
Digital Equity Capacity Grant Webinar Series

How to Design a Strong Digital Inclusion Program

With the Illinois Office of Broadband

June 12, 2024



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Welcome!



Devon Braunstein
Director
Illinois Office of Broadband



Alicia Ross
Community Engagement Manager
Illinois Office of Broadband



Aneta Lee
*Asst. Director for Digital Equity,
Inclusion & Navigation*
Illinois Broadband Lab



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Get To Know You!

Type in the chat:

How does your organization serve Covered Populations?

Covered Populations:

- Veterans
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural households
- People with language barriers
- Aging populations
- Low-income households
- People with disabilities
- Incarcerated individuals



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Agenda

- Introductions
- Context: Digital Equity Act
- How to Build a Strong Digital Inclusion Program
 - Digital navigator program – Foundational Info, Q&A
 - Digital inclusion program – Q&A
- Next Steps
- Q&A



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Objectives

- Learn about the State Digital Equity Plan and timeline for grant release
- Understand best practices when crafting a digital inclusion program, including a digital navigator and broader digital inclusion program
- Get clarity and questions answered



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Illinois Office of Broadband

Launched in 2019 with the Connect Illinois initiative

Tasked with connecting every single resident in Illinois with fast, reliable, and affordable internet

- Administering grants for broadband infrastructure (BEAD \$1B+) and digital equity (\$30M+)
- Engaging regional champions and community organizations

Illinois Broadband Lab

University contributor to Office's broadband partnership

Tasked with research, data gathering, and digital navigation resources

- Lead statewide engagement through public university partnerships (Broadband READY)
 - Illinois Broadband Map
 - Digital Navigator Network



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



What is Digital Equity

Digital Equity:

...is an outcome: It is the state we are working to reach where all Illinoisans have access to the quality and affordable broadband, devices, and skills they need to participate in Illinois' modern economy and thrive. Community members with the **greatest barriers** are empowered towards civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

...is a process: It is how we do business, by prioritizing access and opportunities for groups that have the greatest need and who are **most impacted by digital inequities**.

“The internet is the civil rights issue of the 21st century.”

- Congressman John Lewis

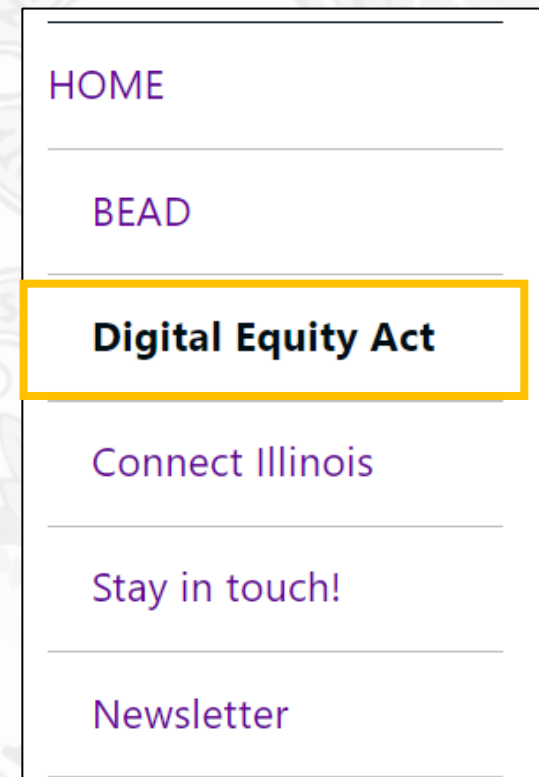
In case you missed it...

Previous two webinars from the Grant Capacity Building series are posted on our [website!](#)

- State Grant Basics | May 29, 2024
- How to Write a Great Grant | June 5, 2024

dceo.illinois.gov/connectillinois

→ Click on Digital Equity Act



Context



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

2021 Digital Equity Act

The Digital Equity Act provides \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion. Programs aim to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy.



