Draft Montague
Digital EquityPlan
April 2, 2024

frcog

Draft Montague Digital Equity Plan

Dated April 2, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Background

While many Montague residents have effortlessly accessed the internet at home, work, school and throughout our communities, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the digital divide that continues to exist. As schools closed for in-person instruction and businesses moved employees to work-at-home models in March 2020, the awareness and consequences of this long-time disparity became evident. Along with heat, electricity and water, in-home broadband access is the fourth utility that must be available for students to learn and thrive, businesses to remain nimble and competitive, seniors to take advantage of telehealth options, and a host of endless useful applications. Along with broadband adoption, many of our residents need devices, technical support and technology training to fully access internet services, educational resources, employment and the social aspects of the digital world.

Digital Equity Plans should focus on "**covered populations**." These are defined by the Digital Equity Act Sec. 60302(8), National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) as groups within a populations who have a higher likelihood to experience digital inequity.

Covered Populations:

- Individuals who live in low-income households
- Aging individuals (60 and above)
- Individuals who are incarcerated
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

Purpose of the Plan

The Montague Digital Equity Plan is intended to help 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. This plan will help prepare the Town of Montague to submit grant proposals to existing or forthcoming state or federal programs to support digital equity activities.

What are the Digital Divide and Digital Equity?

The digital divide is the gap between individuals who have access to computers, high-speed internet and the skills to use them, and those who do not. 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. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.[1]

There are three essential elements of digital equity: **Affordable Connection** (is the internet connection fast and affordable), **Adequate Device** (does an individual or household have the necessary and needed digital device, such as a desktop, laptop, or tablet), and **Digital Literacy** (do residents know how to properly and successfully use technology for their needs, are they receiving quality information, and can they assess their privacy risks).

Digital inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use technology.

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[1] National Digital Inclusion Alliance (www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/)

While there has been significant investment over the past decade in Montague and the surrounding rural communities, a disparity in access, affordability, and digital literacy persists.

Overview of Planning Process

Digital Equity Steering Advisory Group

The Montague Digital Equity Plan is part of the Montague Comprehensive Plan update (https://montagueplans.org/). The planning process consisted of working closely with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Advisory Group to provide oversight and input into the development of the Plan.

Community Outreach and Engagement

Robust community outreach and engagement provides insights into both the needs of Montague residents and the available digital equity assets. The consultant pursued multiple avenues of outreach and engagement to better understand the current conditions relating to digital equity. There were four (4) Steering Advisory Group meetings, two (2) focus groups, including one with older adults and one with digital equity providers, as well a Community

Meeting on December 6, 2023 with ten attendees. In addition, staff met individually with key stakeholders to gather additional information, including the Director of IT for the Gill/Montague School District, the Montague Library Director, and the Senior Digital Equity/Montague Mass in Motion Coordinator, as well as the Town Planner and Town Administrator, to gather insights on specific issues of digital equity, current projects, and ideas for future projects.

Digital Equity Survey

The MBI created a statewide Digital Equity Survey to gather information about needs, barriers, and opportunities from Massachusetts residents. The survey was available online and in print, provided in 9 languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, and Khmer). Copies of the survey were brought to the Senior Center, the three public library locations, and the Brick House (the Community Resource Center). The online survey was promoted on the Town's website, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments' website & social media, and sent out via the Franklin County Resource Network. There were 55 responses from Montague residents.

Connection — Fast, Affordable

Adequate Device — Router, Personal Computer /Laptop

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

Adapted from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute

VISION AND GOALS

The Vision and the Goals for the Montague Digital Equity Plan were developed through Steering Advisory Group meetings and feedback during the Community Meeting, focus groups, and interviews. The Vision and Goals articulate the values that drive the work and the means by which the town will pursue digital equity for all residents.

Vision

Our vision is for all residents in Montague to be able to access affordable, high-speed internet, with the appropriate devices. Affordable access, which includes cost, speed, devices, and knowledge, is not a privilege for those who can afford it, but a right for our residents.

The Montague Digital Equity Plan will lay the groundwork for long-term investments for Montague to reach digital equity for all its residents. With this plan, the Town will be well-positioned to compete for broadband funds that may become available through federal, state, and private sector broadband infrastructure and digital equity funding opportunities.

Goals

Goal 1: Framework for Promoting and Supporting Digital Equity

Develop and maintain a framework to continue promoting and supporting digital equity for all residents of Montague. The framework will include identifying a team of digital equity champions, pursuing funding, and continuing and expanding partnerships with digital equity providers.

Goal 2: Affordable Connectivity

Support residents' access to the internet connectivity they need and can afford.

Goal 3: Digital Literacy and Safety

Ensure every resident in Montague has the opportunity to learn the skills needed to effectively and safely use digital technology.

Goal 4: Digital Navigation

Ensure access for people who need more support to navigate digital systems.

