Montague Digital Equity Plan Steering Committee Meeting #2

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

PRESENTATION PREPARED BY FRCOG

FUNDED BY THE MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE

Agenda

- ➢ Overview

- ➢ Existing Conditions (to date)

- ➢ Outreach & Engagement

- ➢ Vision and Goals Discussion

- ➢ Statewide Digital Equity Plan Update

- ➢ Next Steps

Digital Equity Planning Overview

What is "digital equity"?

Digital equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the **information technology capacity needed for full participation** in our society, democracy, and economy.
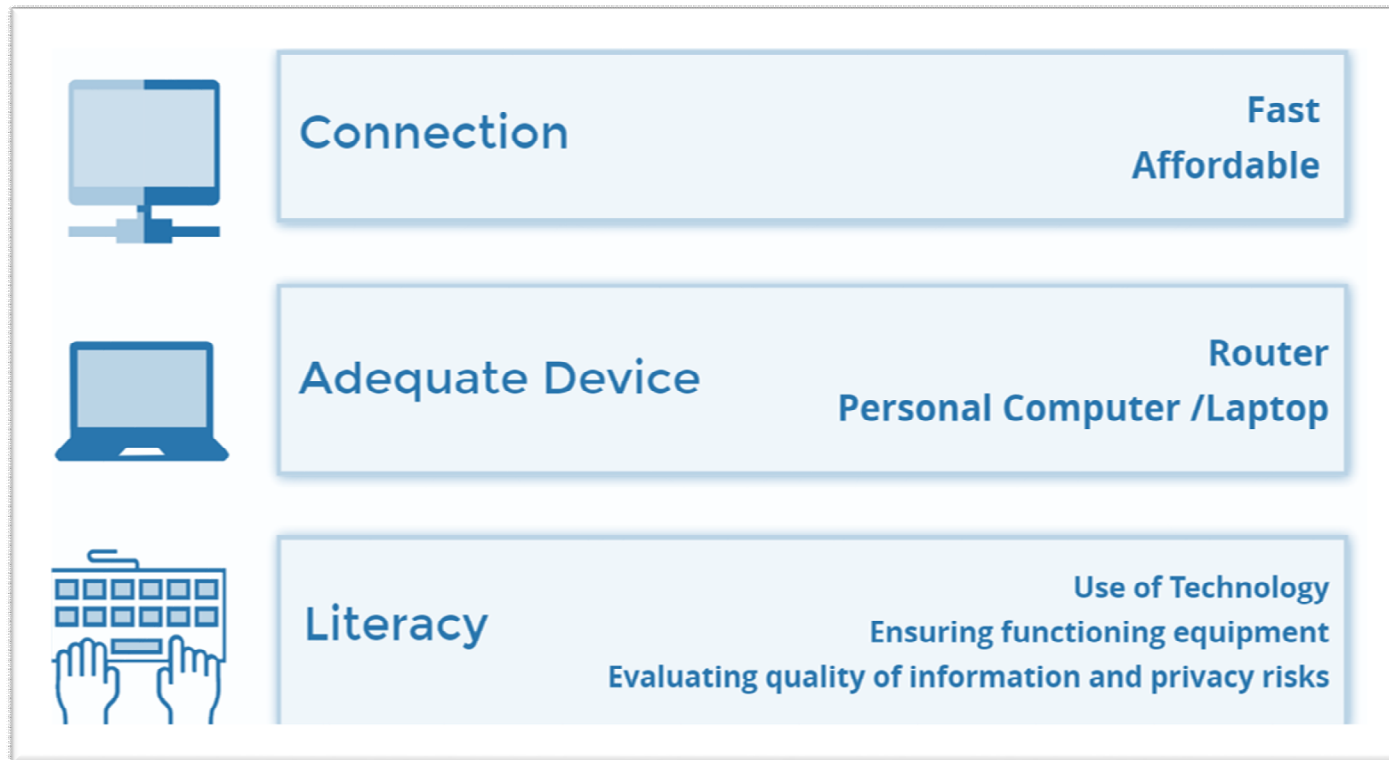

What is the purpose of this digital equity plan?

To guide municipal **decision-making and investments** related to increasing access, adoption and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prepare municipalities to submit **grant proposals** to existing or forthcoming state or federal programs to support digital equity activities.

