



**NATIONAL
SKILLS
COALITION**

Every worker. Every industry.
A strong economy.

Implementing the Digital Equity Act:

What Workforce and Education Advocates Need to Know about Digital Inclusion

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PANELISTS



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AGENDA

- ▶ About our organizations
- ▶ Why this webinar?
- ▶ Digital Equity Act: an opportunity for skills advocates
- ▶ Digital inclusion field: expertise and potential partners
- ▶ How you can take action
- ▶ Q&A



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ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND



NSC'S VISION

- ▶ Jobs that require skills training are the backbone of our economy.
- ▶ National Skills Coalition fights for a national commitment to inclusive, high-quality skills training so that more people have access to a better life, and more local businesses see sustained growth.



NSC'S IMPACT

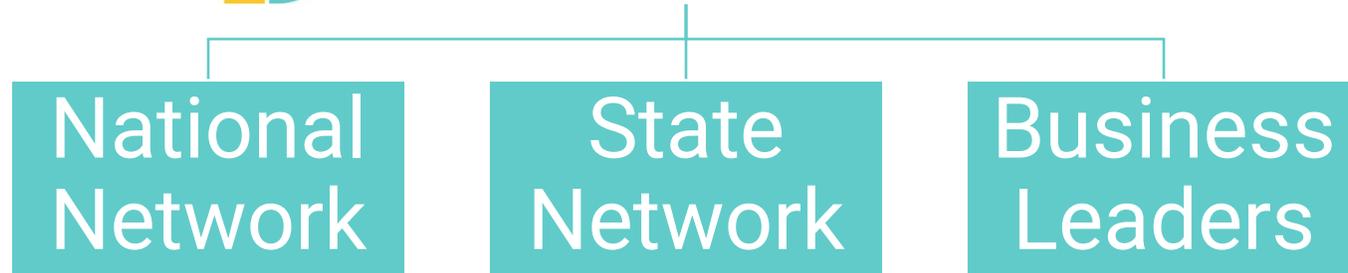
- ▶ Since 2000, through expert analysis and technical assistance, broad-based organizing, targeted advocacy, and cutting-edge communications, NSC has changed hundreds of state and federal skills policies that have changed thousands of lives and grown local businesses and economies.



NSC'S NETWORKS



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION



ABOUT NDIA

A unified voice for home and public broadband, personal devices, and local technology training and support programs.

600+

Affiliates

44

States



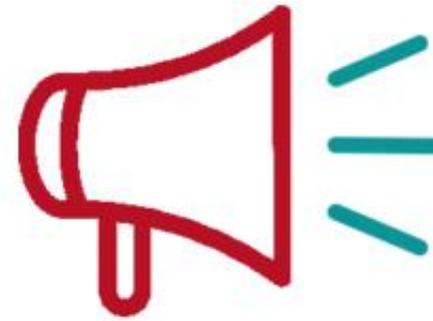
ABOUT NDIA



Practitioner Support



Policy



Awareness



Data & Research

Digital Equity

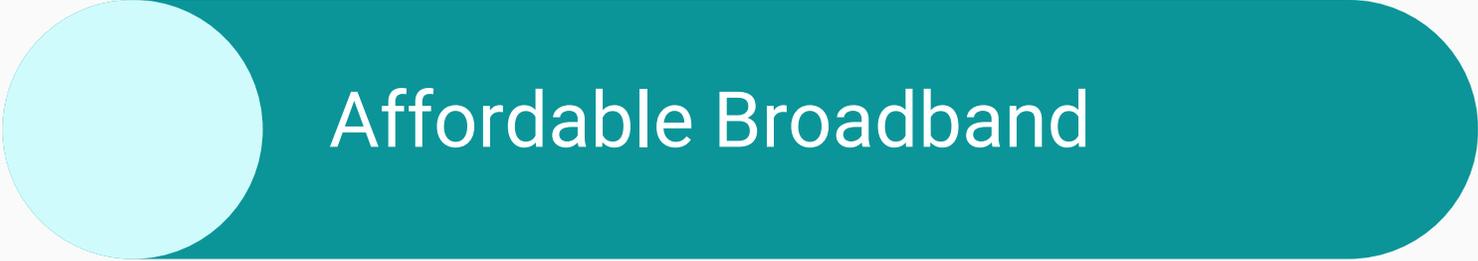
Individuals and communities have IT capacity for full participation in society, democracy and economy.

Digital Inclusion

Activities necessary for full participation:

- Affordable home broadband
- Appropriate devices
- Digital literacy
- Tech support
- Applications

THE SOLUTION



Affordable Broadband



Affordable Devices



Digital Literacy Trainings

WHO IS NOT CONNECTED?

36 MILLION US HOUSEHOLDS

Do not have wireline broadband connections*

*cable, DSL or fiber



26
MILLION
Households in
URBAN Areas



10
MILLION
Households in
RURAL Areas





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WHY THIS WEBINAR?