State Planning Grant

Complete

Funding for states to create Digital Equity Plans



Capacity Grant

Our focus for today

Funding for states to implement Digital Equity Plans
(~\$39M expected for Illinois over 5 years)



Competitive Grant

*Coming soon:
~Fall 2024*

\$1.25B national fund to implement digital equity projects

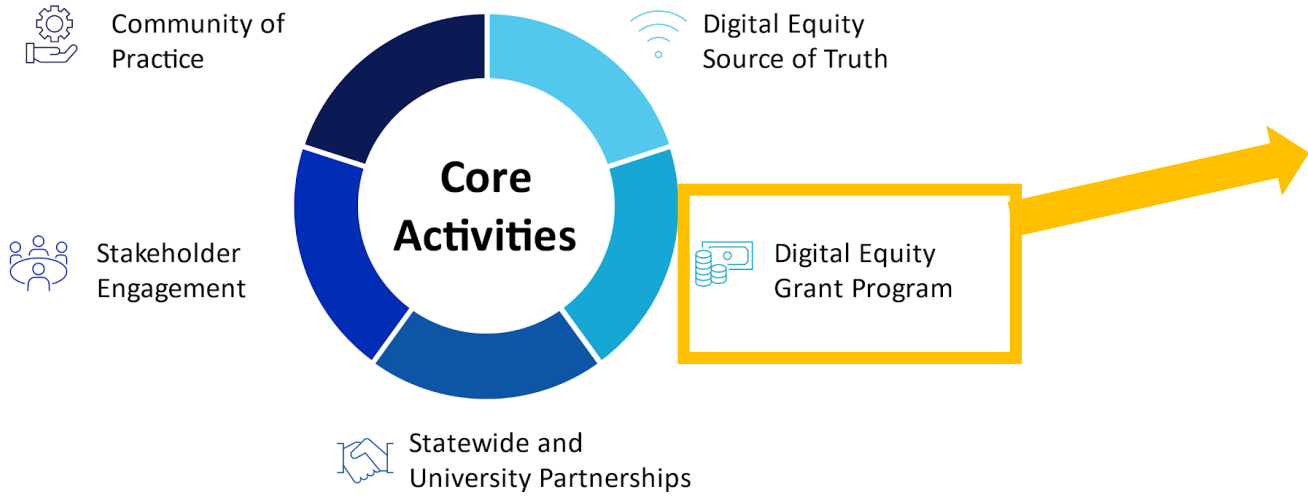


Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



State Digital Equity Plan Has Been Approved

Approval of the SDEP unlocks the opportunity for Illinois to apply for first Capacity Grant allocation from NTIA of \$23.7 million to implement the plan.



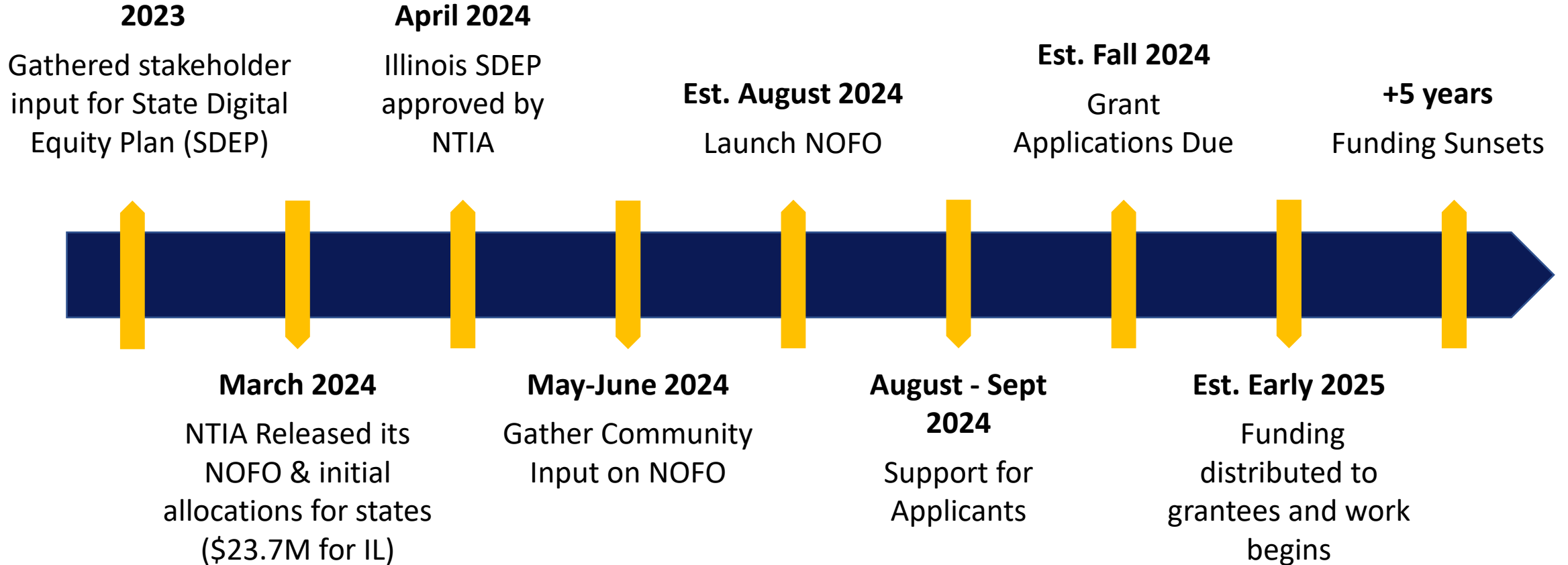
Creating a statewide Digital Equity Grant Program is one of the Plan's Core Activities



