

Connect AK



Digital Equity Plan Public Comment

Where We've Been, Where We Are, Where We're
Going



Where We've Been

Data Collection and Plan Creation

Digital Equity

EQUALITY VS EQUITY



Equality: Everyone has the same box.



Equity: Everyone has the amount of boxes that they need.



The Removal of Systemic Barriers: The fence is no longer there.

- The 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.

(NDIA) -National Digital Inclusion Alliance

The Digital Equity Act

Digital equity means Alaskans who are...

Have access to...

Low income

Affordable, reliable broadband service.

Aging

Internet-enabled devices that meet their needs.

Incarcerated

Applications and content designed to enable and encourage self sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

Veterans

Obtaining digital literacy training.

Have a disability

Quality technical support.

English language learners

Members of racial or ethnic minorities

Obtaining basic awareness of measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity.

Reside in a rural area



Visit broadbandforalaskans.org or scan to learn more.



Almost 83% of Alaskans are considered part of one or more covered populations, including all individuals living outside of the Anchorage and Fairbanks metro areas.

These groups have been identified by the federal government as disproportionately lacking access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet connectivity, affordable devices, and the skills and knowledge to effectively use both the internet and devices.

Connect AK –Data and Story Collection



RurAL CAP
Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.

ALASKA
HUMANITIES
FORUM



Alaska Specific Numbers

- Alaska ranks 51st in BroadbandNow's annual rankings of internet coverage, speed, and availability.²
- 9% of Alaskans don't have internet access or a device.³
- 80% of Alaskans cannot get broadband at an affordable price (\$60/month or less excluding promotions and government programs).⁴
- 21% of Alaskans are not able to purchase a broadband plan that is considered "high speed" internet (connection speeds of at least 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload).⁵



² Alaska's Internet Ranking, <https://broadbandnow.com/Alaska>

³ Alaska Population Metrics, <https://www.internetforall.gov/interactive-map/Alaska>

⁴ Access to wired, low-cost broadband plan, <https://broadbandnow.com/Alaska>

⁵ Access to Wired or Fixed Wireless Broadband, <https://broadbandnow.com/Alaska>

Listening/Qualitative Data Collection Sessions

- *Timeframe: Jan. '22–Aug. '23*
- *In total, 196 community conversations were convened by 13 organizations in 69 communities where over 3,191 individuals shared experiences.*

Listening Sessions – Posters

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Learn more by visiting broadbandforalaskans.org



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Communities We Visited

Akiachak	Healy	Manokotak	Savoonga
Akiak	Homer	McGrath	Seldovia
Alakanuk	Houston	Mekoryuk	Seward
Ambler	Hydaburg	Nanwalek	Sitka
Anchorage	Juneau	Napakiak	Sleetmute
Bethel	Kake	Napaskiak	Soldotna
Chitina	Kasigluk	Nenana	Talkeetna
Cooper Landing	Kenai	Newtok	Teller
Cordova	Ketchikan	Nome	Tok
Crooked Creek	Klawock	Noorvik	Toksook Bay
Dillingham	Kobuk	North Pole	Tununak
Eagle River/Chugiak	Kodiak	Palmer	Tyonek
Eureka	Kongiganak	Pilot Station	Unalaska
Fairbanks	Kotzebue	Point Lay	Utqiagvik
Galena	Kwethluk	Quinhagak	Valdez
Gambell	Lake Louise/Eureka	Russian Mission	Wasilla
Glacier View (virtual)	Lime Village	Saint Mary's	Wrangell
			Yakutat

Listening Sessions –What We Heard (Barriers & Solutions)

Broadband access in rural Alaska is expensive, limited, and inconsistent

Vulnerable populations in all communities lack access

The digital divide results in uneven educational opportunities

The workforce supply and training opportunities are limited by a lack of internet access

Better health outcomes are a challenge without reliable access to internet services

The internet is the easiest way to access many civic and social services

Alaskans can't live where they want to live

Community Anchor Institutions have a key role to play

Digital Equity Plan Creation

DE Plan Development Steering Committee

Amy Hankins, Seward Community
Foundation

Brittany Woods-Orrison, AKPIRG

Carolyn Goolsby, University of
Alaska

Christine O'Connor, Telecom
Industry

Hadassah Knight, Kenai Peninsula
Foundation

Jacquie Braden, RurAL CAP

Mara Kimmel, ACLU

Nicole Borromeo, Alaska Federation of
Natives

Nils Andreassen, Alaska Municipal League

Teresa Holt, AARP

Thomas Lochner, Alaska Broadband
Office

Valarie Kingsland, State Libraries

And....YOU!!!!

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan –Vision Statement

Every Alaskan, as part of their quality of life, will have the digital tools, access, and skills to affordably participate online, wherever they are.



Alaska's Digital Equity Plan –Values

Equity: All Alaskans have the same opportunity for internet connectivity, reliability, and pricing in the place they choose to reside.

Competition: There is diversity of technological solutions and service providers.

