Q4 BEAD & DIGITAL EQUITY UPDATES

Dec. 4, 2023

N.C. Department of Information Technology

Division of Broadband and Digital Equity

NCDIT | NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

EMILY GANGI

POLICY DIRECTOR
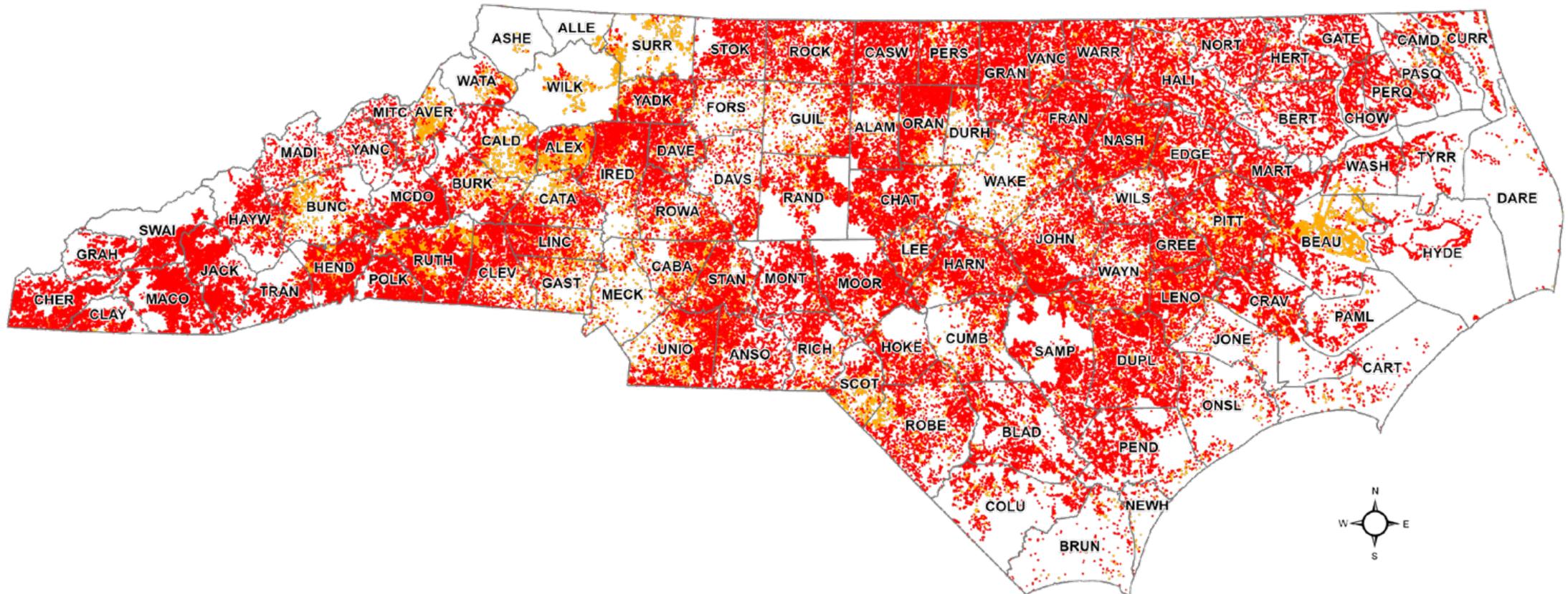NCDIT DIVISION OF BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY

AGENDA

1. BEAD Updates since September and Plans for 2024

2. Digital Equity Plan Updates

3. Questions & Comments

NC BROADBAND PROFILE
Evolving identification of Unserved Locations

New FCC Broadband Data Collection Serviceable Location Fabric – December 2022
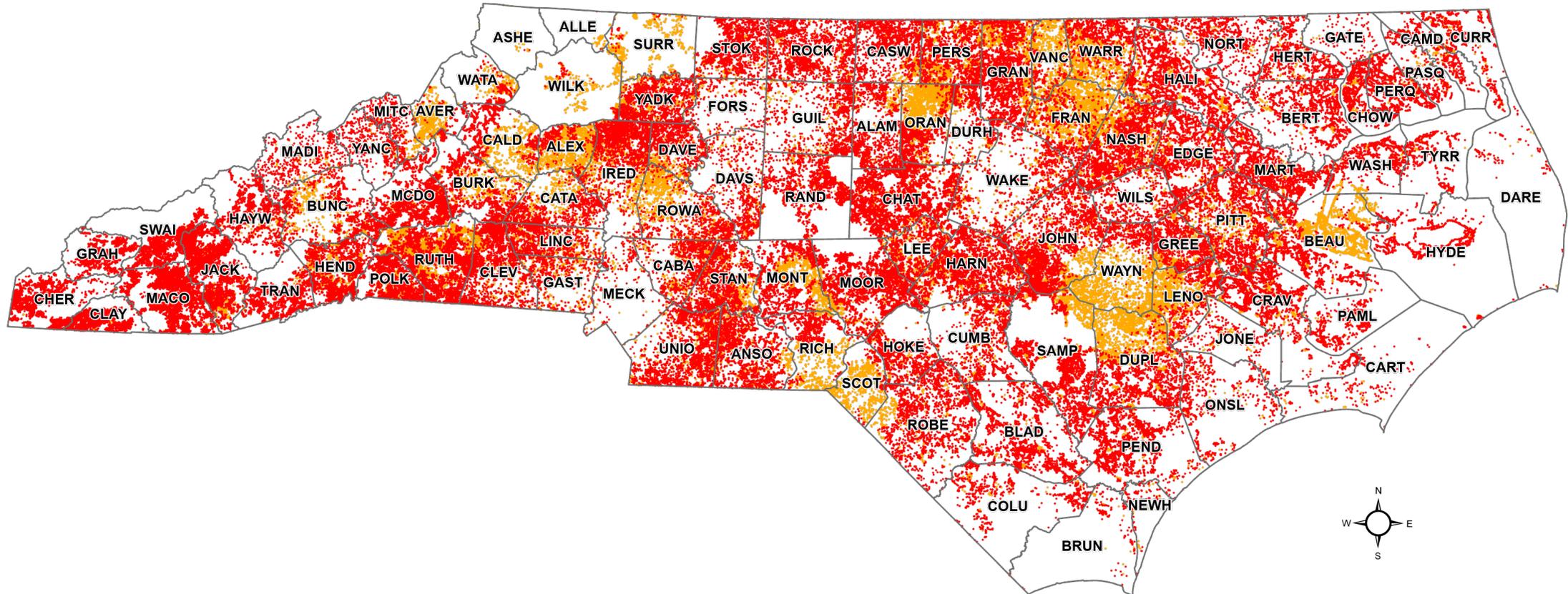