Digital Equity Planning Overview

Factors in Determining Digital Equity

Connection		**Fast** **Affordable**
Adequate Device		**Router** **Personal Computer /Laptop**
Literacy		**Use of Technology** **Ensuring functioning equipment** **Evaluating quality of information and privacy risks**

Digital Equity Plan Outline

➢ Introduction

➢ Existing Conditions

➢ Community Needs Assessment

➢ Recommendations

Existing Conditions – Community Profile

Community Profile

8,565 Total Population

3,765 Households

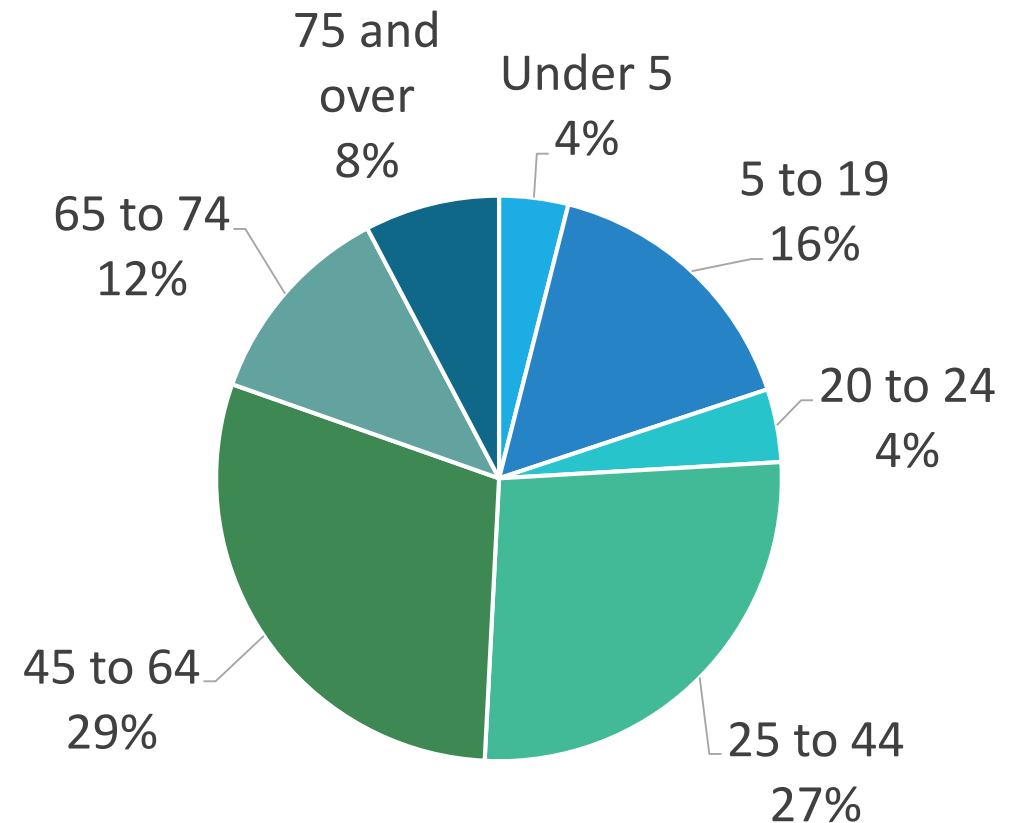4.4% of Total Population of Color and Hispanic/Latino Origin

