Overview

- Public Wi-Fi Network Expansion
- Device Distribution Strategy
- Lake County Digital Navigator Program
- Digital Equity Coalition
- Digital Literacy Programming
- Outreach Marketing Campaign RFP
- BEAD Program Update
- Digital Equity Funding Opportunities
- Next Steps

Public Wi-Fi Network Expansion

- **Strategy 3-1 Pilot Public Wi-Fi Hotspots**
  - Ongoing meetings with municipalities on potential Wi-Fi network expansions and/ or creations
  - Focused on central downtown areas and/ or CAI expansions
  - Municipalities identified in plan include Waukegan, Zion, North Chicago, Round Lake, Grayslake, and Fox Lake
    - Municipalities would be responsible for maintenance and management of equipment/network once installed by Lake County
  - Working with a technology vendor to obtain an agreement to purchase necessary equipment and installation

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Device Distribution Strategy

Phase 1: Planning

- Lake County's Broadband and Digital Equity Plan Strategy 4: Increase access to affordable internet and digital devices.

- Project 4-1 Device Distribution Campaign: Partner with nonprofits and private entities to expand distribution of low-cost and free digital devices to households in need, including recycled devices.
  - Potential partners identified in the Broadband and Digital Equity plan include nonprofits, Lake County Libraries, Community Anchor Institutions, Lake County Housing Authority, Internet Service Providers, Educational Institutions and Lake County Departments.

- Engage relevant agencies to assess the feasibility of distributing refurbished or new devices.

- Identify a vendor to source new and refurbished devices and establish an agreement.
  - Utilize vendor to procure a combination of different types of new and refurbished devices on a quarterly basis over a two-year period.

Device Distribution Strategy

Phase 2: Implementation

- Engage Broadband and Digital Equity Coalition to determine the need for County directly purchasing devices and distributing via community anchor institutions.

- Meet with Board Members to determine appropriate organizations for outreach and event planning.

- Release a call for events statement alongside a Microsoft form that is translatable.

- Hold device distributions in collaboration with community anchor institutions and nonprofit partners.

- Device distributions will be scheduled with organizations across the County, so that impacted populations in different districts of the county have equal opportunities to access the distributed devices.

- The County will be responsible for the procurement and payment of devices that will be distributed. The devices will be paid for using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The County will not reimburse costs associated with the device distribution events to partners. It is the recommendation of the County that organizations propose device distributions be held at events which would take place regardless of the incorporation of the device distribution.

- Once an organization is selected and an event identified and confirmed to be appropriate for a device distribution, board members will be notified of events in their district.

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Phase 3: Evaluation and Iteration

- Regularly track and report to the County Board on progress. The County seeks to track:
  - The number of individuals who registered for a device distribution event.
  - The number of devices distributed at each event.
  - Surveys requesting feedback on the public reception of the distributed devices, ease of registration and distribution processes, and perceived levels of impact the distributed devices will have on target populations.

- Iterate on project based on feedback and success of initial implementation.
  - The County seeks to collaborate with multiple organizations to host device distribution events through 2026 using $2.5 million in ARPA funds.
  - Organizations selected to collaborate on a device distribution event will be evaluated before, during, and after the execution of the event on the terms of an **Evaluation Rubric and Selection Criteria** provided. Continued collaboration with individual organizations will be based on the organization's ability to consistently meet these criteria.
  - The County will seek constructive feedback from residents and partner organizations related to device distribution events to improve the processes over time.

Strategy 5-1 Expand Digital Navigators

The primary objectives of the Digital Navigator Program are as follows:

- Provide personalized technology assistance to Lake County residents, including troubleshooting technical issues, navigating digital platforms, and accessing online resources.

- Increase digital literacy and confidence among Lake County residents, particularly those who face barriers to accessing technology including, but not limited to the following impacted households and communities, low- or-moderate income households or communities, households that experienced unemployment, households that experienced increased food or housing insecurity, and households that qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program, Childcare Subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Program, or Medicaid.