🔴 Unserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (Less Than 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload)
- 374,412 Locations = 409,445 units (homes and businesses)

🟠 Underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (Less Than 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload)
- 127,956 Locations = 145,778 units (homes and businesses)

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NC Broadband Profile
Evolving identification of Unserved Locations

New FCC Broadband Data Collection Serviceable Location Fabric – June 2023

🔴 Unserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (Less Than 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload)
- 283,403 Locations

🟠 Underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (Less Than 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload)
- 138,903 Locations

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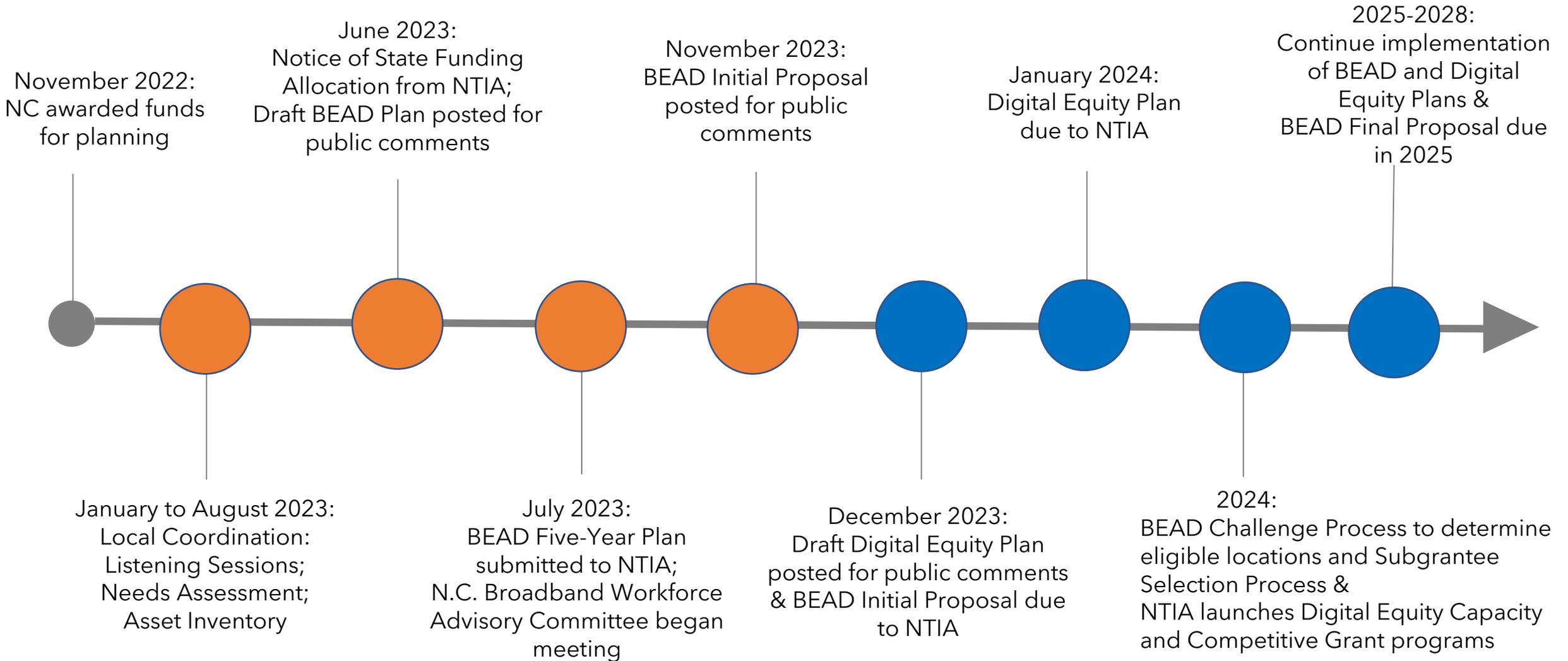
BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS, & DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) FUNDING

$1.5 billion to make sure all North Carolinians can access reliable high-speed internet

Eligible uses of funding include:

- Infrastructure for homes and businesses
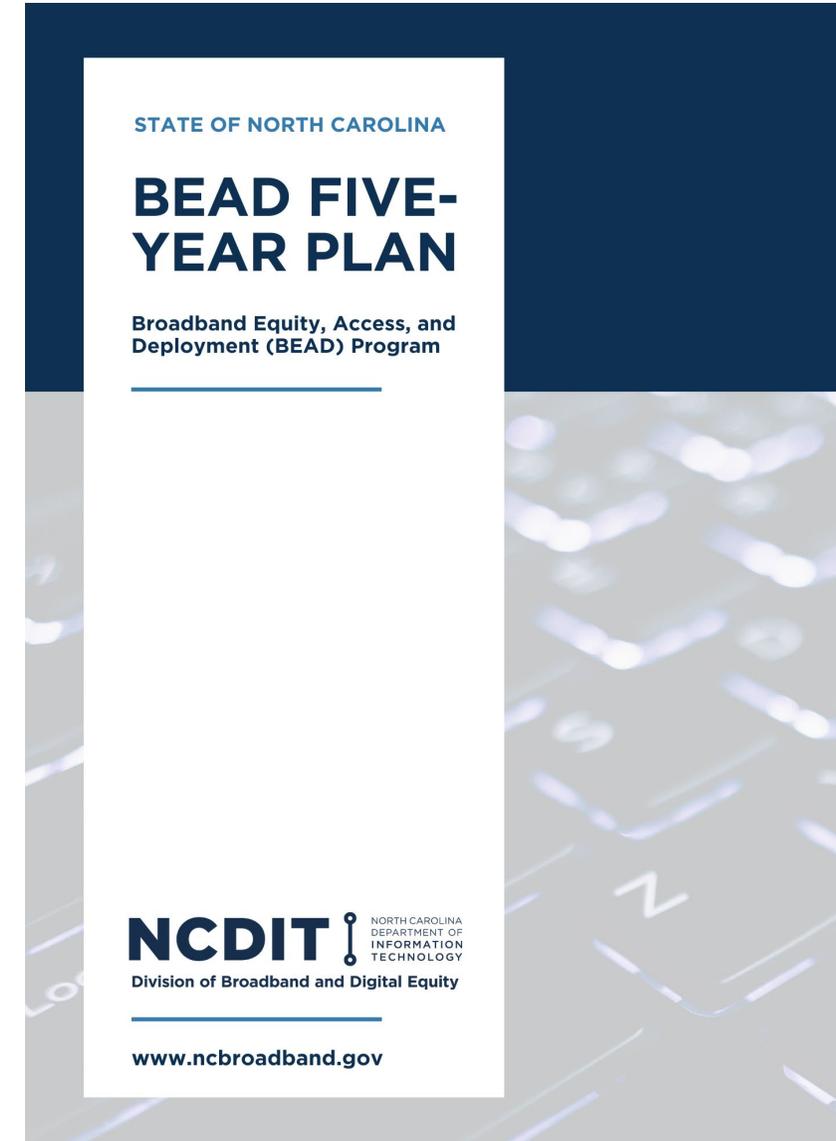
- Upgrades to infrastructure for community anchor institutions

