

LakeCounty



LAKE COUNTY
**DIGITAL
GROWTH
INITIATIVE**

Technology
Committee

Digital Growth Initiative
Team
January 30th, 2026

Overview of Broadband and Digital Equity Plan Strategy Implementation



- 1-1: Support the BEAD Process
- 2-1: Implement a Dig Once Policy
- 3-1: Pilot Public Wi-Fi Projects
- 4-1: Device Distribution Campaign
- 5-1: Digital Navigator Program
- 5-2: Coordinate Digital Literacy Programming
- 6-2: Create a County-led Broadband and Digital Equity Coalition
- 6-3: Launch a Digital Equity Resource Website
- 7-1: Establish a Digital Equity Fund
- Added Strategy: Outreach Marketing Campaign

Strategy 1-1 Support the BEAD Process



- Illinois BEAD Provisional Awards have not received final approval by NTIA
- Illinois has not yet received BEAD non-deployment funds

Goals for 2026:

- Remain aware of updates to BEAD-funded Connect Illinois Round 4
- Communicate updates to appropriate entities at the County and community level

Strategy 2-1 Implement a Dig Once Policy



Goals for 2026:

- Draft policy that will increase the coordination of digging projects within Lake County including projects under:
 - Department of Transportation
 - Environmental Health
 - Public Works
 - Planning/Building/Development
 - Stormwater Management
- Notify Utilities / ISPs of policy changes



Example of conduit ducts

Strategy 3-1 Pilot Public Wi-Fi Projects



- Lake County and the City of Waukegan have approved an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to provide free, high-speed public Wi-Fi to Waukegan's downtown corridor. The project is Lake County's first municipal public Wi-Fi partnership.
- Seeking to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with another community to implement an additional Public Wi-Fi Project.

Goals for 2026:

- Solidify Public Wi-Fi project implementation timelines
- Develop materials on how to use the Public Wi-Fi networks safely and securely
- Launch Public Wi-Fi networks
- Provide direct community support on securely connecting to and safely navigating the networks through Digital Navigators

Strategy 4-1 Device Distribution Campaign

- **1,021** devices distributed to Lake County households through the end of 2025

Goals for 2026:

- Serve ARPA eligible Lake County residents by distributing at least 979 devices in 2026 to increase the number of households in Lake County with access to a computer at home.
- Host three laptop distribution events in 2026 with conditions for receiving and required training (March, June, October).

MARCH 2026



Laptop Distribution Event



EVENT DETAILS:

Tuesday, March 31
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Lake County Central Permit Facility

2nd Floor - Large Conference Room #2220
500 W. Winchester Rd., Libertyville, IL 60048

To attend the event and qualify for a laptop, residents must:

- Live in Lake County and meet certain eligibility requirements
- Be enrolled in Northstar at a participating site
- Complete 3 Northstar Online Learning modules
- Pass 3 Northstar assessments

FIND A LOCATION WHERE YOU CAN LEARN USING NORTHSTAR:

- [Family First Center of Lake County](#)
- [Highwood Library & Community Center](#)
- [Lake County Housing Authority](#)
- [Mano a Mano](#)
- [Round Lake Area Schools District](#)
- [Waukegan Public Library](#)

QUESTIONS? CONTACT THE LAKE COUNTY DIGITAL GROWTH INITIATIVE:

(847) 377-3442

broadband@lakecountylil.gov

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP0214 awarded to Lake County by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Residents must meet specific conditions under the U.S. Treasury guidelines to participate in this program.