Covered Populations:
  8.2% Veterans
  7.3% Primary Language is not English
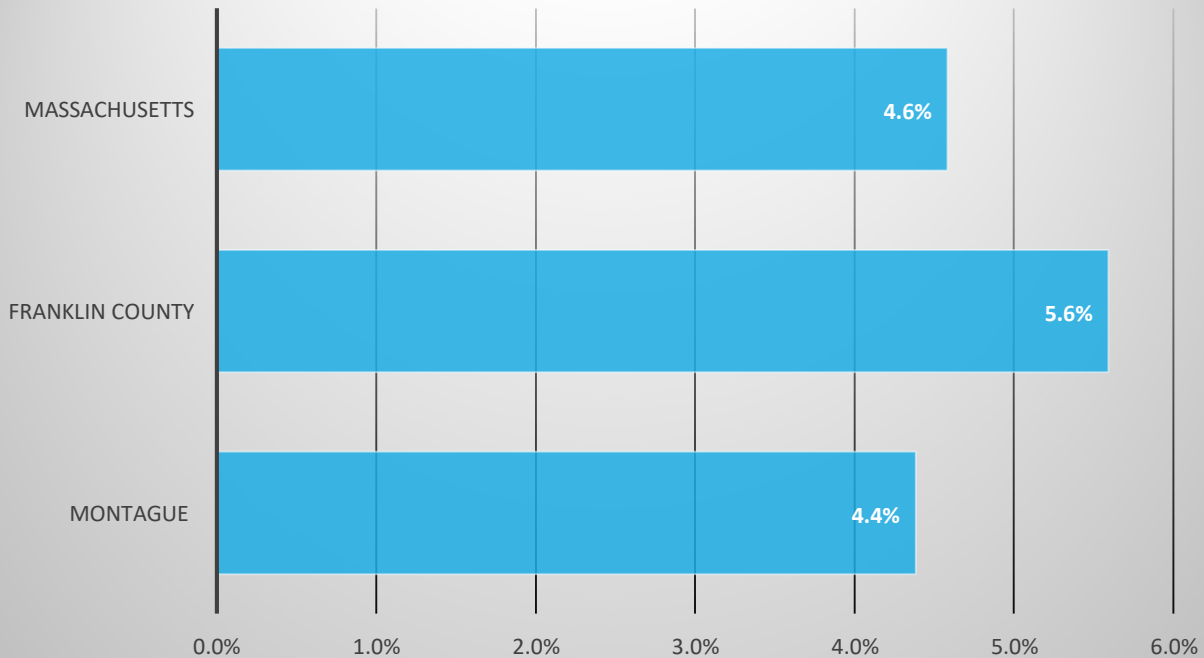 19.6% Age 65 years and over
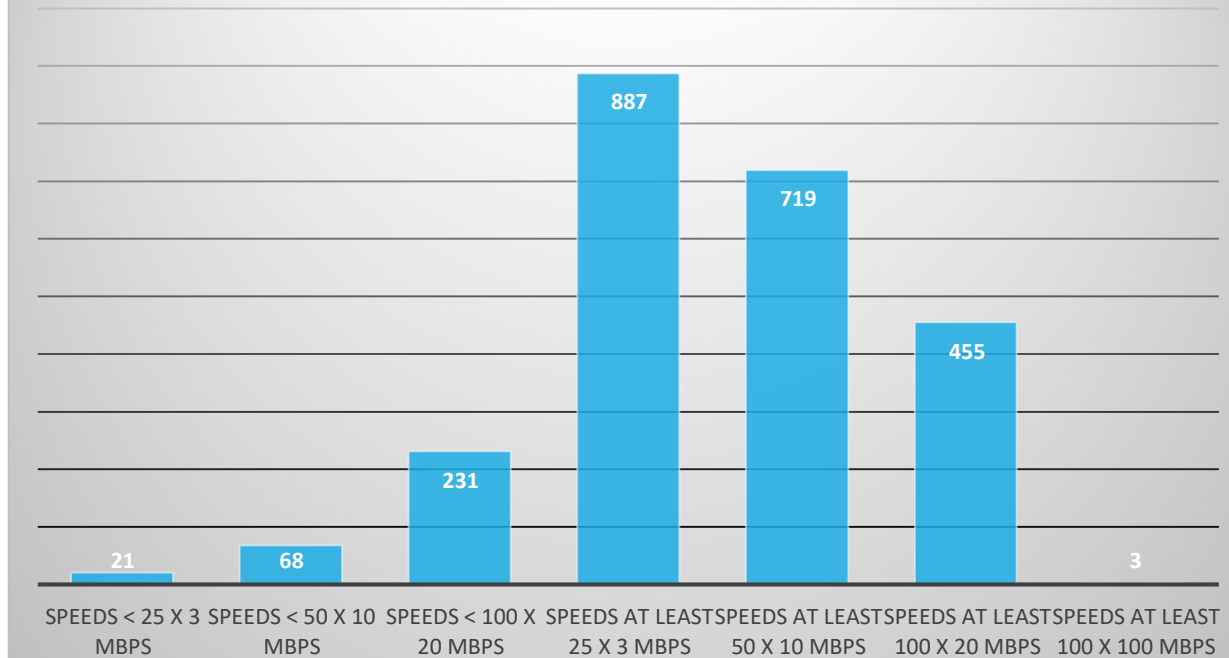
Total Population by Age Cohort