- Mapping and data collection

- Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure for multi-family residential buildings

- Broadband adoption, including affordable internet capable devices and sign-up assistance

- Training and workforce development

- Digital equity programs

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BEAD & DIGITAL EQUITY TIMELINE

November 2022:
NC awarded funds for planning

January to August 2023:
Local Coordination:
Listening Sessions;
Needs Assessment;
Asset Inventory

June 2023:
Notice of State Funding Allocation from NTIA;
Draft BEAD Plan posted for public comments

July 2023:
BEAD Five-Year Plan submitted to NTIA;
N.C. Broadband Workforce Advisory Committee began meeting

November 2023:
BEAD Initial Proposal posted for public comments

December 2023:
Draft Digital Equity Plan posted for public comments & BEAD Initial Proposal due to NTIA

January 2024:
Digital Equity Plan due to NTIA

2024:
BEAD Challenge Process to determine eligible locations and Subgrantee Selection Process &
NTIA launches Digital Equity Capacity and Competitive Grant programs

2025-2028:
Continue implementation of BEAD and Digital Equity Plans &
BEAD Final Proposal due in 2025

BEAD FIVE-YEAR PLAN

- Refined draft plan based on public comments received (partners listed in plan), and then submitted it to NTIA on July 28

- Plan was approved by NTIA in August

- Approved plan is available at https://www.ncbroadband.gov/documents/bead-5-year-plan-final/download?attachment

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

BEAD FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

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www.ncbroadband.gov

BEAD INITIAL PROPOSAL DUE DEC. 27

Includes two volumes that may be submitted consecutively or simultaneously

Required sections are listed below:

VOLUME 1
A. Existing Broadband Funding (Requirement 3)
B. Unserved and Underserved Locations (Requirement 5)
C. Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) (Requirement 6)
D. Challenge Process (Requirement 7)

*Challenge Process may not begin until Volume 1 is approved by NTIA

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BEAD INITIAL PROPOSAL

VOLUME 2

E. Objectives (Requirement 1)

F. Local, Tribal, & Regional Broadband Planning Coordination (Requirement 2)

G. Local Coordination (Requirement 4)

H. Deployment Subgrantee Selection (Requirement 8)

I. Non-deployment Subgrantee Selection (Requirement 9)

J. Eligible Entity Implementation Activities (Requirement 10)

K. Labor Standards and Protections (Requirement 11)

L. Workforce Readiness (Requirement 12)

M. Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs)/ Women's Business Enterprises (WBEs)/ Labor Surplus Firms Inclusion (Requirement 13)

N. Cost and Barrier Reduction (Requirement 14)

O. Climate Assessment (Requirement 15)

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BEAD INITIAL PROPOSAL

VOLUME 2 (continued)

P. Low-Cost Broadband Service Option (Requirement 16)

Q. Middle Class Affordability (Requirement 20)

R. Use of 20 Percent of Funding (Requirement 17)

S. Eligible Entity Regulatory Approach (Requirement 18)

T. Certification of Compliance with BEAD Requirements (Requirement 19)

FUNDING REQUEST

- Project Plan/Narrative

- Consolidated Budget Form

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BROADBAND WORKFORCE PLAN

- A high-quality workforce is critical to achieving North Carolina's broadband deployment goals

- Draft workforce plan posted for public comments at ncbroadband.gov/BEAD

- An advisory committee provides input and guidance on:

  - Needs and gaps in workers, skills and certifications

  - Education & training assets to leverage and develop

  - Effective strategies and investments to address broadband workforce needs, including a focus on equity and building a diverse workforce

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BROADBAND WORKFORCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Alan Fitzpatrick
Open Broadband

Amelia DeJesus
Wireless Infrastructure Association

Andrea DeSantis
Policy Advisor, Office of Governor Roy Cooper

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N.C. Community Colleges

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NC Works Commission, N.C. Department of Commerce

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Fiber Broadband Association

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Piedmont Triad Workforce Development Board

Robert Doreauk
AT&T

Robyn Lake Hamilton
Urban League of Central Carolinas

Shinica Thomas
Wake County Commissioner

Wade Boteler
National OnDemand

Wes Hill
Wilson Community College

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ongoing: Additional outreach, information gathering, analysis, and writing

December:

Dec. 5: BEAD Initial Proposal public comments due

Dec. 27: BEAD Initial Proposal due to NTIA

January 2024:

Jan. 2: Digital Equity Plan public comments due at noon

Jan. 14: Digital Equity Plan due to NTIA

Jan. 30: BEAD semiannual reports due to NTIA

NTIA "Curing" process for BEAD & Digital Equity documents begins in January

March 2024:

TBD: Q1 Webinar Update

OVERVIEW: DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

Vision: We envision a future where all North Carolinians have access to high-speed internet and the digital tools, resources, and skills to fully and equitably participate in our society, democracy and economy.