EXISTING CONDITIONS[2]

Demographics

The Town of Montague is located along the Connecticut River in the upper Pioneer Valley and is the second largest municipality in Franklin County. A rural community, Montague has a population of 8,527 with 3,753 households.[3] The Town is comprised of 5 villages (Montague Center, Montague City, Lake Pleasant, Millers Falls, and Turners Falls). The Village of Turners Falls is home to over half the town's population, and includes the business district.

While in many respects, Montague shares many similarities with Franklin County, the population in Montague differs from the State. For example, the percentage of the population who are People of Color is much lower in both Montague than the State. The population in Montague who speak a language besides English at home is also significantly less than the State. Further, Montague and Franklin County have higher percentages of civilian veterans than the State. Conversely, the percentage of residents in Montague with a disability is higher than the State. While Massachusetts has an aging population, Montague has a greater percentage of households with residents who are 65 or older, and a smaller percentage of households

with children. All municipalities within Franklin County, except Greenfield, are considered Rural by standards set out by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.[4] These demographic characteristics should guide the focus of digital equity in Montague.

Median Household Income

Montague	$70,208
Franklin County	$70,383
Massachusetts	$96,505
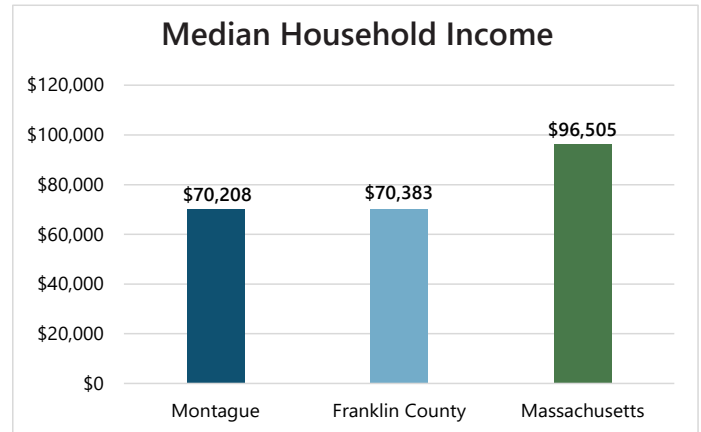
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

A common measure of income for an area is the median household income. The median household income for Montague is $70,208. This figure is consistent with median household income in Franklin County, while both are significantly lower than the median household income of the State. The poverty rate, while still

Town/Region	Civilian Veterans	Population with a Disability	Speak a Language Besides English at Home	People of Color	Households with Children	Households with 65+ years of age
Montague	7.6%	17.4%	6.5%	9.0%	25%	34%
Franklin County	7.5%	16.8%	6.54%	11.1%	23%	39%
Massachusetts	4.7%	11.9%	24.54%	31.1%	28%	32%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

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[2] See Appendix for full list of sources.

[3] A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. A household can include a family, an individual living alone, or unrelated people who share a housing unit.

[4] This Plan uses the MBI definition of Rural, based on the Massachusetts State Office of Rural Health definition, which considers a municipality to be rural if it meets one of the following criteria: Meets at least one of three federal rural definitions at the sub-county level (Census Bureau, Office of Management and Budget, or Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes), and/or has a population less than 10,000 people and a population density below 500 people per square mile, and/or has an acute care hospital in the town that meets the state hospital licensure definition of a small rural hospital, or is a certified Critical Access Hospital.

significant at over 9%, is lower than the State (almost 10%), and much lower than the County (12%). Perhaps more telling of the affordability issues, is the fact that 38% of households have a median income of $50,000 or less.

In Montague, four Block Groups are considered to have Environmental Justice (EJ) population, based on income where the annual median household income is 65% or less than that of the state. In Montague, EJ locations are in Turners Falls and Montague City. The median household income is significantly lower in these sections, and minority population is significantly higher.

Looking at housing cost burden in Montague suggest the impact of affordability for residents. A household is defined as cost-burdened" if they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. In Montague, 30% of households are considered cost-burdened, while in Millers

Falls and Turners Falls the percentages are significantly higher (36% and 40% respectively).