Performance: The internet is fast and reliable

Affordability: Cost is not a barrier

Safety: Alaskans understand the cybersecurity and are educated on how to protect themselves

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan – Strategy 1

Affordability Initiative

Key Activities

- Identify policy initiatives that advance high-speed internet affordability.
- Identify and develop other funding opportunities to sustain affordable access.
- Ensure affordability strategies are inclusive of every Alaskan, including uniquely vulnerable populations.
- Increase enrollment in Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and other affordability programs.

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan – Strategy 2

Digital Literacy Campaign

Key Activities

- Create statewide digital literacy programs with a focus on in-person programming that includes:
 - Train the trainer initiative.
 - Use of existing digital literacy curriculum and programs.
 - Coordination and support of community partnerships.
 - Expand and support existing digital navigator programs.
 - Leverage existing digital literacy resources and curriculum.

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan – Strategy 3

Strengthening Institutions

Key Activities

- Provide pathways to increased broadband access at public entities.
- Encourage nonprofit and other partners to increase their focus on digital equity.
- Enable the equitable delivery of public and nonprofit services.
- Institute planning efforts that expand the capacity of community anchor institutions to meet the needs of intended beneficiaries.

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan – Strategy 4

Device Affordability & Refurbishment Program & Technical Support

Key Activities

- Partner with the private sector, philanthropy, government, non-profits, and others to provide affordable devices.
- Develop technical support programs.
- Identify sources for adaptive device accessories to meet the needs of covered populations.
- Work toward access to devices in community anchor institutions and public spaces.

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan –Local Municipal & Tribal Planning

Anchor Institutions: Public buildings used by the community such as schools, municipal or tribal buildings.

Role in DE Plan: Improving their own public infrastructure and internet coverage systems so that may serve as intermediaries in providing services or even provide coverage to community members. Local government capacity may become a limiting factor and will need to be addressed.



Where We Are

Public Comment Time

Public Feedback Comment Period

- November 09, 2023 — December 09, 2023
- broadbandforalaskans.org
- Multiple languages

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
ALASKA BROADBAND OFFICE
550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1535
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Main: 907.269.8159
Fax: 907.269.8125

**Digital Equity Plan
Draft for Public
Comment**

November 9, 2023 – December 9, 2023

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Digital Equity Plan (DRAFT)
State of Alaska

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Today's Conversation

- Review Strategies & Activities
- Discuss
- Share your thoughts in the public feedback form



**WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU**



Breakout Sessions

Group Conversation

- What are some questions or comments you have after reviewing the plan?
- Do the activities in the plan make sense? Should anything be clarified?
- Do you feel like your experiences in accessing and utilizing the internet are represented in the draft Digital Equity Plan? Why or why not?
- Is there anything missing or inaccurate in the State's Digital Equity Plan? If so, what?

Share your public feedback!

Scan this QR code to access the public feedback form

You voice matters!
Please comment today!





Where We're Going

Next Steps

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan – Funding Opportunities

Affordable Connectivity Program & Affordable Connectivity Program Outreach grants

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP)

Middle Mile grants through National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA)

Digital Equity Capacity Building Grant, and Digital Equity Competitive Grant through NTIA

State and Local Government Cybersecurity Grant

Re-Connect Grant Program (leverages private capital through USDA)

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan –Tribal Planning

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) Recipients		
Native Village of Selawik	\$500,000	Use and Adoption
Village of Clark's Point	\$500,000	Use and Adoption
Cape Fox Corporation LLC	\$1,901,262	Use and Adoption
Ketchikan Indian Community	\$500,000	Use and Adoption
Kotzebue IRA	\$2,500,000	Use and Adoption
Alaska Federation of Natives	\$35,102,141	Use and Adoption
Skagway Traditional Council	\$2,044,600	Use and Adoption
Native Village of False Pass	\$409,311	Use and Adoption
Salamatof Tribe	\$1,062,352	Use and Adoption; Planning, Feasibility & Sustainability
Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission	\$717,017	Use and Adoption; Planning, Feasibility & Sustainability
TOTAL	\$45,236,683	

Federal Guidelines for Tribal Digital Equity Planning have not been released after reported mistakes by the NTIA

Alaska's Digital Equity Plan –Timeline & Next Steps

2024:

- SOA–Office of Broadband Apply for Capacity Building Grant
- Further Develop Plans and Relationships with communities.

2025-2029:

- SOA anticipates to receive 10-13 million. Either regrant to organizations, or appoint an administering entity to distribute the funds
- Organizations can apply for a Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program –\$1.25 Billion dollars nationwide or other grant programs
- Communities and organizations apply for grant funds to implement programs, develop baseline and assess progress.

Digital Equity Coalition

- Meet periodically to stay up to date about the plan and funding
- Provide local information
- Share best practices in digital equity
- Learn and share what other states are doing
- Give updates about what is happening with digital equity in Alaska
- Guide how the digital equity plan goals are implemented throughout Alaska

Why A Coalition Matters

- Nothing About Us Without Us!
- Make sure resources get distributed equitably
- Advocate as a strong group of Alaskan entities
 - Nonprofits
 - Tribes
 - Community organizations
- Be a clearinghouse for information and changing practices

For More Information

- The Coalition will be created over the next year.
- Fill out the form to be added to the contact list.
- There's more to come!



Scan
the QR
Code to
stay up
to date!