NSC-NDIA COLLABORATION IN ACTION

- **Introduce** adult education, higher education, workforce development, and digital inclusion advocates to each other
- Flag upcoming opportunities for **collaboration** on Digital Equity Act implementation (e.g. state plans)
- Encourage **partnership** as appropriate on state policy and federal implementation
- Identify **advocacy opportunities** to strengthen digital skills policy



YOU'VE SHOWED US YOU WANT TO ENGAGE

- Public comments to NTIA on the Digital Equity Act (submitted in February 2022 – thank you!)
- Enthusiastic attendance at NSC's December 2021 webinar on Digital Equity (and earlier webinars)
- High-profile participation in February 2022 Skills Summit plenary session on digital skills (*featuring Sen. Tim Kaine*)
- Robust engagement with NSC's 2020 digital equity policy recommendations for states



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DIGITAL EQUITY ACT: Opportunities for skills advocates

DIGITAL EQUITY ACT

\$1.5 BILLION (combined)

- \$60M: State Planning Grants
- \$1.44B: State Capacity Grants



STATE DIGITAL EQUITY CAPACITY GRANT PROGRAM

Total Allocated: \$1.5 Billion (60m planning grants + 1.44b capacity grants)

- Capacity Grants: 50% population; 25% covered member population; 25% adoption + availability

Program Administrator: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Eligible Administering Entities:

- The State, a political subdivision of the State, an Indian Tribe, a Native Hawaiian organization.
- A foundation, corporation, institution, association, or coalition that is— (i) a not-for-profit entity; (ii) providing services in the State; and (iii) not a school.
- A community anchor institution, other than a school
- A local educational agency.
- An entity that carries out a workforce development program.
- An agency of the State that is responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities in the State.
- A public or multi-family housing authority.
- A partnership between any of the preceding entities.

COVERED POPULATIONS

- individuals who live in covered households (ie. households with income less than or equal to 150 percent of federal poverty level);
- aging individuals;
- incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility;
- veterans;
- 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; and
- individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.



STATE DIGITAL EQUITY CAPACITY GRANT PROGRAM

State Digital Equity Plan

- Identification of barriers to digital equity for covered populations
- Measurable objectives for documenting and promoting digital inclusion activities
- Assessment how objectives will impact and interact with the State's other objectives (ie. economic development, health outcomes, etc.)
- Description of State's plan to collaborate with key stakeholders
- List of organizations State collaborated with on developing and implementing plan



DIGITAL EQUITY ACT: TIMELINE

State Digital Equity Capacity Program

1. Request for Comments-Soon
2. Notice of Funding Opportunity-180 days after IIJA
3. Application Window-60 days
4. Planning Grant Award
5. Plan Development-12 months
6. Capacity Grants-After Planning



Digital Charlotte

DIGITAL EQUITY COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM

Total Allocated: \$1.25 Billion (\$250m per FY for 5 FYs)

Program Administrator: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Eligible Grantees:

- A political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of a State, including an agency of a State that is responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities, or for providing public housing
- An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization.
- A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is a not-for-profit entity and not a school.
- A community anchor institution.
- A local educational agency.
- An entity that carries out a workforce development program.
- A partnership between any of the preceding entities.
- A partnership between any of the preceding entities and an entity that the Assistant Secretary determines to be in the public interest; and is not a school. (Cannot be or have been an administering entity under the Capacity Grant Program)

Eligible Subgrantees: N/A

DIGITAL EQUITY COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM CONT.

Use of Funds: An entity shall use the grant amounts to support not less than 1 of the following activities:

- To develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit covered populations.
- To facilitate the adoption of broadband by covered populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations.
- To implement (I) training programs for covered populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills; or (II) other workforce development programs.
- To make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to covered populations at low or no cost.
- To construct, upgrade, expend, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions.

DIGITAL EQUITY ACT: TIMELINE

Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program

1. Request for Comments-Soon
2. Not later than 30 days after capacity grants go out, and not before, the Assistant Secretary shall establish Competitive Grant Program
3. Notice of Funding Opportunity-TBD
4. Eligible grantees must submit an application at such time as the Assistant Secretary may require





WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SKILLS ADVOCATES?

- Now is the time to connect with your governor's office
- Get to the table for your state Digital Equity Planning Process
- Advocate for your state to **replicate innovative practices** even while waiting for federal rollout (e.g. *Hawaii's recent digital skills survey of state residents*)
- Identify and engage with digital inclusion partners



USE NSC RESOURCES TO MAKE YOUR CASE:



Full report:

www.tinyurl.com/BoostingDL

Digital skills fact sheets by industry (Summer 2021):

- [Manufacturing](#)
- [Retail & hospitality](#)
- [Health & social work](#)
- [Construction, transportation & storage](#)



The New Landscape of Digital Literacy

How workers' uneven digital skills affect economic mobility and business competitiveness, and what policymakers can do about it.