Mission: The NCDIT Office of Digital Equity and Literacy will partner and collaborate with communities across the state and ensure all North Carolinians have:

- Access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet
- Computers and digital devices that meet their evolving needs as well as access to quality and affordable technical support
- Opportunities for developing digital skills
- Tools and information to protect themselves online
- Online resources that are inclusive for all

Covered Populations

- Aging individuals
- Individuals who live in households at or below 150% of Federal poverty level
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier: individuals who are English learners (incl. immigrants and New Americans) and have low levels of literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility
- LGBTQIA+
- Veterans

PLANNING PROCESS

Phase 1: Identifying Key Partners and Developing an Outreach Plan

Phase 2: Community Outreach and Data Collection

- Engaged local digital inclusion planning teams and coalitions
- Hosted nine public regional convenings
- Engaging state agencies to align priorities
- Developing an asset inventory of more than 1,300 resources, programs, and initiatives
- Deployed first of its kind Digital Equity Survey, which received more than 6,600 survey responses May - October 2023
- Hosted 23 listening sessions focused on the needs and experiences of covered populations, including tribal communities

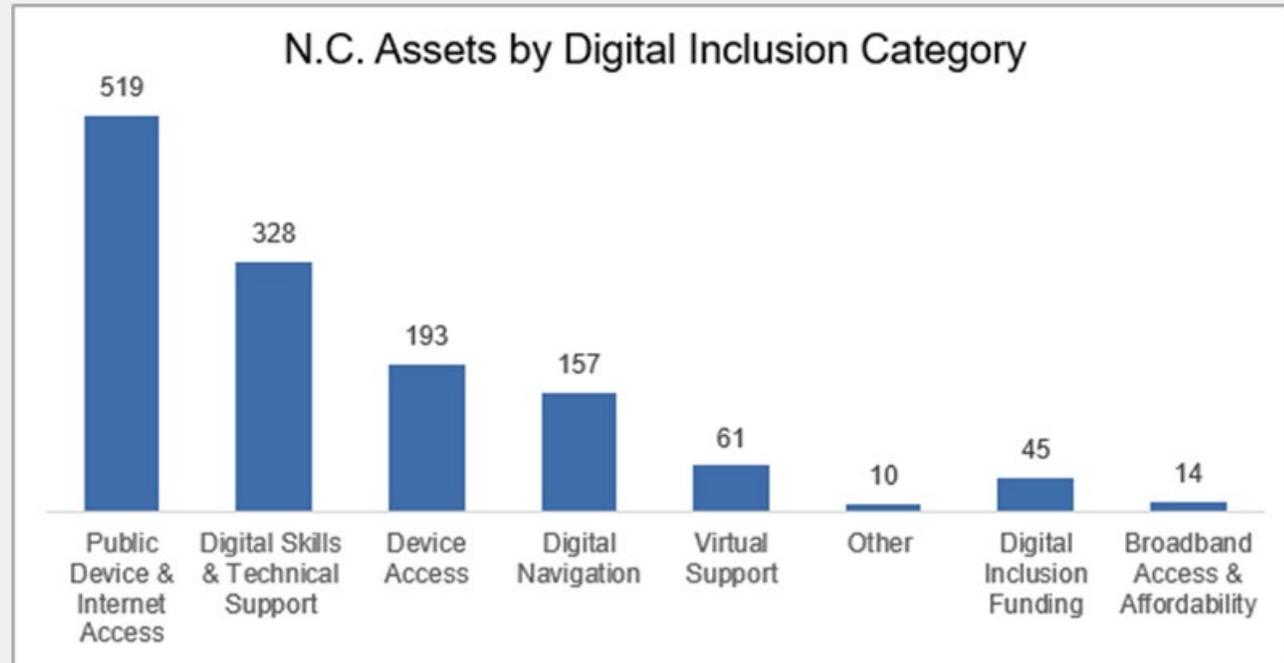**Phase 3: Plan Development and Public Comment**

- Describes efforts to advance digital equity and commits to continued outreach and partnership through public comment and public engagement

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STATE OF DIGITAL EQUITY: ASSETS