- Facilitate access to essential services and resources available online, such as healthcare information, educational opportunities, and government services.

- Foster community engagement and collaboration through outreach efforts and partnerships with local organizations.

Lake County Digital Navigator Program

Strategy 5-1 Expand Digital Navigators

- Developed competitive RFP process to deploy county-wide Digital Navigator Program

- RFP released May 16th, 2024

- Information session and question period held

- RFP submissions closed on June 7th, 2024

- Evaluation of submitted proposals - ongoing

- Training and deployment of Digital Navigators throughout the County to begin this Fall

Training and Program Development

- Development of the Lake County Digital Navigator Implementation Guide in progress.

- Procurement of training for Digital Navigators and Supervisors of Digital Navigators in progress.

Strategy 6-2 Create a County-led Broadband and Digital Equity Coalition

- Meeting held virtually on Tuesday, August 27th
  - 34 attendees
  - 24 organizations
- Agenda:
  - Digital Skills Strategy & Committee Review
  - August Campaign – Back to School Presentations
  - Warren Township - Member Casbon
  - Three Digital Equity Wishes Activity
  - The African American Museum - Sylvia England
  - Workforce Development's Parent Mentorship Program - DeMar Harris
  - Upcoming Broadband and Digital Equity Webinars
- Recording, slides, interest form available at www.lakecountyil.gov/broadband

Lake County Digital Equity Coalition

LAKE COUNTY
DIGITAL GROWTH INITIATIVE

LakeCounty

Strategy 6-2 Create a County-led Broadband and Digital Equity Coalition

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024
IN PERSON

Lake County Digital Equity Coalition

3:00-5:00 PM

College of Lake County Lakeshore Campus
Eleanor Murkey Community Center

34 N Sheridan Rd Waukegan, IL 60085

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Digital Inclusion Week 2024 - October 7th - 11th

- 2024 Theme: "Stronger Together: Mobilizing Toward Sustainability"

- Digital Inclusion Week (DIW) is an annual week of awareness, recognition, and celebration.

  - Raise awareness around Digital Inclusion, its urgency, and benefits

  - Help more community members in need hear about your services

  - Opportunity to gain supporters: funders, partners, policy makers, donors, and/ or volunteers

  - Support the long-term sustainability of Broadband and Digital Equity programs

Share your #DIW24 Action:

[I'm taking action for Digital Inclusion Week 2024! (jotform.com)](jotform.com)

Register your #DIW24 Event:

[Digital Inclusion Week 2024 Events (jotform.com)](jotform.com)

Digital Literacy Programming

Digital Inclusion Week Lunch and Learn Series – details to follow

The series plans to explore:

- Youth Digital Skills Programming

- Adult Digital Skills Programming

Sourcing Digital Skills Programming

- Age-Appropriate Skills
- Safety and Security Online
- Healthcare Access Using Technology
- Financial Literacy Using Technology
- Certificates and Certifications

- New Parents
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Unemployed Individuals
- Low-Income Individuals
- Individuals with Language Barriers
- Veterans
- Incarcerated Individuals

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Outreach Marketing Campaign RFP

Outreach Marketing Campaign for the Digital Growth Initiative

- RFP process to acquire marketing services has been released - Thursday, August 22nd

- The primary objectives are to increase awareness of the DGI, promote events, engage communities, and highlight partnerships.

- These objectives will be reached through social media marketing campaigns, adaptive grassroots outreach, event promotion and coverage, program promotion, and reporting.

- Proposals are due Friday, September 13th at 11:00AM CT

Register to view and submit a proposal for this opportunity:

[Procurement Opportunities | Lake County Purchasing (lakecountypurchasingportal.com)](http://lakecountypurchasingportal.com)

BEAD Program (Broadband, Equity, Access & Deployment)
Key Updates

- **Challenge Results**: Submitted; Illinois is currently in the curating process with NTIA.

- **Pre-qualification:** 41 submissions are under review, with feedback being provided.

- **Subgrantee Selection:** Expected to begin in October 2024, pending NTIA approval. Select subgrantees will execute BEAD deployment.