Region	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force Participation Rate	Percent working from Home
Montague	4.30%	67%	12.4%
Franklin County	5.7%	63.1%	13.7%
Massachusetts	5.3%	67.1%	14.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Inability to connect to high-speed internet, lack of access to digital devices, and lack of digital literacy, negatively impacts the economic vitality of a municipality. The labor force participation rate in Montague is fairly strong, while the percentage of employees working from home is less than both the County and the State.
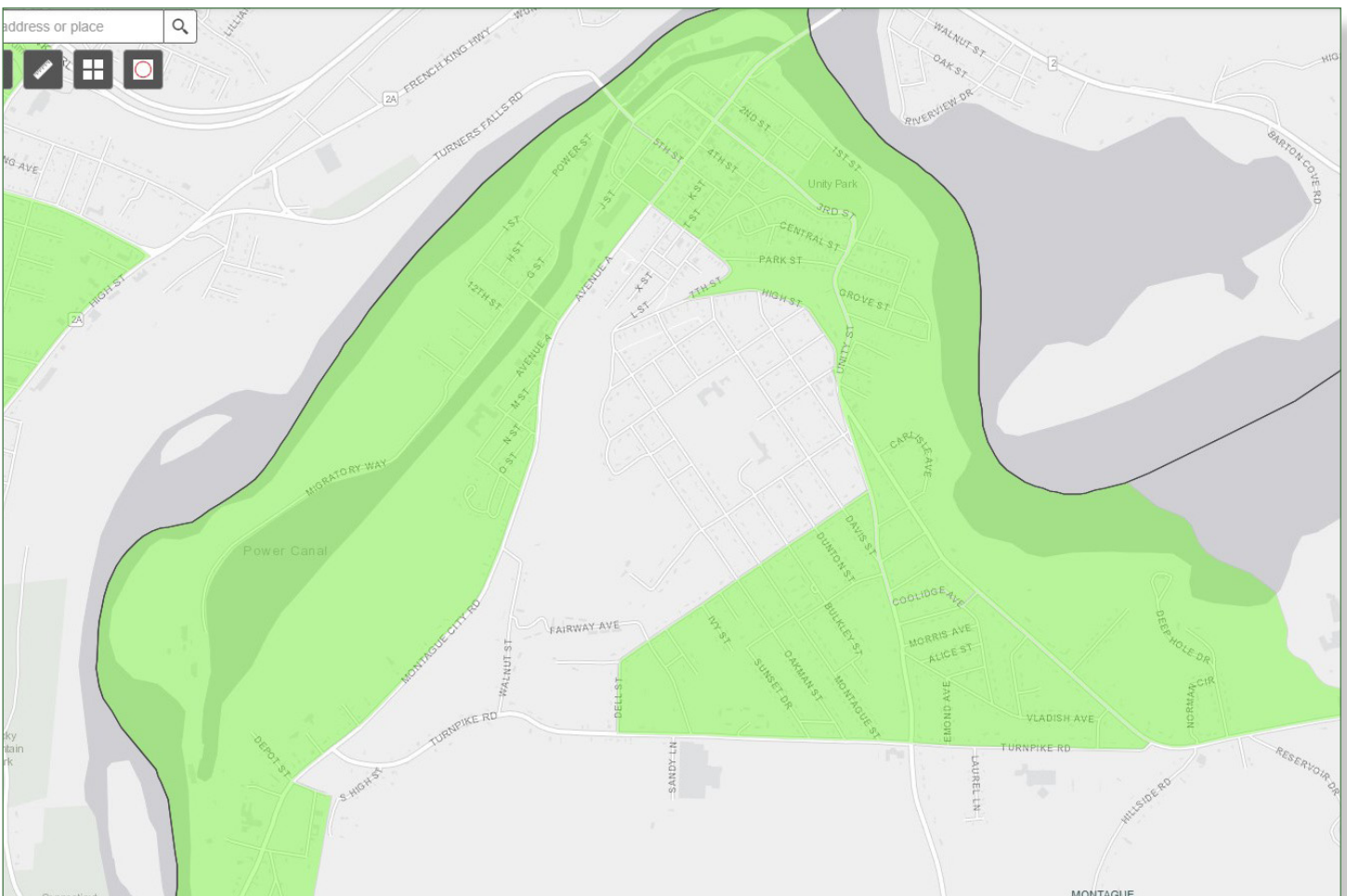
Montague Environmental Justice Block Groups.
Source: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-2020-environmental-justice-populations

Digital Equity

As noted above, the main factors to consider when determining digital equity include: **Affordable Connection** (ability to connect to broadband service), **Access to Devices** (i.e. computers or tablets), and **Digital Literacy** (ability to navigate the internet safely and effectively). Each of these three components contributes to overall digital equity. While Montague has taken strides to ensure digital equity, the data suggests there is still work to do.

Affordable Connection

Having a reliable broadband internet connection is necessary for many vital activities, from filling out medical forms to interviewing for a new job to talking with grandchildren. While Massachusetts has increased internet and broadband access, a percentage of households do not have an internet subscription.

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), "broadband," while used generally to mean "high-speed internet", has a specific definition of a minimum of 100 megabits per second (100 Mbps) download speed and 20 megabits per second (3 Mbps) upload speed. This definition was recently updated by the FCC from 25/3 Mbps.