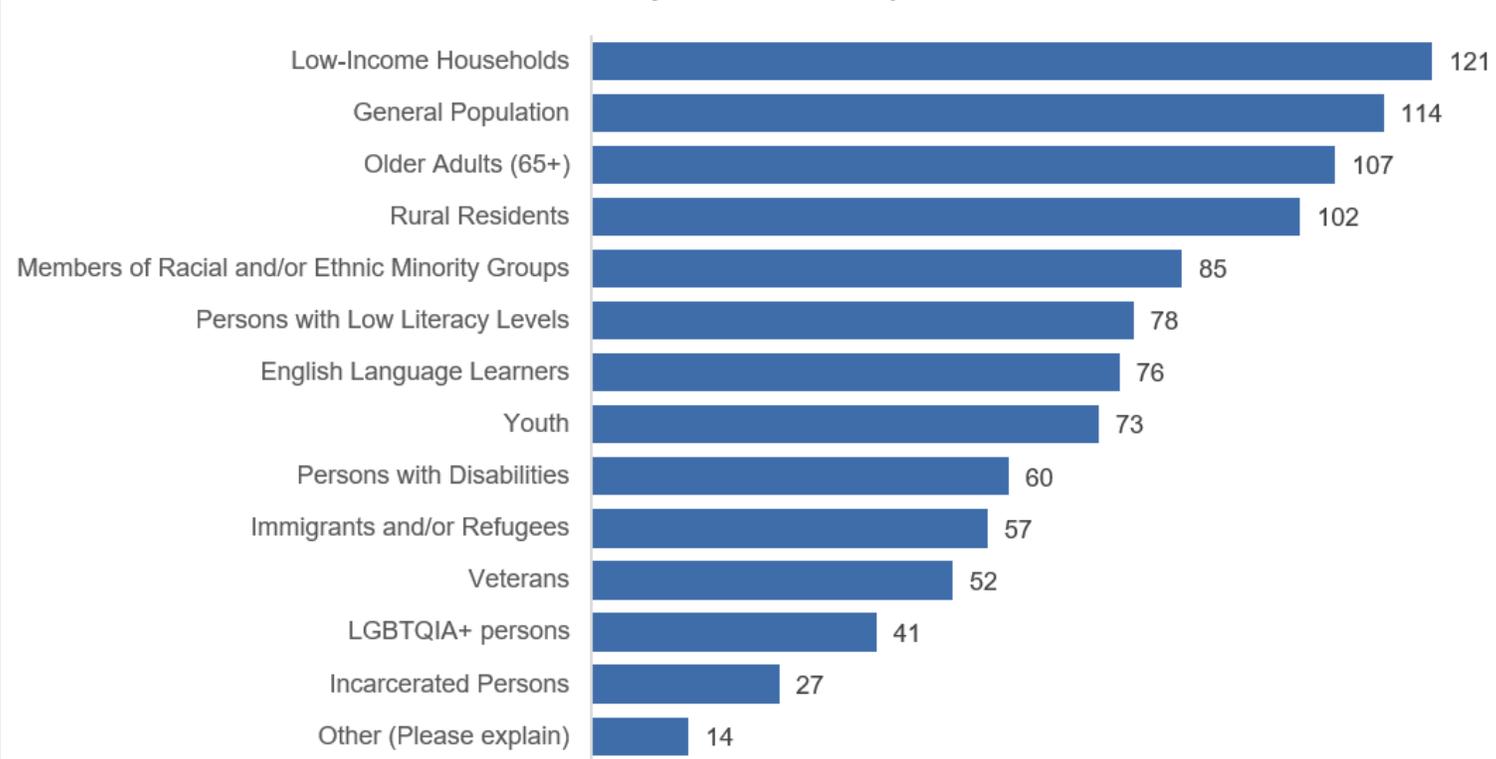**1,343 Digital Inclusion Assets
(resources, programs, initiatives)**

- 258: Asset Inventory Survey

- 571: Analysis of 27 county and regional digital inclusion plans representing 48 North Carolina counties and the Qualla Boundary

- 122: Division of Aging and Adult Services Broadband Survey

- 23: Analysis of counties with gaps

And counting – continuing to add every day

N.C. Assets by Digital Inclusion Category

Category	Value
Public Device & Internet Access	519
Digital Skills & Technical Support	328
Device Access	193
Digital Navigation	157
Virtual Support	61
Other	10
Digital Inclusion Funding	45
Broadband Access & Affordability	14

STATE OF DIGITAL EQUITY: ASSETS

Assets by Covered Population

Covered Population	Count
Low-Income Households	121
General Population	114
Older Adults (65+)	107
Rural Residents	102
Members of Racial and/or Ethnic Minority Groups	85
Persons with Low Literacy Levels	78
English Language Learners	76
Youth	73
Persons with Disabilities	60
Immigrants and/or Refugees	57
Veterans	52
LGBTQIA+ persons	41
Incarcerated Persons	27
Other (Please explain)	14

Significant need for:

- **Programs provided in languages other than English**

- Programs designed for needs of specific covered populations: **individuals with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQIA+** and **incarcerated individuals** and **people in re-entry**
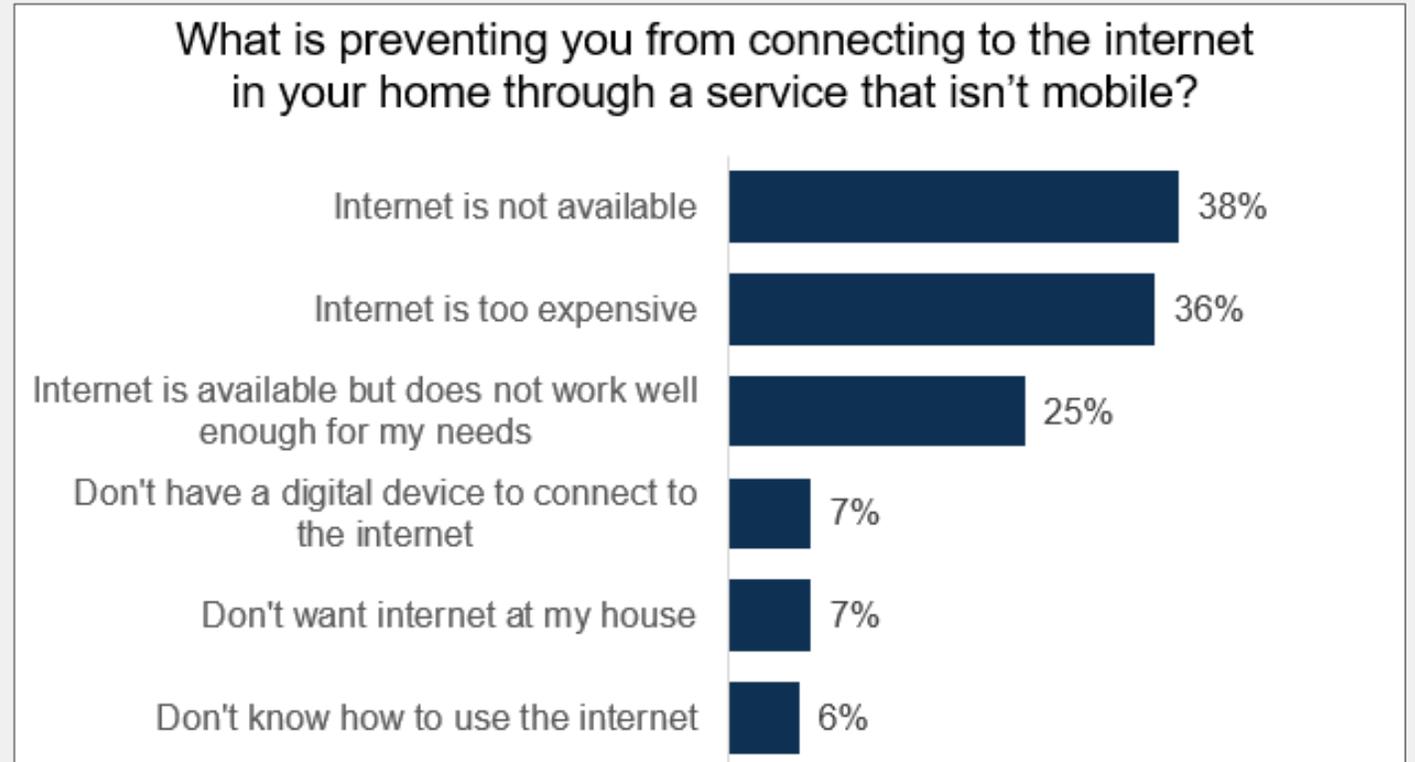
- More geographic spread