- Under 5: 4%
- 5 to 19: 16%
- 20 to 24: 4%
- 25 to 44: 27%
- 45 to 64: 29%
- 65 to 74: 12%
- 75 and over: 8%

Existing Conditions – Broadband Access

Broadband Access

Households with No Internet Subscription

- MASSACHUSETTS: 4.6%
- FRANKLIN COUNTY: 5.6%
- MONTAGUE: 4.4%

Montague Internet Speeds (983 total tests)

- SPEEDS < 25 X 3 MBPS: 21
- SPEEDS < 50 X 10 MBPS: 68
- SPEEDS < 100 X 20 MBPS: 231
- SPEEDS AT LEAST 25 X 3 MBPS: 887
- SPEEDS AT LEAST 50 X 10 MBPS: 719
- SPEEDS AT LEAST 100 X 20 MBPS: 455
- SPEEDS AT LEAST 100 X 100 MBPS: 3

Existing Conditions – Broadband Access

Device Access

Households with No Computer

- MASSACHUSETTS: 6.5%
- FRANKLIN COUNTY: 8.4%
- MONTAGUE: 14.0%
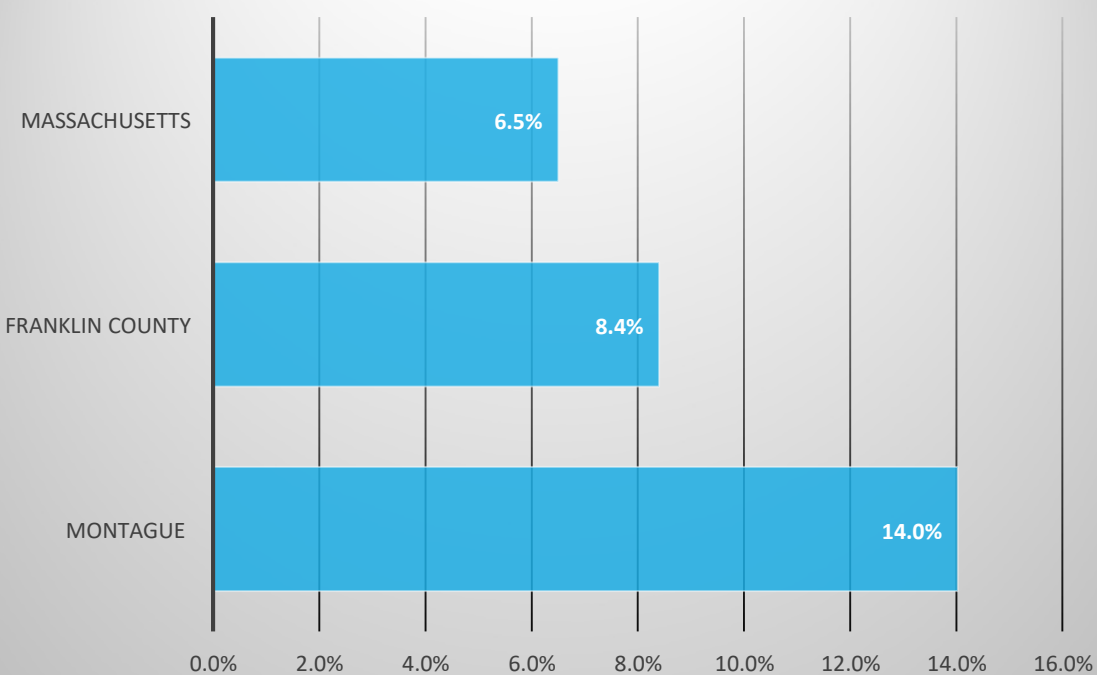
Device Access in Montague