- **BEAD Map:** Final map available at least 30 days before the application opens.

- **Local Support:** Counties and Cities can submit letters of support to broadband providers applying under the BEAD program.

BEAD Program Update – Letters of Support

- Letters of Support from Counties and Cities have significant influence in determining the broadband providers that receive awards in their jurisdictions under the BEAD Program.

- If a County or City provides a letter of support to a broadband provider, that provider receives 10 points in the BEAD application process.

- The letter of support is worth 10% of the total points available – so the letters of support will be significant in determining the awarded broadband provider in a County or City.

- It is the responsibility of broadband providers to request this letter of support from the County or City and upload this letter with their application into the application portal.

Recommendation for Providing Letters of Support

- The Broadband and Digital Equity Team recommends the County encourages all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) expecting to apply for BEAD funds to request letters of support from the County and other key entities in the identified Project Area Units where the ISP plans to bid on contracts.

- By the County providing a letter of support to an ISP, that ISP will agree to coordinate digging and construction projects with other entities executing projects in Lake County whenever possible.

Digital Equity Funding Opportunities

National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA's)

Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program

- [Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)](#) released July 24th

- Application on the [NTIA Grants Portal](#) opened August 14th

- Applications are due September 23rd 10:59pm CT

- Application materials are available at https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity solicits applications for the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, the third of three digital equity programs authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, also known as the "Digital Equity Act" or "DE Act." The Digital Equity Act appropriated $2.75 billion to be awarded by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to promote digital equity and inclusion.

NTIA expects to begin issuing awards to applicants by Winter of 2024 and no later than April 20, 2025. NTIA expects to make awards on a rolling basis.

Digital Equity Funding Opportunities

Eligible Entities:

- Political subdivisions, agencies, or instrumentalities of a state
- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations
- Not-for-profit foundations, corporations, institutions, or associations
- Community anchor institutions (e.g., public schools, public housing authorities, libraries, healthcare providers, community colleges, etc.)
- Local educational agencies
- Entities that carry out workforce development programs
- Partnerships between any of the above entities
- Match Requirement:
- A 10% match is required, which can be cash or in-kind services. Higher matches may receive additional consideration.

Eligible Activities:

- Developing and implementing digital inclusion activities for covered populations

- Facilitating broadband adoption for educational and employment opportunities

- Implementing training programs for basic, advanced, and applied digital skills

- Workforce development programs

- Providing equipment and digital network technology at low or no cost

- Upgrading or operating public access computing centers through community anchor institutions

- Application Preparation Reimbursement: Up to $50,000 for eligible expenses

Digital Equity Funding Opportunities

Grant Writing Support and Match Funds

The **Federal Access Center at the Just Transition Fund** supports equitable economic development in places hardest hit by the coal industry. They provide grants and technical assistance to help organizations apply for federal funds. Grants of **up to $100,000** can be used as match or to cover application development costs like hiring a grant writer, covering staff time, etc.

Organizations in Lake County are eligible for this program, and it may be a great opportunity to receive grant writing support for broadband access and affordability projects – or other economic development projects.

You can submit this form to get in touch with the Just Transition Fund: Interested in help from the Just Transition Fund's Federal Access Center? (airtable.com)

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Next Steps

- **Procurements In Progress**
  - Public Wi-Fi Network Expansion
  - Digital Skills – various programming
  - Execute agreement to purchase new and refurbished devices
  - Outreach Marketing Campaign due September 13th
- **Lake County Digital Equity Coalition**
  - Planning for Digital Inclusion Week 2024
  - Digital Navigator Implementation Guide – Review and Feedback Period
  - Next meeting will be held in person Wednesday September 25th at the College of Lake County Lakeshore Campus Eleanor Murkey Community Center
    - Registration details will follow
  - Save the date for the next virtual meeting – Tuesday, October 29th at 12:30pm
- **NTIA Digital Equity Competitive Grant Application**
    - Due September 23rd

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Questions