BARRIERS AND NEEDS

1. Access to and affordability of high-speed internet

2. Accessibility and inclusivity of online public resources

3. Digital literacy

4. Cybersecurity and privacy

5. Availability and affordability of devices and technical support

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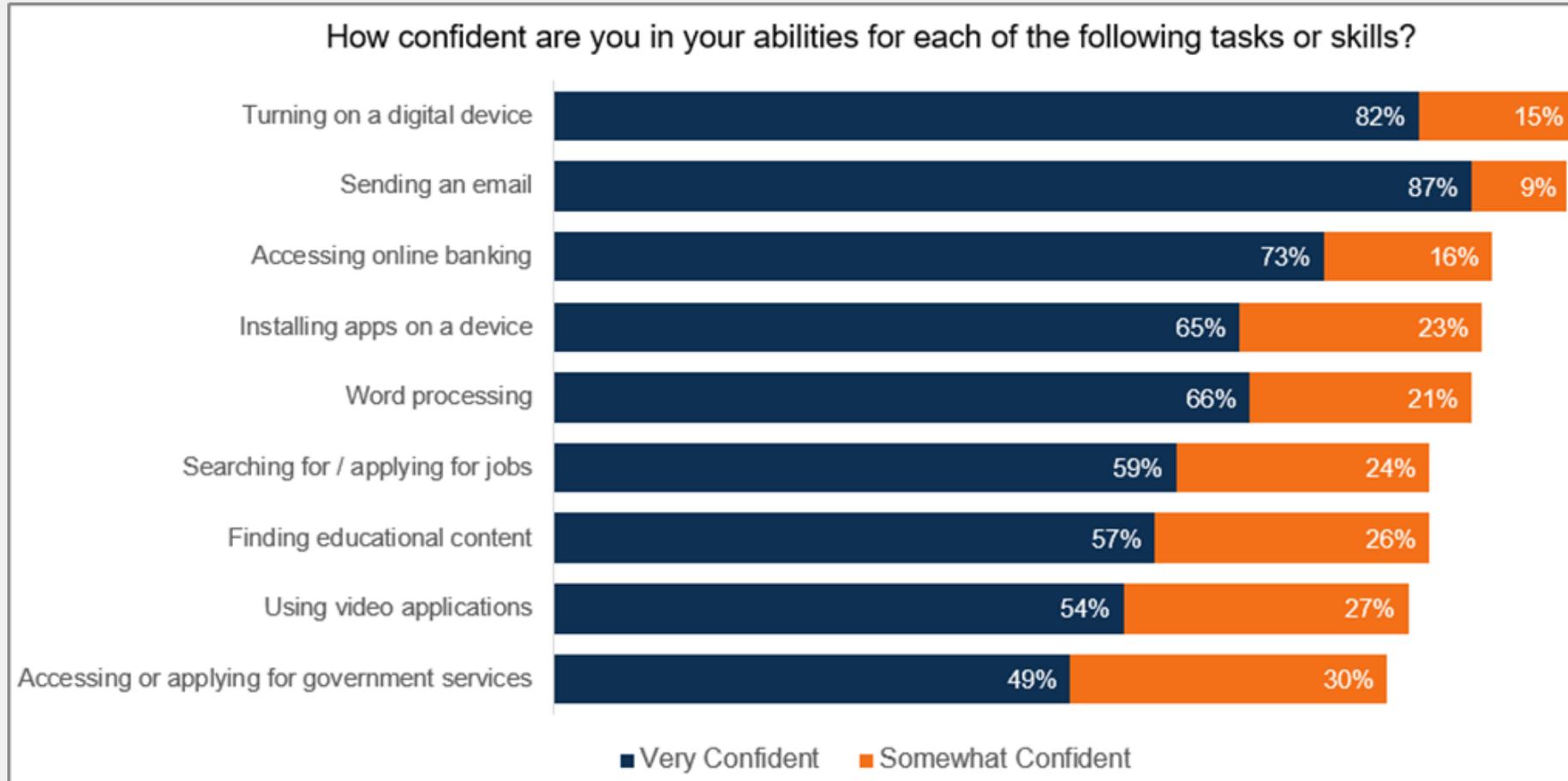
BARRIERS AND NEEDS: ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

Barriers and Needs

- Limited service providers

- Inadequate broadband coverage

- More public Wi-Fi in downtown areas

- More affordable and reliable service

- Internet access (infrastructure)

What is preventing you from connecting to the internet in your home through a service that isn't mobile?

Internet is not available	38%
Internet is too expensive	36%
Internet is available but does not work well enough for my needs	25%
Don't have a digital device to connect to the internet	7%
Don't want internet at my house	7%
Don't know how to use the internet	6%