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Timeline for State Digital Equity Grant Program



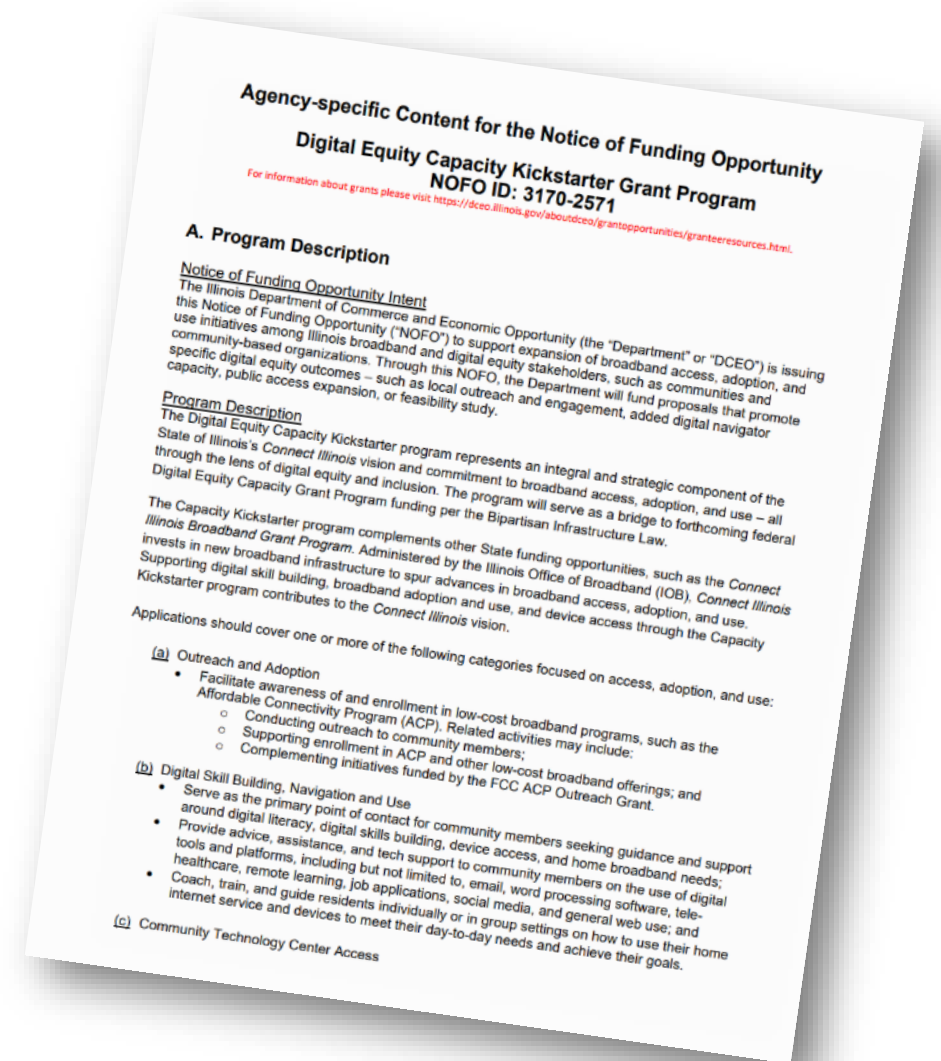
Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