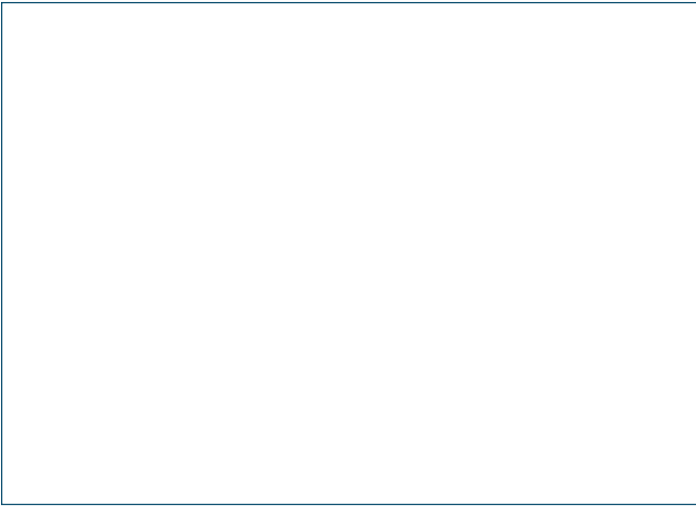Measuring internet speeds, particularly in residences, can be difficult due to various factors,
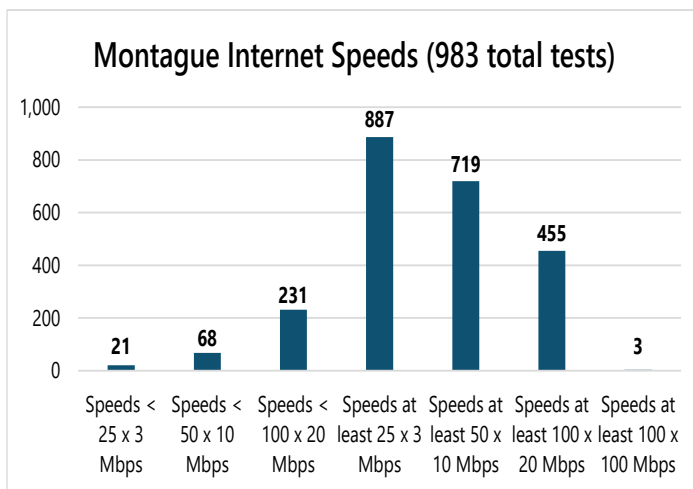
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such as how many users are currently online in the household or in the neighborhood, how close a user is to a router, and other factors. However, speed-test data provides a general understanding of how well a community is reaching broadband speeds. Overall, the data for Montague suggests that most residents are experiencing broadband speeds based on the current definition. If the FCC determines to update broadband to mean 100/20 Mbps rather than the current 25/3 Mbps, then the available data from Montague shows that less than half the speed tests meet broadband speed.

Interviews with residents and town staff suggest that while overall internet connection is generally good, there are both issues with speed, as well as sections of the town where a connection can be slow or prone to drops. While, according to data available from the FCC, the Town of Montague has 100% broadband coverage throughout the Town[5], based on survey data and information from focus groups, it is unlikely that this is accurate. Although there were only 55 survey responses, approximately 31% noted that their home internet is not good enough to meet their household needs. Feedback from participants in the Community Meeting and Focus Groups, there is not 100% broadband coverage in town.

Montague Internet Speeds (983 total tests)

Category	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

Source: Ookla Speed Test (https://www.speedtest.net/), 2022

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[5] FCC Broadband Data Collection (https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData)

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Based on Allconnect[10], a company that allows consumers to compare internet pricing, pricing for Xfinity (Comcast), the major internet provider in town, was $25 per month with listed speeds of 75-2000 Mbps. Based on the rate sheet from Comcast, costs range from the basic offering of $68/month (called Connect) to a premium offering for $300/month (Gigabit x10).

During conversations with residents, cost was often noted as a barrier to connection. Although a limited sample size (31 responses to this question on the Statewide Survey), 48% of households said it was Somewhat Hard or Very Hard to pay for internet.

The FCC does allow a Challenge process to ensure accuracy.[7] As part of the upcoming Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, Massachusetts will be coordinating a challenge process to help better ensure the accuracy of the coverage data.[8] This will allow municipalities, like Montague, to better understand where there is limited or poor broadband connection within town.
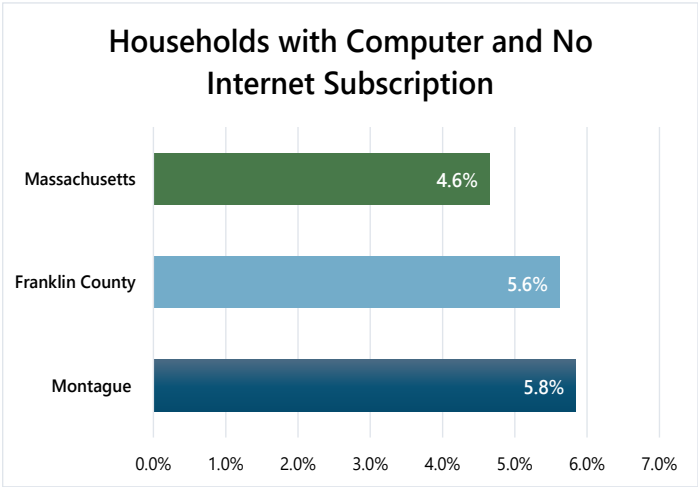
Broadband costs are difficult to comprehensively measure due to various factors, including levels of speed, discounts, and bundling options. However, nationwide, one study found that the median cost of high-speed internet was $74.99 per month.[9] Further, around half of households were paying between $60 and $90 per month. Based on 29 responses to the MBI Statewide Digital Equity Survey, the average monthly cost for internet service was $91 in Montague, with a range of $9.95-$275.