"I couldn't work without reliable internet, and my young adult/teen kids would struggle with their work and school. Days when the internet cuts out are really tricky."
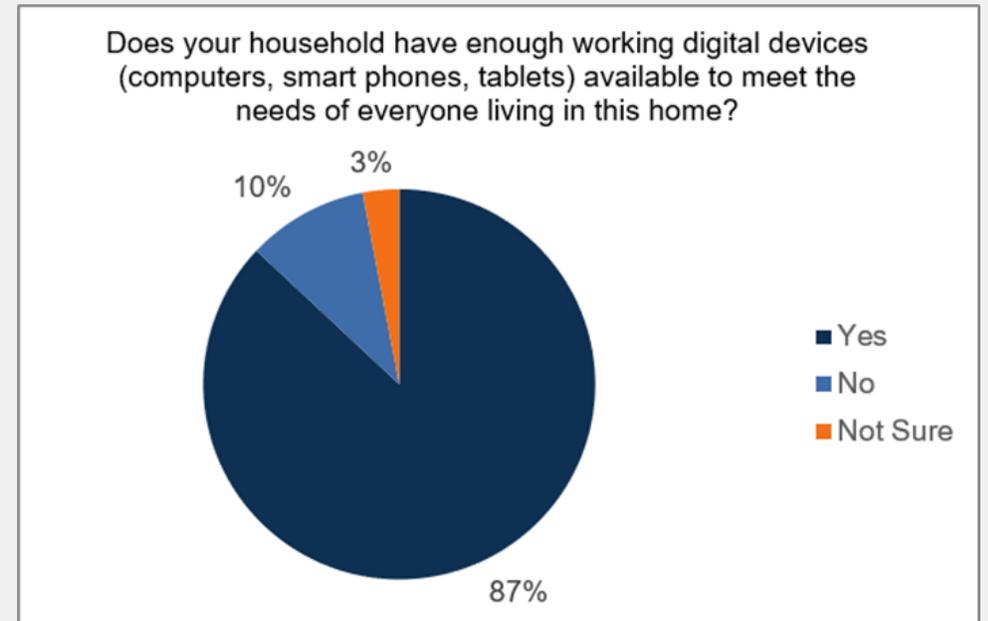
BARRIERS AND NEEDS: DIGITAL LITERACY

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks or skills?

Task or skill	Very Confident	Somewhat Confident
Turning on a digital device	82%	15%
Sending an email	87%	9%
Accessing online banking	73%	16%
Installing apps on a device	65%	23%
Word processing	66%	21%
Searching for / applying for jobs	59%	24%
Finding educational content	57%	26%
Using video applications	54%	27%
Accessing or applying for government services	49%	30%

■ Very Confident   ■ Somewhat Confident

"If I had the digital skills, it would have made the transition to get on my feet sooner and easier."

BARRIERS AND NEEDS: DEVICES & TECH SUPPORT

Barriers and Needs

- Lack access to necessary equipment to work from home – especially in rural areas

- Outdated technology

- Lack of or unaffordable technical support

- Devices at public spaces often have time limits

- Need local device refurbishers to provide high-quality, low-cost devices

Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home?

- Yes: 87%
- No: 10%
- Not Sure: 3%

BARRIERS AND NEEDS: ONLINE SAFETY
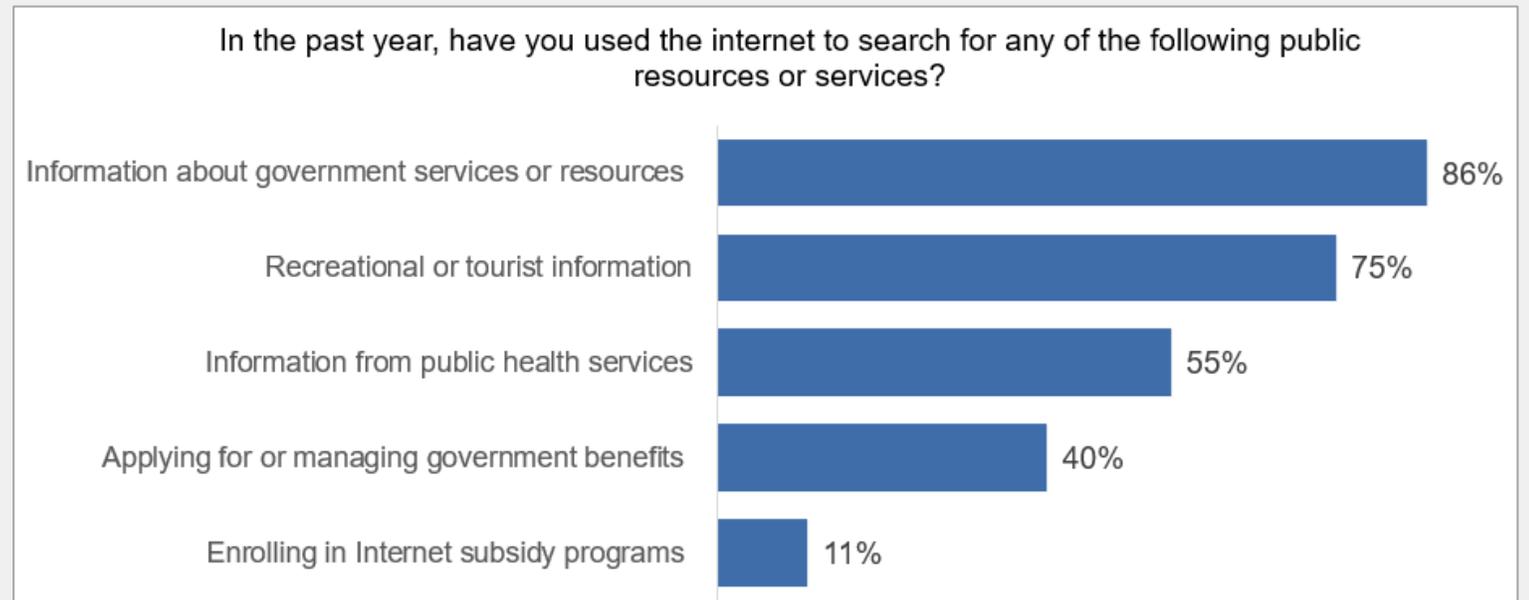
Cybersecurity and Privacy

"The younger generations know the security of the internet pretty well, but I'd like to know more about a VPN and other security things."

BARRIERS AND NEEDS: ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVITY (PUBLIC SERVICES)

Barriers and Needs:

- Lack of language accessibility

- Internet searches not meeting their needs

  - Benefits programs

- Plain and accessible language

In the past year, have you used the internet to search for any of the following public resources or services?

Information about government services or resources	86%
Recreational or tourist information	75%
Information from public health services	55%
Applying for or managing government benefits	40%
Enrolling in Internet subsidy programs	11%

"I still need help with websites or searches in my language, if it had more languages, it would be easier."