Strategy 5-1 Digital Navigator Program



Digital Growth Initiative Cumulative Metrics 2024 - 2025

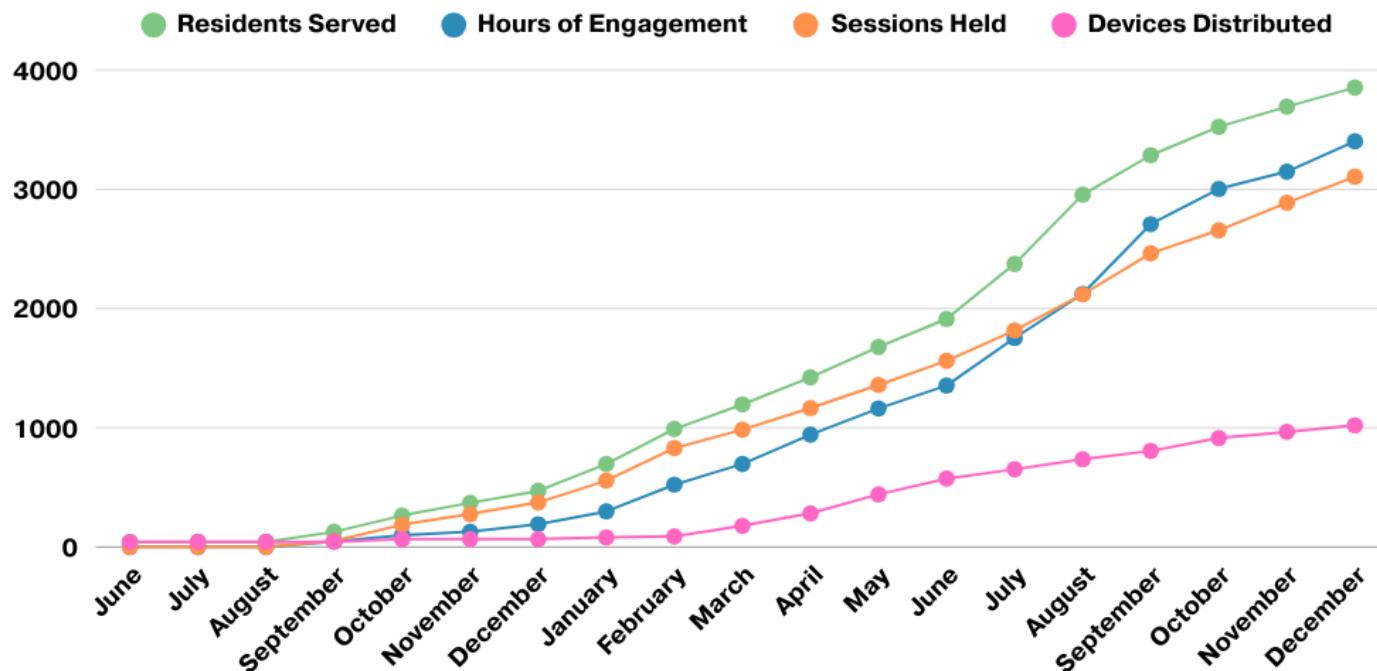
Totals to Date:

3854

3403

3106

1021



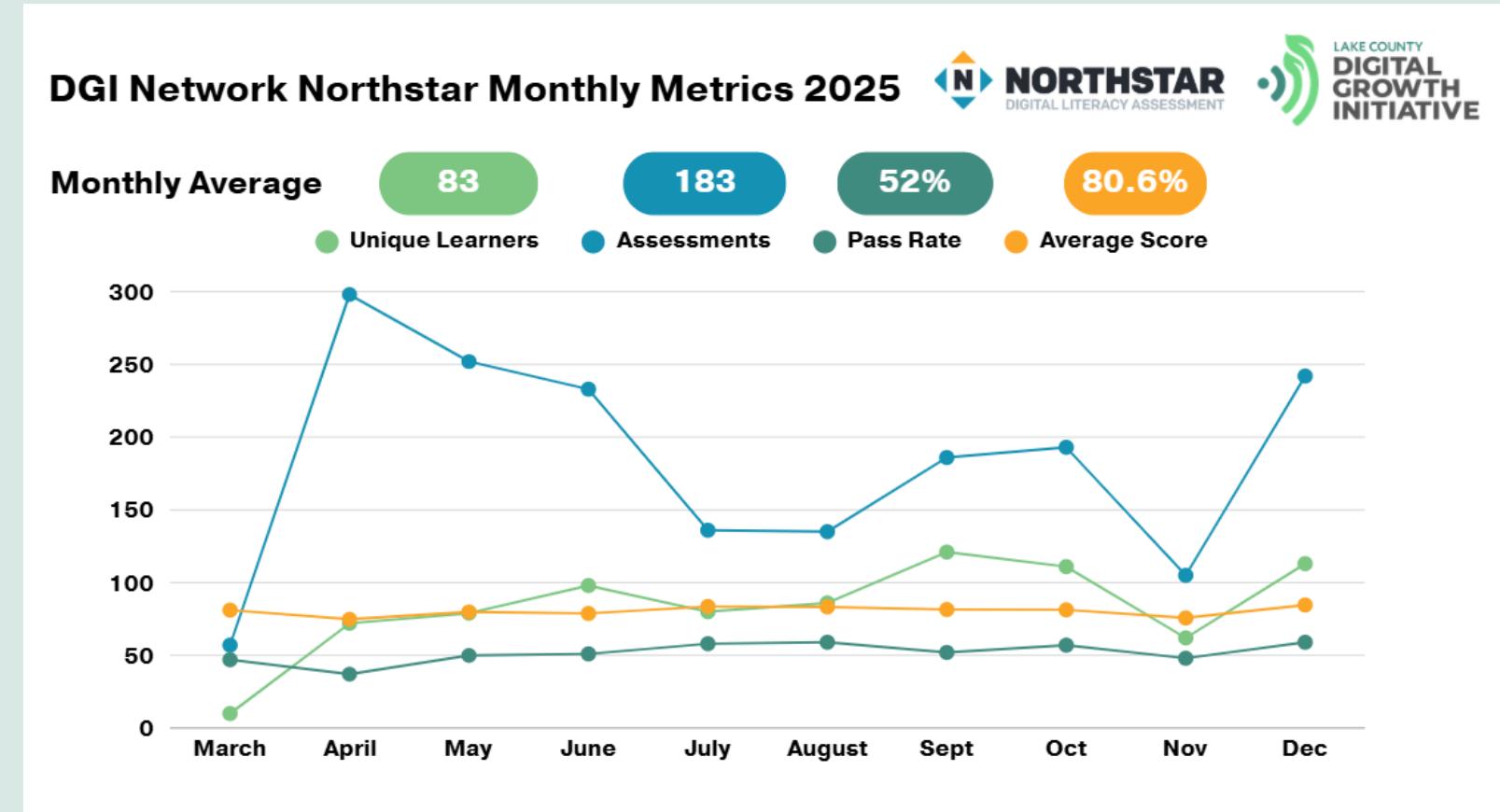
Goals for 2026:

- Continue to partner with community organizations to host programs which serve Lake County residents in need of digital skills and devices.
- Continue to provide one on one and group digital literacy sessions to help Lake County residents increase their confidence and ability to use technology in ways that improve their quality of life.

Strategy 5-2 Coordinate Digital Literacy Programming



- 850 total users since March 2025
- Community Partner sites actively using awarded Northstar licenses:
 - Family First
 - Highwood Library & Community Center
 - Lake County Housing Authority
 - Mano a Mano
 - Round Lake Area Schools District
 - Waukegan Public Library