	Montague	Franklin County	Massachusetts
DESKTOP OR LAPTOP (%)	71.7%	79.9%	82.5%
SMARTPHONE (%)	77.0%	77.6%	85.9%
TABLET OR OTHER PORTABLE WIRELESS COMPUTER (%)	55.6%	60.4%	66.0%
OTHER COMPUTER (%)	2.6%	1.6%	2.1%
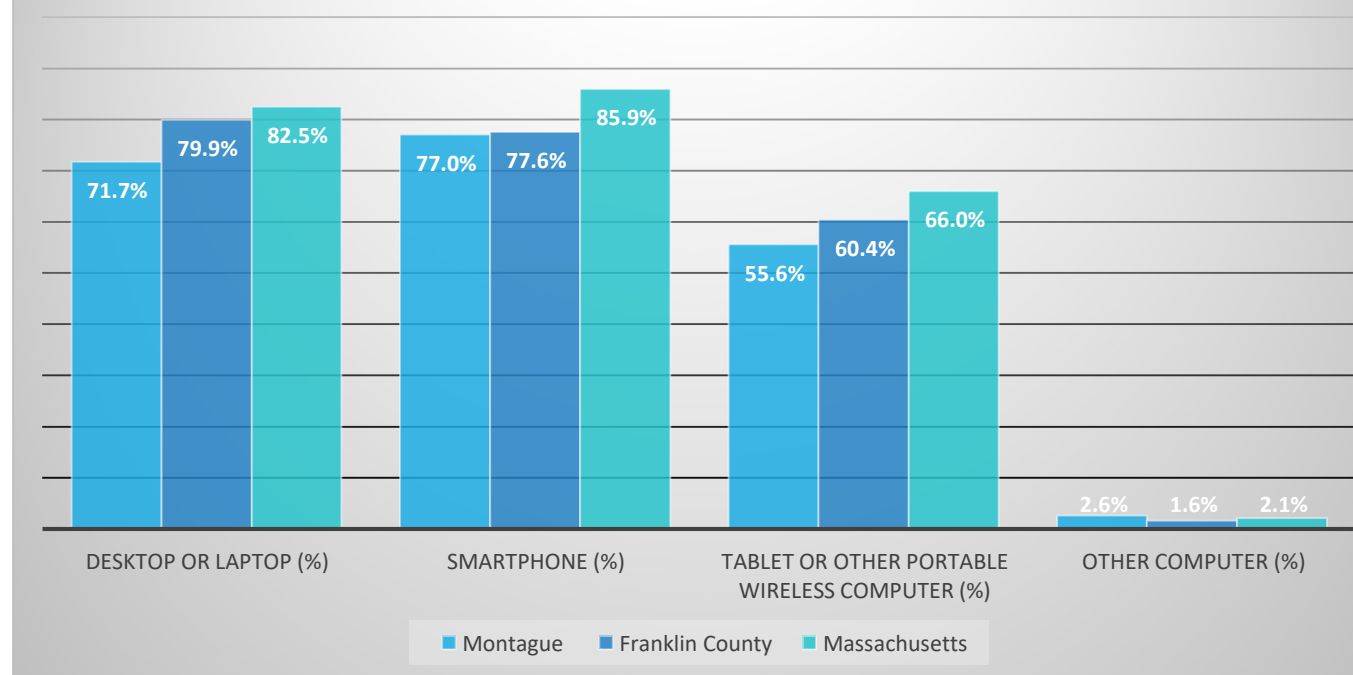
Existing Conditions – Broadband Access

MBI Statewide Digital Equity Survey

30 complete responses (33 total)

All have internet connection
- T-mobile -1
- Comcast -11
- Verizon - 3
- Xfinity -14
- No response -1

How well does internet work?
- Good enough - 20
- Not good enough - 9
- I don't know - 1

Survey Distribution, so far ….
- Town of Montague website
- FRCOG website & social media
- Franklin County Resource Network members

Existing Conditions – Broadband Access

MBI Asset Inventory Tool

No meaningful data yet

Asset Inventory Outreach, so far ….

- Municipal departments
- Montague Housing Authority
- Montague Catholic Social Mini
- The Brick House
- MCTV
- Gill-Montague School District
- Franklin County Tech School
- Ja'Duke Center
- Great Falls Discovery Center
- St. Kazimier Society

- Center for New Americans
- Greenfield Community College
- LifePath
- Community Action PV
- MassHire Franklin/Hampshire
- Opioid Task Force
- NELCWIT
- ServiceNet
- The Literacy Project
- The United ARC
- United Way
- FCRN and more

Outreach & Engagement

MBI Statewide Digital Equity Survey

Audience: All community members

Purpose: To ask households about their current broadband service, devices, and ability to use the internet

Outreach: Make paper copies available and hold "office hours" at specific locations.