MEASURABLE GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The strategies to meet these needs include:

- **Strategy 1:** All North Carolinians have access to high-speed internet and to affordable, low-cost internet services

- **Strategy 2:** Promote practices that support online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services

- **Strategy 3:** Ensure that North Carolinians can acquire the digital skills and understanding to meet their personal needs and the workforce needs of the state

- **Strategy 4:** Promote practices and leverage tools to ensure online privacy and security

- **Strategy 5:** Ensure that North Carolinians have access to digital devices to meet their needs

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Strategy 1: All North Carolinians have access to high-speed internet and to affordable, low-cost internet services

Measurable goals:

- By 2029: 100% of unserved and underserved households have access to high-speed internet

- By 2028: 80% of eligible households subscribe through low-cost and subsidized internet services *(Currently 49%)*

- By 2028: 90% of households subscribe to high-speed internet (adoption rate) and reduce the disparity across covered populations *(Currently 85%)*

- By 2025: 100% of households with children subscribe to high-speed internet *(Currently 81%)*

Data: ACS 5-year estimates and FCC Broadband Data Collection

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Strategy 1: All North Carolinians have access to high-speed internet and to affordable, low-cost internet services

Implementation Activity 1.1: Support the state's Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program plan objectives and implementation to ensure alignment with North Carolina Digital Equity Plan goals

Implementation Activity 1.2: Support Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) to improve and expand free, public Wi-Fi locations

Implementation Activity 1.3: Increase awareness of and enrollment in low-cost and subsidized broadband internet programs like the Affordable Connectivity program (ACP)

Strategy 2: Promote practices that support online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services

Measurable goals:

- By 2028, increase in confidence to access or apply online for government services by 5%. Currently at 89% but varies significantly by covered population
- By 2028, 100% of cabinet-level agencies are trained on accessible website content.
  - Train other public entities (ex. local governments) to provide accessible online content.

Data: Digital Equity Survey 2023

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Strategy 2: Promote practices that support online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services

Implementation Activity 2.1: Leverage partnerships within state government, local government and organizations serving covered populations to identify and develop North Carolina standards for online accessibility and inclusivity

Implementation Activity 2.2: Leverage partnerships to train staff in all cabinet-level agencies on online accessibility standards to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of state government websites and expand training and capacity to local governments and beyond

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Strategy 3: Ensure that North Carolinians can acquire the digital skills and understanding to meet their personal needs and the state's workforce needs

Measurable goals:

- By 2028, increase in percentage of North Carolinians who are confident using word processing programs, finding educational content, applying for jobs, and communicating with a healthcare provider by 10%
  - *Current:*
    - *Word processing, such as Google Docs or Microsoft Word: 87%*
    - *Searching for/applying for jobs: 83%*
    - *Finding educational content such as taking a course: 84%*
    - *Making an appointment, checking test results, or communicating with a healthcare provider online (ex. Using MyChart). No baseline*
- By 2028, increase access to and geographic reach of services that meet individual needs to advance digital literacy by 25%, including digital navigator programs
  - *Current: 328 entities offering digital skills training; 157 entities offering digital navigation*

Data: Digital Equity Survey 2023; Asset Inventory 2023

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Strategy 3: Ensure that North Carolinians can acquire the digital skills and understanding to meet their personal needs and the state's workforce needs

Implementation Activity 3.1: Partner with workforce and education agencies at the state and local levels to identify and adopt high quality digital skills standards, including digital privacy and cybersecurity standards and digital health literacy

Implementation Activity 3.2: Build on lessons learned from existing digital navigator programs to expand services across the state

Implementation Activity 3.3: Leverage digital navigator and digital literacy programs to expand partnerships with organizations serving covered populations to meet their specific digital literacy needs

Implementation Activity 3.4: Leverage existing partnerships with state education agencies to engage students and families in digital literacy programs

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Strategy 4: Promote practices and leverage tools to ensure online privacy and security

Measurable goals:
- By 2028, improve confidence and ability to protect personal data online by 10%
  - Current: Somewhat or very confident in the following:
    - Knowing how to keep yourself safe online: 81%
    - Protecting the privacy of your personal data: 77%

Data: Digital Equity Survey 2023

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Strategy 4: Promote practices and leverage tools to ensure online privacy and security

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Implementation Activity 4.1: Partner with workforce and education agencies at the state and local levels to identify and adopt digital skills standards, including digital privacy and cybersecurity standards *(Crossover from Implementation Activity 3.1)*

Implementation Activity 4.2: Integrate cybersecurity and privacy training into curricula implemented by digital navigators and other digital literacy efforts across the state

Strategy 5: Ensure that North Carolinians have access to digital devices to meet their needs

Measurable goals:

- By 2028,100% of the population has access to a quality public computer through a community anchor institution *(Current: 519 organizations are providing public devices access and internet access)*

- By 2028, 95% of North Carolina households will own a working, large-screen (laptop, desktop, or tablet), internet-capable device that meets their needs *(Current: 92% of households)*

- By 2028, increase in geographic spread of organizations offering low-cost computers and technical support *(Current: 193 organizations provide device access; four nonprofit device refurbishers)*

Data: Digital Equity Survey 2023; Asset Inventory 2023

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Strategy 5: Ensure that North Carolinians have access to digital devices to meet their needs

Implementation Activity 5.1: Increase public access to devices at community anchor institutions

Implementation Activity 5.2: Increase the supply of no-cost and low-cost devices in North Carolina's device distribution system

Implementation Activity 5.3: Develop and sustain a high-volume refurbishment and distribution system that supports the efficient movement of devices throughout the state and matches computing devices with the unique needs of the intended covered populations

Implementation Activity 5.4: Utilize trained and qualified partners for device deployment and technical support

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Help us make this plan better!

The draft plan is posted and available for public comment on our website at ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Equity-Plan

- Please email your comments to digitalequity@nc.gov using the subject line "Digital Equity Plan Comment" by **Tuesday, Jan. 2 at noon**

- Help improve the Asset Inventory: View the List of Digital Equity Assets

- If you do not see a known asset, resource or organization in the above list, submit through the form on our website: ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Equity-Plan

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Place your questions in the chat feature or raise your hand to request to be unmuted.

Visit the Division's website to learn more and see additional resources: **www.ncbroadband.gov/BEAD**

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