



The Digital Equity Capacity Kickstarter (DECK) program represents an integral and strategic component of the State of Illinois's *Connect Illinois* vision and commitment to broadband access, adoption, and use—all through the lens of digital equity and inclusion. Applications covered one or more of the following categories focused on access, adoption, and use:

- *Outreach and Adoption*, including support for federal Affordable Connectivity Program awareness and enrollment
- *Digital Skill Building, Navigation and Use*, including digital literacy programming
- *Community Technology Center Access*, providing a physical space with internet access and computing devices
- *Access Expansion Feasibility*, preparing local governments to play a role in community-led broadband expansion

Project Summaries – Wave 1

Association House of Chicago | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Greater Humboldt Park

Association House of Chicago has an established history of supporting immigrant communities on Chicago's West Side, expanding its mission to provide comprehensive programming in English and Spanish, and promoting health and wellness and creating opportunities for education and economic advancement. Through the DECK program, Association House seeks to enhance its digital literacy and skills #TechReady program by hiring a digital navigator, promoting enrollment in the ACP Program, and expanding access to its community technology centers.

Brighton Park Neighborhood Council | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Brighton Park

Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (BPNC) is an intergenerational, community-based organization with a mission to improve the quality of life for the working-class and immigrant populations of Brighton Park and Southwest Chicago. Their DECK award will enable it to continue its relationship with its clients from the Chicago Connected initiative, ultimately building a foundation for the provision of digital equity and digital literacy services within BPNC's program offerings, including ACP awareness and enrollment as part of its Public Benefits Enrollment support.

Center for Changing Lives | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Northwest/Southeast Chicago

Center for Changing Lives (CCL) is committed to offering bilingual (English/Spanish) outreach and education for the ACP program through its Northwest and Southeast Chicago offices, focusing on increasing internet connectivity and digital skills to its target populations including low-income Black and Latinx households and the Spanish-speaking immigrant population. The DECK award will enable CCL to expand its Resource Development Coaching and enhance its function as a one stop service center on skills training and financial education for low-income and Spanish-speaking members of the community.

The Center: Resources for Teaching & Learning | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Hoffman Estates, Palatine, Rolling Meadows

The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning will act as the fiscal agent for the United Palatine Coalition (UPC) to enhance digital equity efforts in Palatine, Rolling Meadows, Hoffman Estates, Arlington Heights, and Inverness. The initiative will support UPC's bilingual community navigator and focus on expanding outreach and awareness to ACP-eligible households. The funding will help UPC build on the digital equity work that was developed by its participation in the *Illinois Connected Communities* program.

Chicago Urban League | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center**Location: South/Southwest Chicago**

Founded in 1916, the Chicago Urban League works to achieve equity for Black families and communities through social and economic empowerment. Its Youth Services Center will lead the initiative, serving young people ages 11 to 24 through a digital literacy program and community technology center access. The digital literacy program offers basic and advanced classes on software, web navigation, and online workforce development tools that together with the community tech center will enable families to use the Internet to find resources and employment opportunities for all members of a household.

Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP)**Location: Chinatown**

The Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) works with Asian and Asian American residents on digital literacy issues in Chicago, with Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking staff members offering one-on-one help and community workshops. The DECK opportunity enables CBCAC to continue and expand its ACP outreach and enrollment programming, helping to reach many Chinatown Area Chicago residents—especially the elderly—and assist in navigating technology and language barriers.

Digital Leaders Now (LatinX DLN) | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)**Location: Effingham, Fairmont, Mattoon, Summit**

A distinguished and effective former *Illinois Connected Communities* participant, Digital Leaders Now (LatinX DLN) is a leading organization uplifting Latinx voices in technology-related policies and growing Latino representation in STEM-related careers and entrepreneurship. LatinX DLN's main hub in Summit, in addition to its presence in West Lawn, Garfield Ridge, Pilsen, Little Village, Mattoon, Effingham, and Fairmont City/East St. Louis, enables LatinX DLN to reach several large Hispanic population centers across the state. LatinX DLN offers bilingual in-person and virtual digital literacy and tech workforce trainings and will continue its work co-hosting community events to provide outreach and training on ACP and other affordable broadband opportunities.