It is unclear from the survey results whether the higher pricing indicated in the responses (two indicated monthly pricing over $200 and 11 other responders indicated costs of $100 or more) was for internet only, or a bundled service.

There are few programs available to assist with broadband affordability. One program is the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a benefit program run by the FCC. The goal of the ACP is to help make broadband affordable for all households. The ACP provides a discount of up to $30 per month for internet services of eligible households. The FCC collects data on which households are eligible and how many are enrolled in the program. As of January 2024, 314 households were claimed subscribers to ACP,

Households with Computer and No Internet Subscription

Massachusetts	4.6%
Franklin County	5.6%
Montague	5.8%

0.0% 1.0% 2.0% 3.0% 4.0% 5.0% 6.0% 7.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

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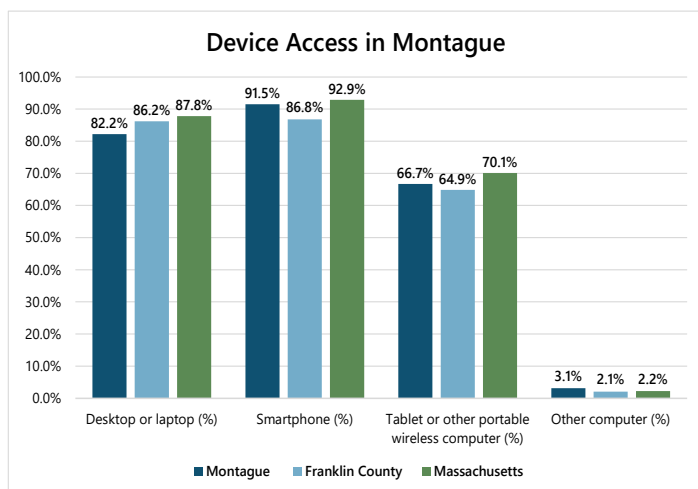[7] To learn more about the FCC map and how to file challenges, see: https://help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/sections/10467243210651-Consumers-Individuals

[8] More information on the Massachusetts BEAD Challenge is available on the MBI website (https://broadband.masstech.org/bead-challenge-process) [9] Broadband Pricing: What Consumer Reports Learned from 22,000 Internet Bills (https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL.report-broadband.november-17-2022-2.pdf)

[10] https://www.allconnect.com/

although over 1,200 households were considered eligible.[11]

As of early 2024, the federal government had not renewed the funding for the ACP. Although there is currently a bi-partisan bill to renew funding, the Program stopped accepting new applications and enrollments on February 7, 2024, and is expected to completely run out of funds by April 2024. Based on interviews, survey results, and the prospect of over 300 households losing ACP funding (plus the eligible households that were not receiving ACP), broadband affordability will likely only grow as an issue for Montague households.

Device Access

Device Access in Montague

Category	Montague	Franklin County	Massachusetts
Desktop or laptop (%)	82.2%	86.2%	87.8%
Smartphone (%)	91.5%	86.8%	92.9%
Tablet or other portable wireless computer (%)	66.7%	64.9%	70.1%
Other computer (%)	3.1%	2.1%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Almost 90% of households in Montague have a smartphone. However, only 83% of households have a desktop or laptop. Not having a reliable desktop or laptop computer can negatively impact a household, preventing the ability to work remotely, or access government services, and educational material.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is more difficult to quantify than either broadband connection or access to devices. While there are different needs for both level of internet speed needed and type of device needed, the range of digital literacy is vast—from knowing how to turn on a computer to learning how to code. Digital literacy needs are often age-dependent as well as language dependent.

When asked to rank the difficulty of using the internet for various tasks (i.e. job search, healthcare or telehealth services, etc.) most respondents indicated *Easy*. However, 35% said it was *Not Easy* to use the internet for Transportation Information, and 45% said it was *Not Easy* or *Hard* to use the internet to Search of Apply for Benefits for You or Your Family.

Based on discussions with the Gill-Montague School District IT Director, there is a need for continued digital literacy education, especially for parents of younger students and parents whose first language is not English. All students use Google classroom, and for older students (7-12 grades), laptops, issued by the school, are used at home for homework. An important element of digital literacy for parents is to understand how the school portal works, as it is how all students and teachers engage with academics.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is recognized as a continuing and growing issue. Based on the survey, 42% of responders were *Somewhat Concerned* about
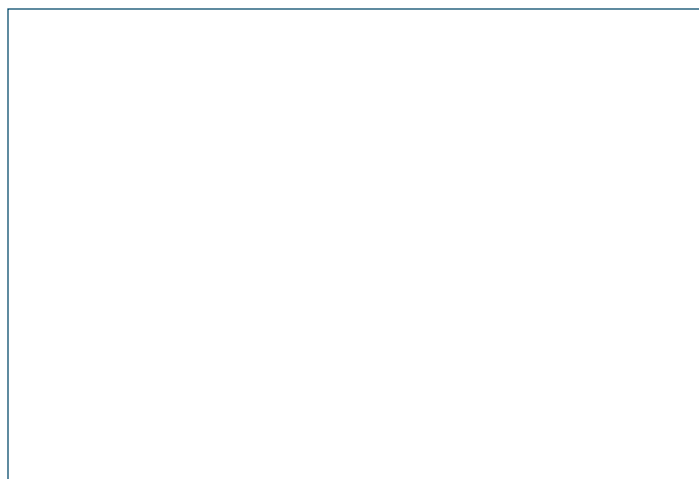
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[11] ACP Enrollment & Claims Tracker (https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/)