What is a NOFO

A “NOFO” is a Notice of Funding Opportunity shared with the public that outlines key information for prospective applicants including:

- Eligible entities for applying
- Timeline and important dates and deadlines
- Grant award amounts
- Application requirements
- Detailed process for applying



NTIA Requires Prioritization of Covered Populations

Low-income households

Incarcerated individuals

People with disabilities

Racial and ethnic minorities

Aging populations

Veterans

Rural inhabitants

People with language barriers

72% of Illinoisans are part of these identity groups and communities disproportionately impacted by digital inequity



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Tentative Grant Project Types

Subject to change based on design process and adherence to program and agency requirements

Device Distribution Programs

Laptop, computer, or other device distribution to Covered Populations.

Digital Literacy + Skills Training

Classes, workshops, coaching, or other learning opportunities to help Covered Populations build digital skills and confidence.

Digital Navigation + Tech Support

Individuals embedded in community trained to help connect Covered Populations access affordable broadband, digital skill building, and other essential resources.

Broadband Affordability Program

Small infrastructure projects to increase affordability and choice within multi-dwelling units (MDUs), affordable housing, or other residential communities.

Access Expansion Feasibility Study

Opportunity for communities to chart their own broadband path through local coordination and planning.

Coalition Building

Seed funding for regional or local digital equity coalition formation, building, and growth.

Digital Navigator Program

Foundational Information



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Digital Navigator Program 101

Digital navigators address the whole digital inclusion process including home connectivity, devices, and digital skills.

The Digital Navigator (DN) Program model typically includes...

- **An opportunity for community members to receive personalized digital literacy training**
 - **Keeps long-term goals in mind, such as advancing education, workforce development, and basic lifestyle needs**
- **Technology support including navigating the use of computers, laptops, and tablets**
- **Connecting community members to affordable internet, devices, and other essential resources**

Who are digital navigators?

A digital navigator should..

- Have a desire to train others
- Have a passion to serve all communities
- Be a community members working with a trusted community organization
- Be familiar with and trusted among the local community
- Have experience or be willing to be trained in providing basic service and sometimes specialized training for focused areas as education, telehealth, and financial literacy

New Digital Navigators should complete a training in computer knowledge as well as cultural awareness/sensitivity and digital confidence to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Who are digital navigators? (cont’d.)

Digital navigators might be...

1. **Volunteers** – Community Members
2. **Cross-trained staff** – Staff at existing organizations
3. **New employees** – Organizations may hire new employees through programs that train digital navigators



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Digital Navigator Program

Let's hear from the experts!



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with IBL's Aneta Lee:

Share a brief summary of the program:

- **Goals** - The goals for the 1st year of the program were 1) To stand up a statewide digital navigator corps 2) bring digital inclusion programming to communities.
- **Target audience** - Low-income, underserved, and historically marginalized communities.
- **Main activities** - The original set of activities were to market and sign-up residents for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). After the winddown, the focus is on providing digital skills classes.



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with IBL's Aneta Lee:

What does your budget look like at a high level?

Partnership with Lead for America to host 10 AmeriCorps members to be placed around the state; ~\$35,000 per member.

What are the main buckets you spend funding on?

1) staff, 2) equipment, 3) marketing (including swag items)



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with IBL's Aneta Lee:

How is your program structured?

Each DN was placed with a university or Government partner to provide digital inclusion and navigation programming, full-time.

Do you use a digital literacy curriculum?

We utilized the NorthStar Digital Literacy Assessment tool and curriculum.

How do you market and promote your program?

