telehealth, so Veterans with long travel times or limited internet access can receive VA clinical services in their communities.
 - [Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses \(VET TEC\)](#)⁸
VET TEC matches veterans to a leading training provider to help develop high-tech skills in areas like computer software, programming, and media applications.
- ! Administering Entities (AEs) may consider reaching out to [Veteran Service Officers](#)⁹ for inclusion in planning efforts, whether through stakeholder engagement or planning for future partnerships to raise awareness of digital inclusion programs that could benefit Veterans.



[Department of Defense SkillBridge](#)¹⁰

SkillBridge is a program under the Department of Defense for transitioning Service members. The program offers employment training, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities at more than 1,000 public and private organizations across the country to ease the transition back to civilian life.



[National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education Veterans Resources](#)¹¹

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)'s National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) has a guide for Veterans looking for cybersecurity jobs and training.



[CyberSkills2Work](#)¹²

CyberSkills2Work is a National Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program funded by the National Security Agency's NCAE-C to transition military personnel, veterans, first responders, and others pursuing the cybersecurity field.



[Virginia Veterans \(V3\) Transition Program](#)¹³

The Virginia Department of Veteran Services facilitates the V3 Transition Program, in which transitioning service members and their spouses are provided peer-to-peer support in seeking employment, education, and entrepreneurship.



[Washington State – Digital Navigator Program](#)¹⁴

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs helps Veterans and/or their families connect to earned benefits, healthcare, and other supportive services. The program focuses on communities such as Veterans in underserved rural areas, elderly Veterans, and Veterans of Color.

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs bridges digital divide for Veteran with old laptop

Until a recent act of kindness, Veteran Charles Murray, 66, would lug his heavy, 12-year-old laptop three miles on his bike to Igo Library in San Antonio. He endured the weight of the eight-pound laptop in his backpack, pedaling in the Texas summer heat because he couldn't afford bus fare.

Once he arrived at the library, which was closed due to the pandemic, he would sit on the outdoor patio and use its Wi-Fi to conduct his VA telehealth appointments. Murray did not have broadband to participate in video visits from his home.

Digital Divide consult helps qualified Veterans get loaned equipment

Murray isn't alone in not having reliable internet access. According to the [Federal Communications Commission](#), 15% of Veteran households do not have a way to connect to the internet at home.

That's why VA Telehealth Services has developed the Digital Divide Consult and the connected devices program. The programs help qualifying Veterans receive VA-loaned equipment.

Murray's clinical psychologist, Dr. Amanda Wetegrove-Romine, ordered a Digital Divide Consult for Murray. The consult determined his eligibility for programs to help him get the internet service needed for VA telehealth. Heidi Morris, Murray's homeless program social worker, then completed an assessment for a VA internet-connected device.

In collaboration with Apple – and facilitated by [the Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships](#) – VA loaned Murray an iPad with cellular data service, as well as start-up instructions. Since then, Murray has connected with his care team through VA Video Connect from his home.

Increased Engagement with Camera Use

Providing Murray and other Veterans with these tools was a game changer. It was noted that Veterans are more engaged when they're in front of a camera. And they reveal more through nonverbal cues – such as facial reactions to treatment recommendations – than they do over the phone.

"You need the internet right now, especially during the pandemic, to take part in health care, employment and education," said Dr. Kevin Galpin, executive director of VA Telehealth Services. "It's important that every Veteran has the ability to stay connected."

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"VA social workers have seen an increase in Veteran engagement in VA programs due to increased access to VA-loaned devices and connectivity resources," said Jennifer Koget, a licensed clinical social worker and acting national director of VA's national social work program office.

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Washington veterans can get free tech, digital literacy training under new program

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is partnering with the Washington State Department of Commerce to provide free technology for Washington state veterans.

The [WDVA Digital Navigator Program](#) provides eligible Veterans or their families with devices like a laptop and a smartphone with a mobile hotspot. The program includes digital literacy training as well in an effort to connect more veterans with their earned benefits, like disability compensation, pension, healthcare and other services.

The WDVA Digital Navigator Program is a grant-funded program through the Department of Commerce and primarily focuses on veterans in underserved rural areas. Older veterans, veterans of color, participants in the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program, and veterans enrolled in higher education or apprenticeship programs, will be offered skills training and enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program to ensure the veterans are still connected and supported after the Digital Navigator Program service ends.

Veterans, active-duty members, reserve members, National Guard members of the same household as qualified veterans and member of families currently receiving benefits from a deceased active-duty service members in households at or below the Federal Poverty Guideline for their household are eligible.

WDVA Director David Puente says it's a purpose driven program that will help countless veterans access what they've earned. "The purpose of what we're doing today is to help veterans and their family members connect to their earned benefits like healthcare and other support services," Puente said.

Four Digital Navigators will travel throughout Washington state to provide technology and training for qualified veterans. Kimberly Danley says the services are vital to many veterans and accessible to those who don't live near a major metropolitan city.

"Instead of saying you gotta find a bus or a friend to drive you —this is us saying we can take medical to you and we can get you the help you need at your level where you're at," Danley said.

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Danley says she recently worked with a Veteran who's now living in transitional housing in Orting.

"He never had an email account and after we gave him a phone and trained him he called his daughter who he hasn't spoken to in several years," Danley said.

This story was written by Chris Cashman and originally published by King5 News.

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This document is intended solely to assist recipients in better understanding the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program and the requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. This document does not and is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this document.