Include with Community Meeting promotion (article, flyers)

MBI Asset Inventory Tool

Audience: Providers of digital equity services

Purpose: To collect information about digital equity services offered in the community.

Outreach: Direct follow up via email and telephone

Outreach & Engagement

Community Meeting

Audience: All community members

Purpose: To bring the community together to review the digital equity services that are currently available and needed.

Discussions will inform the Plan's vision & goals and recommendations.

Focus Group

Audience: Small group of invited individuals

Purpose: To bring together people with lived experience from a specific population or people who serve this population to talk about their experience and needs.

Discussions will inform the Plan's vision & goals and recommendations.

Outreach & Engagement – Community Meeting

Proposed Event Outline:

→ Welcome

→ Overview of Digital Equity and Plan

→ Quick review of existing conditions

→ Discuss draft vision and goals

→ Conduct exercise to identify assets, needs and opportunities

→ Discuss potential recommendations

→ Review next steps.

Event Details:

- In-person or online?

- If in-person, where should it be held?

  Is it accessible? Can a projector be set up? Are refreshments allowed? How is parking?

- When should it be held - day, evening, weekend?

- Who will do the Welcome?

- Will ask for RSVP.

- Depending on anticipated number of RSVPs, may need to do break-out groups with facilitators.

Outreach & Engagement – Focus Groups

> What populations in your community do you think are the most important to hear from about their experience accessing and using the internet?

> What is the best way to identify and bring together about 9-12 people from this community to participate in a focus group?

The federal Digital Equity Act identified the following "covered populations":

- Aging individuals
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in rural areas

Outreach & Engagement – Focus Group

Event Details:

- Is there an organization we should partner with to help us identify and invite the 9-12 individuals?

- In-person or online?

- If in-person, where should it be held?

    Is it conveniently located? Is it accessible? Are refreshments allowed?

- When should it be held - day, evening, weekend?

- Should childcare services be offered?

- Should there be an incentive for participants?

Vision & Goals

The Plan's **Vision** should be a "clear, specific, compelling picture" of what the community would look like if it were digitally equitable.

The Plan's **Goals** should be the broad outcomes that are derived from and support the achievement of the vision.

Vision Statements

"The City of Austin vision includes every Austin resident having an opportunity to be fully engaged in digital society, accessing and using digital and communications technology."

- City of Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy

"All resident of Portland/Multnomah County will have barrier-free access to high-speed broadband internet at home and at school, an affordable computing device and the training to use them effectively."

- Digital Equity Action Plan, City of Portland & partners, 2016

"To achieve digital equity through universal residential broadband adoption which includes affordability, devices, and digital life skills training and technical support, in order to ensure Franklin County residents have the tools necessary to support education, health, well-being, economic prosperity, and the ability to fully participate in society"

- Franklin County (OH) Digital Equity Coalition Framework, 2021

Vision Statements

Draft Vision Statement

Based on the public engagement process and refined through public review, the Montague Comprehensive Plan vision statement describes the ideal future of Montague and the framework through which the master plan is written:

The Town of Montague's shared vision is to preserve our sense of community and the unique character of our Five Villages by protecting its natural resources, nurturing its cultural richness, seeking social equity, and promoting quality schools, public services, and facilities; all while ensuring that the community is resilient and sustainable.

https://montagueplans.org/review-comment/

Goals

Goal 1: Devices – Philadelphians can access appropriate and affordable technology devices.

Goal 2: Connectivity - Philadelphians can access and afford the Internet connectivity they need.

Goal 3: Training and Workforce – Philadelphians develop the digital skills necessary for work and life.

Goal 2: Ecosystem – Philadelphia grows and sustains the capacity and infrastructure required to increase digital equity.

- A Digital Equity Action Plan for the City of Philadelphia, 2021

Goal 1 – Access: Ensure access to affordable high-speed Internet and devices for those in need.