Flyers, social media, networking, and word of mouth



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with IBL's Aneta Lee:

How do you measure impact and evaluate progress?

Define what success looks like for your organization's digital inclusion program. Ideas to consider:

- Your program's funder and their required deliverables
- Number of people impacted in various scenarios:
 - # of people attending workshops, training, etc.
 - # of people that completed a class series
 - # of people outreached to
 - # of people that received 1:1 support (tech support, tutoring, digital navigation)
- Increased digital skill levels:
 - # of people reporting increase confidence level
 - # of people passing an assessment
 - increased interaction with a digital platform (email, portals, digital forms, etc.)

Use the following to measure and evaluate progress:

- Sign-in sheets
- Pre and post surveys (adaptable to measure a variety of informational topics)
- Longitudinal post class interaction (qualitative analysis)
- Scored assessments (also can be used pre and post class, workshop, etc.)
- Project-based assessment
- Tracking
- Digital platform tracking
- Program specific tracking



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with IBL's Aneta Lee:

What advice do you have for someone looking to stand up a digital inclusion program for their community?

- 1) Take as much time as you can to research, brainstorm, and plan
- 2) A community needs assessment is paramount
- 3) involve the community you are attempting to serve as much as possible in the planning and creation process
- 4) Embrace fluidity, flexibility, and be adaptable
- 5) Small starts are common; perseverance is key
- 6) There are no 'failures' only opportunities and lessons to be learned

Questions please contact: Aneta Lee, atl@uillinois.edu



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Considerations to craft a successful digital navigator program

| Factor | Considerations |
|---------------------|---|
| Program Goal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is this program interested in accomplishing? What problem is it intended to address? Who is the target population?• What is the need in your community?• What is the purpose of your program? |
| Program Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What activities will you be doing to achieve the desired program outcomes? What service(s) will you offer?• Who will you serve?<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Demographics characteristics➤ Degree of reach➤ Participants strengths and capacities➤ Challenges➤ Program eligibility and other requirements• What specific services or activities will you provide? |

Considerations to craft a successful digital navigator program

| Factor | Considerations |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Building a Digital Equity Ecosystem | <p>Do you know potential partners offering complementary, wrap-around, or supportive services?</p> <p>What strategic alliances with businesses, governments, and other organizations or institutions, can be made to ensure digital inclusion?</p> |



Considerations to craft a successful digital navigator program (cont'd.)

| Factor | Considerations |
|---------------------|--|
| Implementation Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there training and startup requirements? What current resources can you leverage and or will you need additional resources?• Internal Asset Mapping<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What partners do you already have that can help your efforts?2. Do you know of any refurbishing programs in your community, or do you know of any digital literacy programs offered at your library?3. Do you know of any services available in your community for people with learning disabilities?4. Are there any upskilling programs you can connect learners to?5. Are there any agencies working with immigrant communities that can help you recruit or help with language access?6. What low-cost connection services are available in your area? This asset mapping guide developed by Digital Promise can be helpful. |

Digital Inclusion Program

Let's hear from the experts!



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas



Contact Information:
Dwaynedouglas@quiltfp.org



QUILT is committed to initiating and supporting signs of hope in the city by empowering people, achieving social justice and economic development and promoting the well being of communities



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas

What does your budget look like at a high level? What are the main buckets you spend funding on?

At a high level, our budget is allocated to ensure maximum impact and sustainability:

- **Staff**
- **Equipment**
- **Marketing**
- **Other**



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas

How do you market and promote your program?

We utilize a multi-channel marketing strategy to promote our programs:

- **Community Outreach**
- **Digital Marketing**
- **Traditional Media**
- **Word of Mouth**



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas

What metrics do you collect?

We collect a comprehensive set of metrics to evaluate our impact:

- **Participation Numbers**
- **Completion Rates**
- **Broadband Adoption Rates**
- **Employment Outcomes**
- **Participant Feedback**



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas

How do you measure impact and evaluate progress?

We measure impact and evaluate progress through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods:

- **Data Analysis**
- **Surveys and Focus Groups**
- **Long-Term Tracking**
- **Stakeholder Feedback**



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas

What have been your biggest challenges, and how have you overcome them?