Get more data and recommendations in our full report:
tinyurl.com/NLDigitalLiteracy

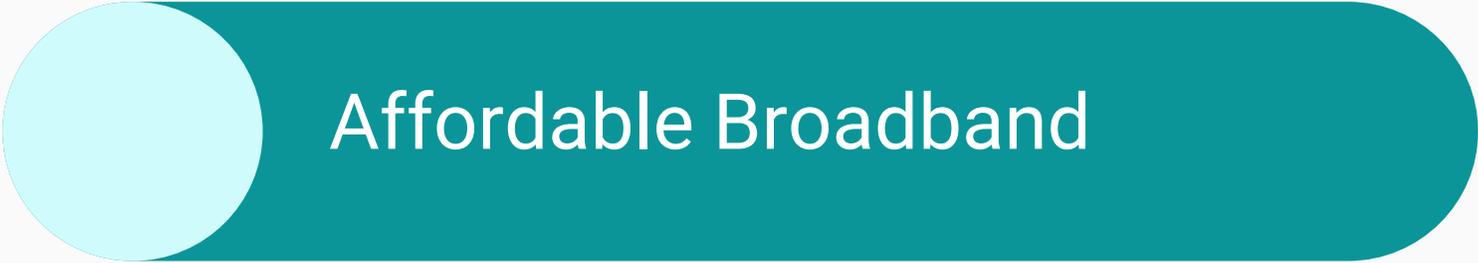


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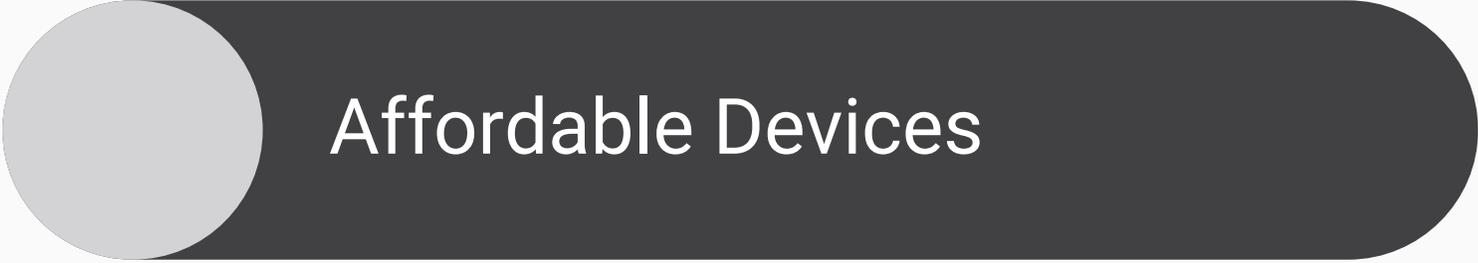
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THE DIGITAL INCLUSION FIELD: Expertise and potential partners

DIGITAL INCLUSION



Affordable Broadband



Affordable Devices



Digital Literacy Trainings

DIGITAL NAVIGATORS

Digital Navigator

Program model to provide one-to-one basic digital inclusion services (connectivity assistance, device assistance, basic digital skills support) over the phone.

- Learner-Centered Approaches
- Asynchronous and Live Instruction
- Replicable, Open, Iterative Model



“Being involved in this project has affirmed and personalized the digital needs of our communities. I was aware of the need for services before simply by observing it in-person, but now I have a story attached to each individual with whom I speak.”

Amanda Perry, Digital Navigator

Digital Inclusion Ecosystem: Indicators

- Existence of programs and policies addressing all aspects of the digital divide
- Affordable and subsidized devices and broadband service options that meet the community's needs
- Multilingual digital literacy and digital skill trainings that meet the community's needs

Digital Inclusion Ecosystem: Indicators

- Hardware and software technical support
- Digital navigation services to guide residents to the above services
- Collaboration: Entities providing local digital inclusion services, policymakers, advocates, social service providers and community leaders co-create solutions in partnership with the community



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ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES: Advocacy opportunities



ADVOCACY

- ▶ 130 Hill meetings as part of #SkillsSummit2022

- ▶ Business partners will take to Congress April 4-6 #BLUontheHill2022

- ▶ How we're engaging Congress
 - Investment
 - Industry sector partnerships
 - WIOA reauthorization
 - Short term training (JOBS Act)



SHORT TERM TRAINING

- ▶ Bipartisan JOBS Act amendment moving forward in Congressional "competitiveness" package
- ▶ Expands federal financial aid to short term, high quality training programs
- ▶ Key for digital literacy programs, workers, and businesses



WATCH THIS SPACE!

- ▶ JOBS Act sign-on letter deadline **March 31**
 - Complementary advocacy campaign
 - Passionate about short term Pell? Email Caroline!

- ▶ Upcoming: "Summit Sequel" on Digital Equity
 - State examples, newest information
 - Date/time TBD

- ▶ Reskilling/upskilling bill – end of summer?

- ▶ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization



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Q&A



STAY IN TOUCH

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**THANK
YOU!**