internet security while 45% were *Very Concerned*. Within the Montague schools, internet security is a very big concern with respect to student users, but also for parents, who need to have the tools and education to practice effective cybersecurity.

Digital Assets[12]

Although there are areas of digital inequity in Montague, the town and surrounding region provide numerous assets that promote and implement digital equity.

Public libraries are an important source for digital equity, providing free onsite device usage, technical assistance, as well as other benefits like free Wi-Fi. There are three public libraries that make up the Montague Public Library system (Carnegie Public Library in Turners Falls, Millers Falls Library, and Montague Center Library). All the Montague libraries provide computers and laptops for onsite use. The library provides 30-minute one-on-one computer and internet troubleshooting sessions. Previously, the libraries offered digital literacy classes but found that there were few people who didn't know the basics and those that didn't need one-on-one attention for the help to be effective. There are three mobile hotspots at each location for people to checkout, although they are often in high demand.[13] All three branches have public Wi-Fi available. The Town also provides access to public Wi-Fi within the immediate vicinity of Town Hall and at Unity Park, both of which are located in Turners Falls.

The Brick House Community Resource Center provides numerous programs for both youth and families in Montague. The Brick House offers public Wi-Fi onsite and has four computers and five Chromebooks for people to use onsite to fill out job applications, anything related to Brick House programming, or school work.

DIGITAL ASSETS: SENIOR CENTER

Funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs and the FRCOG Mass in Motion program, the Gill-Montague Senior Center developed two programs in the winter of 2024.

The Tech Drop-in program will be held once weekly for residents to bring in their laptops, phones or tablets with technical questions (issues that cannot be resolved will be referred to Staples for discounted assistance). The second program is a 6-week class for senior residents to learn computer basics. Residents expressed strong interest in both of these programs.
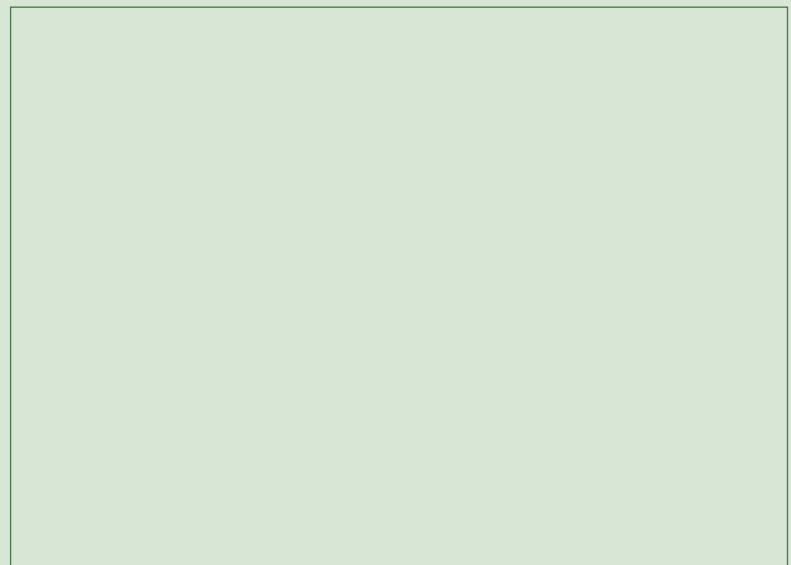
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[12] See Appendix for list of local and regional assets

[13] A hotspot is a physical location where people can access the Internet, typically using Wi-Fi, to connect their mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, to the Internet. A mobile hotspot is a hotspot that is not tied to a physical location, and the user can move it to different locations.