Goal 2 – Support and Training: Provide training and support to ensure that everyone has the skills to use digital technology to enhance their quality of life.
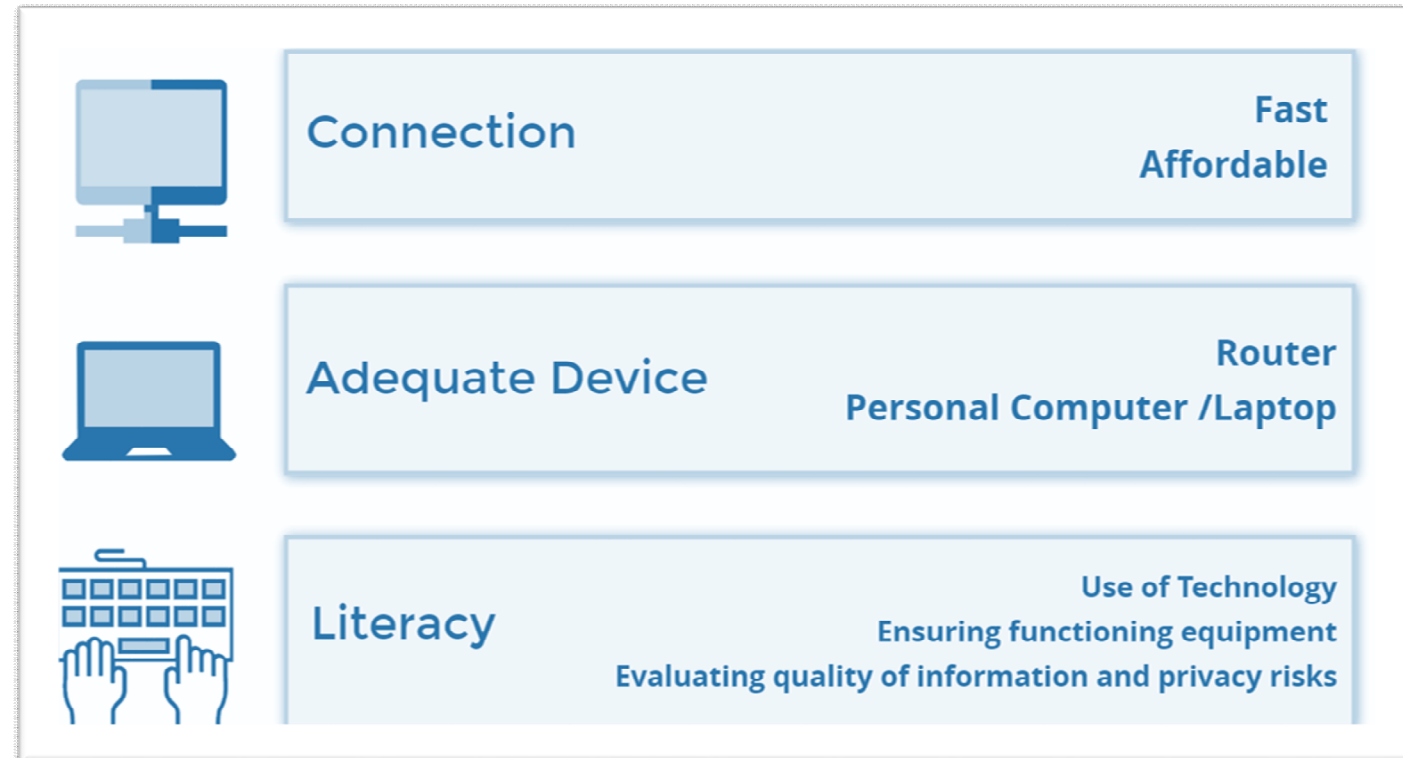
- Digital Equity Action Plan, City of Portland & partners, 2016

Goals

- ❑ To understand and increase usage of digital and communications technology.

- ❑ To address potential barriers to digital inclusion.

- ❑ To understand the need for access via reliable and affordable devices.

- ❑ To understand the need for language and disability accommodations.

- ❑ To develop relevancy & advocacy campaigns within specific communities & populations.

   - Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy, 2016

When thinking about Goals, consider the determining factors for digital access…..

Connection
Fast
Affordable

Adequate Device
Router
Personal Computer /Laptop

Literacy
Use of Technology
Ensuring functioning equipment
Evaluating quality of information and privacy risks

Statewide Digital Equity Plan

The MBI is creating a statewide digital equity plan called **Massachusetts Internet for All**.

Rural Listening Session to be held on **Tuesday, October 3rd at 5:00 pm** at JWO Transit Center in Greenfield.