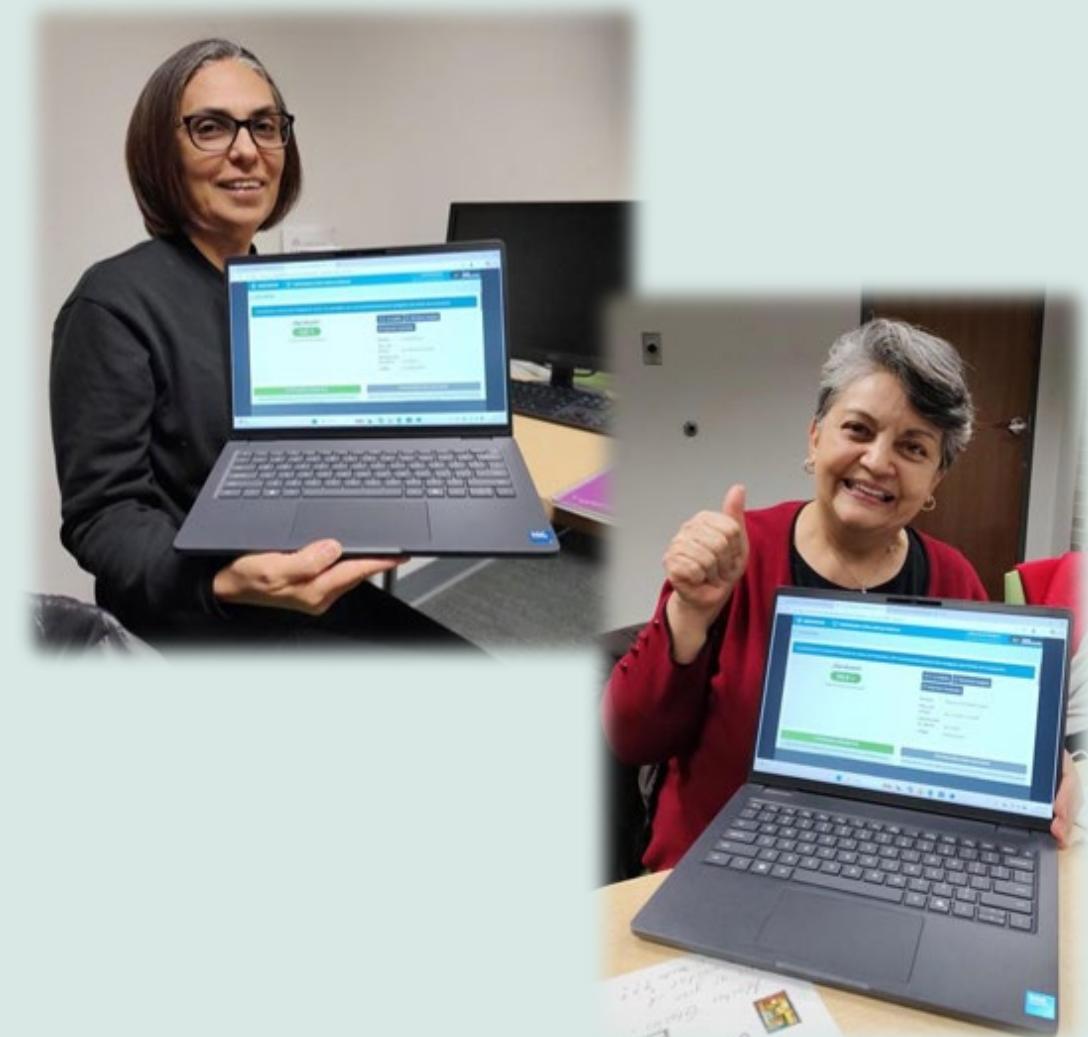


Strategy 5-2 Coordinate Digital Literacy Programming



Goals for 2026:

- Continue to partner with community organizations interested in using Northstar Digital Literacy as a tool to teach digital skills.
- Continue to promote the use of Northstar licenses by organizations and residents as a way for eligible residents to learn digital skills and earn laptop devices.
- Continue to use Northstar as a curriculum, reporting, assessment and independent learning tool within our Digital Navigator Program.



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



- **143** active participants in 2025
- **16** meetings held since the coalition was started in June 2024
- Average number of attendees at meetings: **35**



Goals for 2026:

- Serve Lake County residents by hosting two virtual and four in-person Digital Equity Coalition meetings where we will engage in meaningful activities which facilitate the development of community-based relationships and identify opportunities for community-driven solutions to increase digital equity across the County.

Strategy 6-3 Launch a Digital Equity Resource Website



Digital Growth Initiative Webpage launched in 2023

- Affordable Internet Plans
- Northstar Digital Skills License Application
- Digital Equity Coalition
- Digital Skills Courses Available in the Community
- Funding Opportunities
- [Lake County Broadband and Digital Equity Action Plan \(PDF\)](#)
- Technology Resource Map ***NEW***
- News and Recognition
- Special Committee on Broadband Recordings
- Technology Support Services

Goals for 2026:

- Update Affordable Internet Plan options available to Lake County residents
- Add Digital Equity Coalition presentations and meeting recordings
- Update Digital Skills Courses Available in the Community
- Add information about possible Funding Opportunities
- Update Technology Resource Map quarterly
- Update News and Recognition as needed

Strategy 7-1 Establish a Digital Equity Fund



- Submitted one federal and one state level grant application in 2025.