Digital Equity Assets and Services in Montague and Franklin County

Assets and Strengths

- Local services like hotspots to borrow from the library and free Wi-Fi within all three libraries and a limited number of other public areas

- Local services like the new Tech Drop-In program and computer training class at the Senior Center
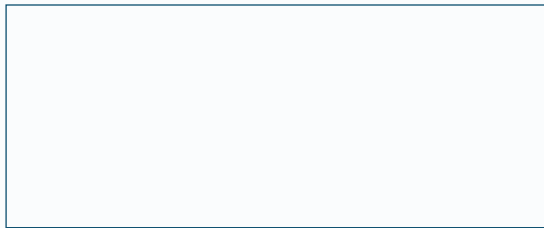
- Regional networks and support services like the Franklin County Resource Network, administered by Community Action Pioneer Valley

- Regional services through the 413Cares.org/Digital Equity (working with the Alliance for Digital Equity)

- Digital literacy programs for seniors, including the Cyber Senior Program through Greenfield Community College

- Availability of broadband in most communities in Franklin County through the MBI Last Mile program

- MBI as the point organization

  to work with state agencies and departments to maintain funding sources and coordinate from the state level (for example, coordinating digital literacy programs between libraries)

- Coordination through organizations like CWMARS

Need and Challenges

- Staff and programs are heavily grant dependent. Lack staff and resources to provide services or other programs

- One-time funding

- Reliance on volunteers

- Difference in bandwidth quality

- Gaps in cell service due to varied geography

- Reliance on federal and state funding due to the COVID pandemic to purchase devices and provide digital equity services

- Reliance on external funding sources

- Need for staff/capacity

- Need for an asset map so people know where to go for services (ex. Seattle-King County Digital Equity Asset Map)

- Having an individual or organization to coordinate between organizations
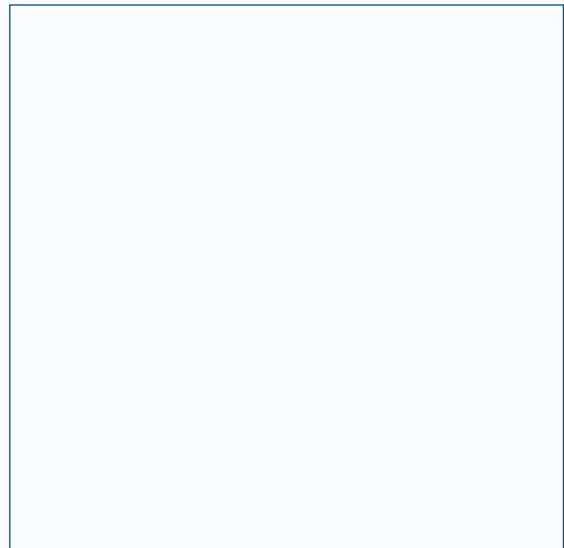
RECOMMENDATIONS

Decision Point:

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GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal 1: Framework for Promoting and Supporting Digital Equity

Develop and maintain a framework to continue promoting and supporting digital equity for all Montague residents.

Strategy	Population(s)/Area(s) Served	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Support and enhance current digital equity partnerships	Montague residents, especially "covered populations" as defined by the National Telecommunications and Information Agency	Town of Montague	• FRCOG • Alliance for Digital Equity • Clinical & Support Options (CSO) • Gill-Montague School District • Franklin County Tech School	Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Grant	Short-Term
Prioritization of Digital Equity Action Items	Montague residents, especially "covered populations" as defined by the FCC	Town of Montague	FRCOG	Various	Short-Long Term
Promote and support local and regional organizations providing digital equity	Montague residents, especially "covered populations" as defined by the FCC	Town of Montague	• Library • Senior Center • LifePath • The Brick House	Various (MBI grant funds, Executive Office of Elder Affairs grants, library grants, etc.)	Short-Long Term

Goal 2: Affordable Connectivity

Support residents' access to the internet and device connectivity they need and can afford.

Strategy	Population(s)/Area(s) Served	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Promote and support BEAD Challenge Program	Underserved Montague residents	Town of Montague	• FRCOG • MBI • Alliance for Digital Equity	• Municipal DE Implementation Grant • BEAD Challenge Funding	Short-Medium Term
Expand Library Mobile Hotspot Program	Montague residents with limited or no home connectivity	Montague Public Library	Town of Montague	• Municipal DE Implementation Grant • Other grant funding • Town budget for long-term maintenance	Short Term
Enhance/implement public Wifi, install hotspots or small cells in high-traffic areas (Avenue A, Peskeompskut Park, Unity Park, etc.). Work with businesses, government entities, and ISPs to determine best approach, considering pricing, internet speeds, and location.	Public; tourists and other visitors to Montague	Town of Montague	Alliance for Digital Equity	• Community Space Public WiFi Program • Municipal DE Implementation Grant	Short-Medium Term
Digital device (i.e. laptops or tablets) distribution to FCC-defined "covered populations"	FCC-defined "covered populations"	Alliance for Digital Equity	• Town of Montague; Senior Center • Public Libraries	• Municipal DE Implementation Grant • Other MBI grant funds	Short Term

Strategy	Population(s)/Area(s) Served	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Negotiate lower internet subscription rates with local ISPs or investigate the possibility of direct subsidies.	All residents	Town of Montague (Cable Advisory Committee)			Long Term
Create and disseminate outreach materials for internet subsidy programs and low-cost internet plans. Materials should be available in English, Spanish, and other languages as necessary	All residents of Montague, particularly low-moderate income households	Town of Montague		MBI grant funding	Short-Long Term
Investigate public housing eligibility for the Apartment Wi-Fi program with guidance from MAPC and/ or MBI. Montague Housing Authority is eligible to apply.	Public housing residents	Montague Housing Authority	Town of Montague	MBI W-Fi Program	Short-Medium Term

Goal 3: Digital Literacy

Ensure every resident in Montague has the opportunity to learn the skills needed to effectively use digital technology, including safety.