Our biggest challenges include:

- **Digital Divide**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Resource Constraints**

We have addressed these challenges by:

- **Building Strong Partnerships**
- **Continuous Adaptation**
- **Securing Diverse Funding**



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A with QUILT Corp's Dwayne Douglas

What advice do you have for someone looking to stand up a digital inclusion program for their community?

- Conduct Thorough Needs Assessments
- Build Strong Partnerships
- Ensure Accessibility
- Focus on Sustainability
- Promote Community Engagement
- Continuously Evaluate and Adapt

Trust with people you are serving and the people you are doing the work with to serve the communities.

Commerce



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Next Steps



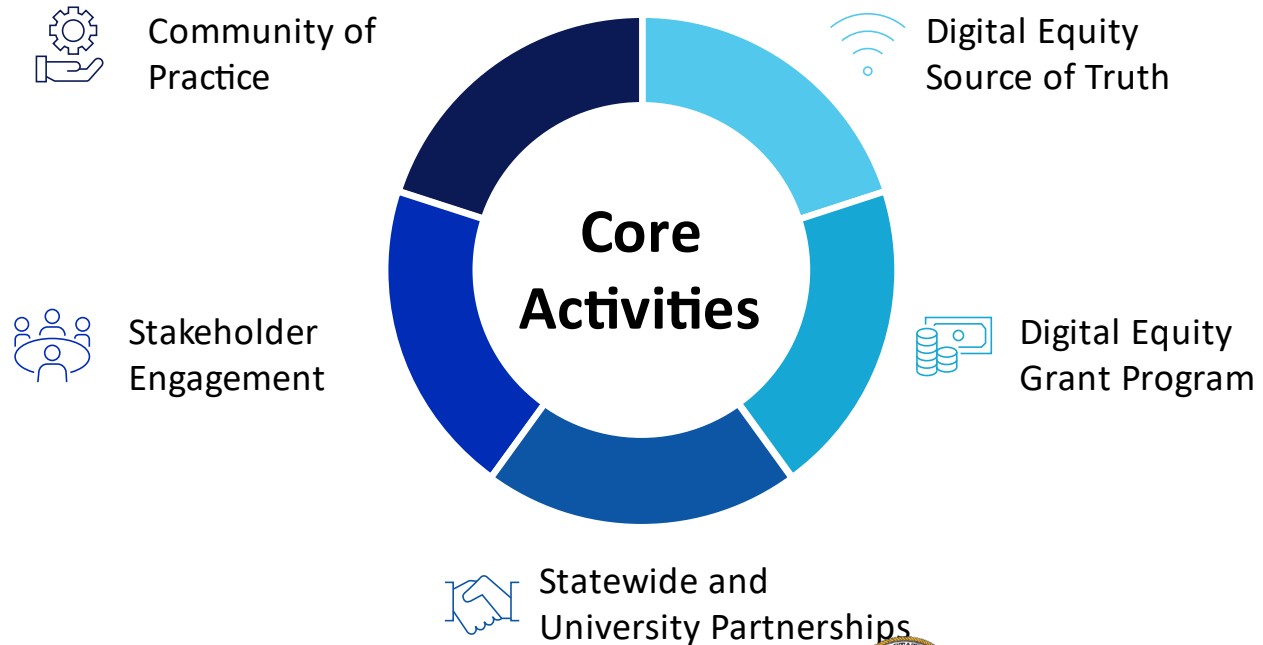
Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



State Digital Equity Plan

Final plan now LIVE!

Executive Summary is available in 6 languages



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Next Steps

Fill out our partner form!

Receive the most up-to-date information about grant programs, action items, and get inspired by other #IllinoisBroadbandStories

bit.ly/IOBPartner



- Sign up for the Illinois Broadband Connections Newsletter at <https://bit.ly/IOBNewsletter>
- Follow the Illinois Broadband Lab on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn

Stay tuned for summer series diving into the different grant program types – let us know what you're interested in!

Coalition building, feasibility studies, broadband affordability, digital literacy, etc.



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



Q&A



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB

Thank You!



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND



ILLINOIS
BROADBAND
LAB