Goals for 2026:

- Continue to explore funding options for program sustainability.
- Explore how partnerships with Workforce Development, Health Department, local libraries and other Community Partners can be maintained in full or in part.

Totals

Instagram:

- 29 posts (9 in-feed posts, 20 stories)
- Reach: 2,826
- Views: 4,426
- Engagements: 67

Facebook:

- 9 posts
- Reach: 106,749
- Views: 162,832
- Engagements: 751

NextDoor:

- 9 posts
- 14,988 Impressions

Takeaways

Instagram:

- 197% increase in views*
- 103% increase in reach*
- 123% increase in engagement*

Facebook:

- 419% increase in reach and views, 232% increase in engagement*
- Two posts with high engagement
 - December 29th Week Ahead Post
 - Shared 126 times
 - 2025 by the numbers
 - Shared 28 times
- People are interested! Both in terms of programming and successes

Nextdoor:

- 66% increase in impressions*



**Compared to November 2025*

Outreach Marketing Campaign



Goals for 2026:

- New palm cards focused on Northstar laptop Distribution Events
- Educational flyers for safe use of new public Wi-Fi networks
- Short form videos about
 - Learn to Earn courses
 - Northstar Online Learning successes
 - Digital Equity Coalition Meetings
- New signs and flyers for community outreach events
- Continued work on:
 - Weekly social media posts
 - News articles

A flyer titled 'Receive Technology Support Services'. It features the Lake County Digital Growth Initiative and Lake County logos. Contact information is provided: digitalnavigators@lakecountyil.gov and (847) 377-3442. A laptop icon is shown. The text 'Connect with a Digital Navigator to learn more.' is followed by a bulleted list: 'Build digital skills and confidence', 'Set up emails, apps and accounts', 'Access online learning and job tools', and 'Sign up for classes and workshops'.

A flyer titled 'Apply for a Northstar Digital Skills License!'. It features the Northstar Digital Literacy logo. Text reads: 'Help Lake County residents learn essential digital skills and build their confidence online.' and 'Awarded organizations will support eligible residents through digital skills learning programs with the Northstar curriculum in English and Spanish. Learn more:'. It includes a globe icon and the URL 'lakecountyil.gov/broadband' and email 'broadband@lakecountyil.gov'. A small note at the bottom states: 'This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP0214 awarded to Lake County by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Residents must meet specific conditions under the U.S. Treasury guidelines to participate in this program.'

A flyer titled 'Reciba servicios de soporte técnico'. It features the Lake County Digital Growth Initiative and Lake County logos. Contact information is provided: digitalnavigators@lakecountyil.gov and (847) 377-3442. A laptop icon is shown. The text 'Comuníquese con un navegador digital para obtener más información.' is followed by a bulleted list: 'Desarrolle habilidades digitales y confianza', 'Configure correos electrónicos, aplicaciones y cuentas', 'Acceda a herramientas de aprendizaje y trabajo en línea', and 'Inscríbase en clases y talleres'.

A flyer titled '¡Solicite una licencia de Northstar Digital Skills!'. It features the Northstar Digital Literacy logo. Text reads: 'Ayude a los residentes del condado de Lake a aprender habilidades digitales esenciales y a desarrollar su confianza en internet.' and 'Las organizaciones galardonadas apoyarán a los residentes elegibles a través de programas de aprendizaje de habilidades digitales con el plan de estudios de Northstar en inglés y español. Más información:'. It includes a globe icon and the URL 'lakecountyil.gov/broadband' and email 'broadband@lakecountyil.gov'. A small note at the bottom states: 'Este proyecto está siendo apoyado, total o parcialmente, por el número de asignación federal SLFRP0214 otorgado al Condado de Lake por el Departamento del Tesoro de los EE. UU. Los residentes deben cumplir con las condiciones bajo las normas del Departamento del Tesoro de los EE. UU. para participar en este programa.'



Questions