Strategy	Population(s)/Area(s) Served	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Support and promote current digital literacy programs	Any Montague residents	Town of Montague	Library, Senior Center, Brick House, GMRSD, FCTS	MBI Digital Equity Implementation Fund	Short-Term
Develop digital literacy classes/workshop program	FCC-defined "covered populations"	• Alliance for Digital Equity • CSO • GCC • The Brick House • GMRSD • Franklin County Technical School	Town of Montague	MBI grant funding	Short-term
Develop and Implement Digital Navigator Program	Residents who need assistance with navigating the internet	• Alliance for Digital Equity • CSO	• Town of Montague • Senior Center • Library • LifePath • Franklin County Technical School	• MBI Digital Equity Implementation Fund • Other grant funding	Short-term
Survey the community to understand the top digital literacy needs and interests (basic computer skills, cybersecurity, public benefic applications, telemedicine, etc.).	All residents	Town of Montague; FRCOG	Alliance for Digital Equity	MBI Implementation Grant	Short-Term

Strategy	Population(s)/Area(s) Served	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Organize workshops and training programs (around topics based on the results of the survey) at Public Library, Senior Center, etc.	All residents	Town of Montague (Public Library, Senior Center, etc.)	• FRCOG • Alliance for Digital Equity • Franklin County Technical School	• MBI Implementation Grant • Other MBI grant funding	Short-Medium Term
Cybersecurity/digital safety support	Residents of Montague; municipal employees	Town of Montague		Municipal Cyber Security Grant Program	Short-Term

Goal 4: Digital Navigation

Ensure access for people who need more support to navigate digital systems.

Strategy	Population(s)/Area(s) Served	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Secure private spaces for assisted internet access	Generally older adults; anyone with need	Senior Center; Library	Town of Montague	Municipal DE Implementation Grant	Short-Medium Term
Evaluate Town website and communications materials to ensure that they are universally accessible and usable on all Internet-enabled devices including cell phones and tablets. Refer to the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division's guidance on web accessibility and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	All residents; Town of Montague staff and boards	Town of Montague		Municipal DE Implementation Grant; other grant funding	Short-term
Collaborate with MCTV and other local media channels to spread awareness of community resources, upcoming events, and training opportunities.	All residents	Town of Montague	MCTV	Various grant funding	Short-Long Term
Assess businesses' needs in terms of digital access and literacy. Provide support and resources when possible.	Local business owners	Town of Montague	Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and pending downtown Turners Falls Business Coordinator	Various grant funding	Short-Long Term

APPENDIX A: Acknowledgments

The contributions of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Advisory Group and project stakeholders join the comments of residents and stakeholders who participated in meetings and surveys throughout the Digital Equity planning process.

Comprehensive Plan Steering Advisory Group

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Digital Equity Stakeholders

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Caitlin Kelley, Library Director, Montague Public Library
Mahaney, Tina, Director of IT and Educational Data Services, Gill-Montague School District
Lynne Feldman, Director of Community Services, LifePath

APPENDIX B: Funding Resources

Some text here explaining what is in the following charts.

Note: This is a sample, there are several more sources to cite (likely two more pages)

Program	Type of Assistance
State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program https://www.internetforall.gov/program/digital-equity-act-programs#	A $1.44 billion formula grant program for states, territories, and tribal governments. Funds an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans: 1. Develop, implement, and oversee DE plans + make awards to other entities help develop DE plans 2. Improve online accessibility & inclusivity of public resources 3. Implement DE plans and digital inclusion activities 4. Provide digital literacy and skills education to covered populations 5. Facilitate adoption of high-speed internet by covered populations 6. Fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects.
State Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program https://www.internetforall.gov/program/digital-equity-act-programs#	A $1.25 billion competitive grant program to fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects. Several types of entities can apply for these funds.
Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation	Funding to mobilize, start-up, and implement digital equity activities locally to access a one-time grant up to $100,000 per municipality to execute a project (or projects) defined in their local digital equity plan or related document that MBI deems of sufficient standard. Project implementation will increase access and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program	Expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment and adoption programs. This program builds high-speed Internet infrastructure where needed. It also supports efforts to teach the skills and provide the equipment needed so everyone can use the Internet.
Community Compact Municipal Fiber Program https://www.mass.gov/municipal-fiber-grant-program	1. Implementation of fiber optic networks that connect remote municipal assets to improve municipal operations and/or improve disaster recovery and resiliency. 2. One time capital needs- fiber optic cabling, hardware, software and implementation services. (Centralized management of IT infrastructure, enterprise approach to network monitoring, cybersecurity, records management, and backup and recovery.)