Register for event at:

Statewide Listening Tour Events

Map Legend
- Upcoming Events
- Past Events
- Satellite Locations

MBI
MASSACHUSETTS
BROADBAND INSTITUTE

INTERNET FOR ALL

https://broadband.masstech.org/internetforall

Statewide Broadband Mapping

The MBI is developing an online, interactive Massachusetts Broadband Map.

Its purpose is "to accurately map fixed broadband availability for each home, business and other serviceable locations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

Are there areas without sufficient broadband access that are not identified as unserved or underserved on this map?
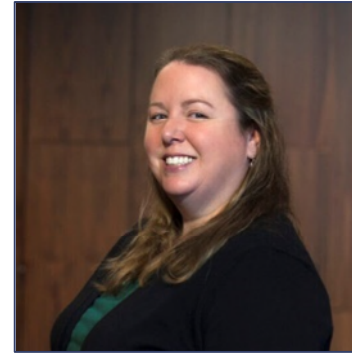

https://mapping.massbroadband.org/map
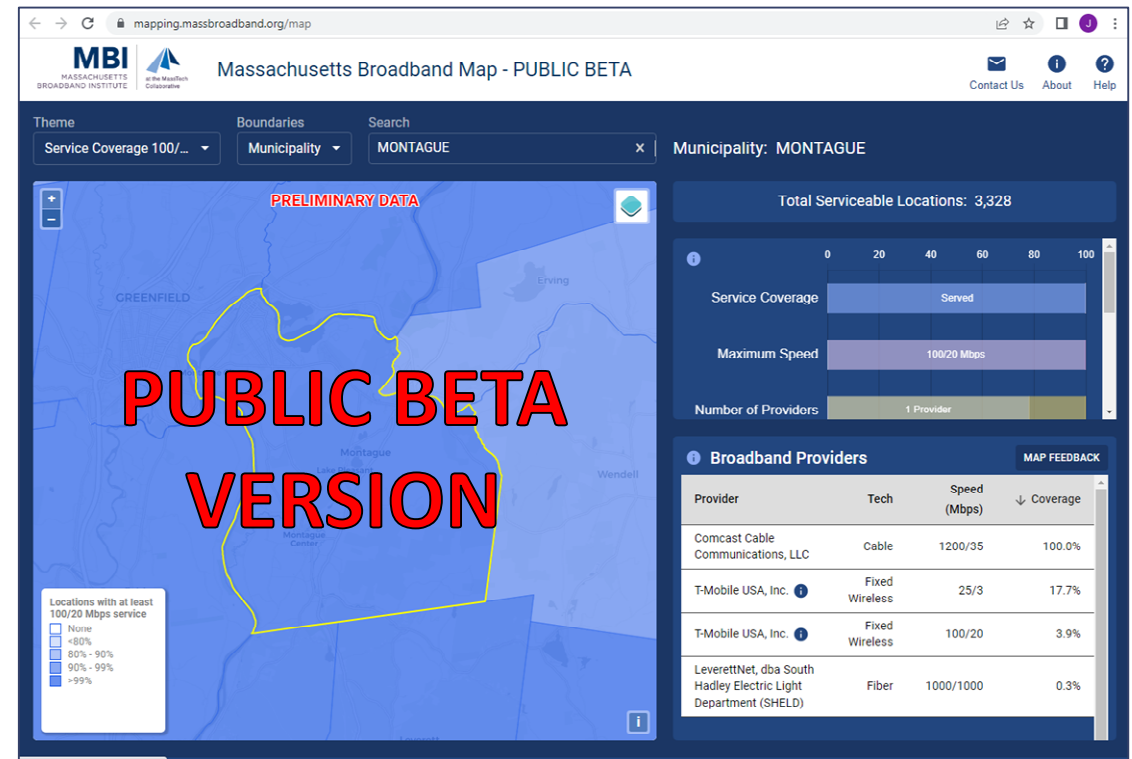
Next Steps

➢ Continue **outreach to promote** MBI Statewide Survey, Asset Inventory Tool and Mass. Broadband Map

➢ Conduct **Community Meeting and Focus Groups**

➢ **Next meeting:** Update on existing conditions data; Report on Community Meeting and Focus Groups; Finalize vision and goals; Begin discussion on draft recommendations.

Thank You!

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

https://frcog.org/

https://frcog.org/project/municipal-digital-equity-planning-services/

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