Erie Family Health Centers | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (Telehealth)**Location: Chicago and Greater Chicagoland Area**

With the increased recognition of digital literacy as a social driver of health (SDOH), Erie Family Health Centers expanded their healthcare focus to include screening for digital literacy and access and providing digital navigation support. Providing a 100% cash match for the project, Erie's participation in the DECK program will increase their patients' awareness of and hands-on engagement with the digital tools related directly to their healthcare, including telehealth, accessing online patient portals, promoting best practices around health data security, and connecting eligible patients to the Affordable Connectivity Program to increase home broadband access.

Growing Home | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Greater Englewood

In addition to operating three USDA-certified organic farms, Growing Home opened a full-time computer and job resources center that houses a 10-week CompTIA IT-Technology employment program. Growing Home's programming works to achieve expansion of broadband access, adoption, and use among low-income and under-resourced communities in Chicago, and provides individuals the training and wraparound services needed to be equipped for quality jobs and personal success in the digital world. All programs take place in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, connecting primarily low-income communities of color to the technology job sector. Growing Home provides a free state-of-the-art Computer Resource Center, used by college students, job seekers, and seniors alike who gain basic computer and job training and instruction.

Gads Hill Center | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use**Location: Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn, Pilsen**

Gads Hill Center (GHC) primarily services Black and Latinx youth and their families of underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. It has a long history creating opportunities for children and their families to build a better life through education, access to resources, and community engagement, and serves over 5,000 children and families on Chicago's south and west sides annually. GHC offers the Digital Education for Learning Technology-focused Activities (DELTA) project, a four-week immersive digital skills curriculum for disinvested communities of color.

McLean County | Access Expansion Feasibility Study**Location: Countywide**

As a previous *Accelerate Illinois* program participant, McLean County has been building capacity and leadership toward the goal of universal broadband access throughout the county. Planning and engagement has continued through the countywide stakeholder group, Accelerate Access McLean County, and this grant will support a feasibility study to access options for achieving universal access, including but not limited to formal engagement with broadband service providers to assess the county's preferred path for leveraging federal, state, and local resources toward universal access in alignment with county needs and goals.

Metropolitan Family Services | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center**Location: Calumet**

Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) uses a community-centered service delivery model to strengthen families and communities across Chicago and its suburban communities. MFS Calumet is looking to hire digital navigators at its Financial Opportunity Center in Englewood and the Family Works Program at Altgeld-Gardens-Murray Homes in Riverdale. These navigators will be responsible for local outreach and engagement to increase awareness and enrollment in low-cost broadband programs like ACP, increasing digital skill building, navigation, and use for community members, and expanding access to each site's Community Technology Center resources.

North Lawndale Employment Network | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Cntr**Location: North Lawndale**

North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) is a place-based, non-profit workforce development organization whose mission is to increase the earnings potential of the North Lawndale community and surrounding neighborhoods on Chicago's West Side. Through a state-of-the-art workforce development facility in the heart of North Lawndale, NLEN offers job readiness and occupational skills training, coaching and career pathway development, and wraparound supports including free digital literacy training and community technology center access.

Northwest Side Housing Center | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Belmont Cragin

Northwest Side Housing Center (Northwest Center) is looking to build upon its nationally recognized digital equity initiatives in Belmont Cragin, the fastest-growing Latinx neighborhood in Chicago. Their 1:1 computer basics course curriculum offers a digital literacy education and hands-on experience with side-by-side support. Northwest Center will use funding to support digital literacy coaches, monthly workshops, and ACP application support to community residents.

The QUILT Corporation (2) | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center

Location: North Lawndale and Woodlawn

Based in Naperville, the QUILT Corporation is dedicated to closing the digital divide in the Chicagoland area and helped launch the Chicago Area Broadband Initiative to increase broadband access in economically neglected communities. QUILT is being awarded two DECK grants and will work with various partners to address the stark digital equity challenges experienced by residents of Chicago's North Lawndale and Woodlawn neighborhoods: One grant will be support the North Lawndale Digital Equity Connect Project, focusing on increasing access to affordable broadband internet, standing up a community digital navigator program, and establishing a community technology center; the second grant will be used to implement the Technology Economic Mobility Initiative (TEMI) in the Woodlawn community, collaborating with the Woodlawn Resource Center (WRC), Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), and other partners to provide residents with equitable access to affordable broadband and devices, digital literacy training, and outreach for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

ScaleLit | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Cook County

scaleLIT, a nonprofit literacy and workforce development organization headquartered in Chicago, deploys digital equity strategies through its Northstar Digital Literacy training platform and the Illinois Digital Learning Lab. With this grant, scaleLIT will leverage its current role as the One Stop Operator for the Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 in Cook County and support its Career Pathway Navigators to increase outreach and enrollment in the ACP program and integrating digital literacy training alongside career pathway support in 10 American Job Centers across Cook County.

Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use | ACP Outreach

Location: Southwest Chicago

The Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) brings together 41 member institutions (religious institutions, schools, health and social service providers, and community development corporations) to ensure old and new resident have a voice in decisions that impact their neighborhoods amid large and rapid demographic shifts in Chicago's Southwest communities. Leaders of SWOP have dedicated themselves to building relationships across racial, ethnic, generational, and faith differences, and the organization leads the Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P) anti-violence program. SWOP's goals for their DECK initiative are to build off on their work with the Chicago Connected program, to increase ACP enrollment in Southwest Chicago, and to increase the digital literacy of community stakeholders, including CP4P participants.

TCA Health | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (Telehealth) + Community Tech Center

Location: Chatham, Riverdale

As a federally qualified health center, TCA Health (TCA) believes digital inequity is a social determinant of health, and more specifically, digital determinants of health are a subset of social determinants of health. TCA is looking to establish two Kickstarter Computer Technology Centers—in Chicago's southside neighborhoods of Riverdale and Chatham—where residents battle tremendous structural and social barriers, health disparities, and racial inequities.

These community technology centers will operate within TCA's Employment & Training Department, increasing patient telehealth opportunities.

Touch Gift Foundation | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Archer Heights, Roseland

Touch Gift Foundation (TGF) is a young, BIPOC-led nonprofit service provider aiming to break the poverty cycle, offering programming in the Archer Heights, Near West, Roseland, and Woodlawn communities of Chicago. TGF is looking to build off of its digital literacy training and online adult education programs by providing a mini digital learning lab, digital skills certifications, and expanding its online adult education programs and ACP outreach initiatives.

The Trep School | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach) + Community Tech Center

Location: Danville, Vermilion County

Teague International Corporation (The Trep School) is looking to create the Trep Digital Incubator to train, develop, and coach entrepreneurs in the City of Danville and wider Vermilion County to compete in Illinois' digital economy. With goals to develop a dedicated community technology center inside of its Soar Space Business Center, the Trep School seeks to offer specialized technology trainings and recruit digital navigators to address the technology needs of business.

Women's Business Development Center | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Chicago and Greater Chicagoland Area

Using its proven Hub and Spoke Model, the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) seeks to be a connector in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, disseminating digital knowledge and tools through its comprehensive offerings and expertise. Headquartered in Chicago, WBDC serves low-to-moderate income communities in the Greater Chicagoland Area with dedicated staff and programming toward advancing digital equity and helping to provide underrepresented small business owners with access to the digital tools, business assistance, and funding they need to thrive.

YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Irving Park, Logan Square, Lakeview, Little Village

YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago is looking to extend the organization's long history of strengthening community by connecting all people to their purpose, potential, and each other. With this funding, YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago seeks to strengthen and expand its Digital Equity Initiative, which is dedicated to increasing access to high-speed Internet and promoting digital literacy and navigational skills among residents of low-investment Chicago communities. Specifically, funding will be used to sustain the Y's bilingual IT Helpdesk staff, who provide a direct point of contact to community members seeking internet access, computers, and tech support.

Project Summaries – Wave 2

Asian Human Services DBA Trellus | Community Tech Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Chicago

Trellus, founded in 1978, has been serving Chicago's Northside for over 40 years with a mission to empower immigrants, refugees, and underserved communities. Through the DECK program, Trellus will implement its "Tech for Employment and Empowerment" initiative, designed to meet the growing demand for digital literacy among underserved populations. The project includes free computer literacy classes, access to reliable computer labs, IT courses aimed at providing career pathways in the tech industry, and resources for community members to learn about and enroll in the Affordable

Connectivity Program. This initiative will modernize the organization's computer lab and double the capacity of its existing digital skills programming, thereby enhancing employment opportunities and digital literacy for workforce participants and adult ESL students.

Association House of Chicago | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Greater Humboldt Park

Association House of Chicago has a long history of supporting immigrant communities on Chicago's West Side. It has expanded its mission to provide comprehensive programming in English and Spanish, promote health and wellness, and create opportunities for education and economic advancement. Through the DECK program, Association House seeks to enhance its digital literacy and skills #TechReady program by hiring a digital navigator, promoting enrollment in the ACP Program, and expanding access to its community technology centers.

Board of Trustees of Western Illinois University | Digital Skill Building

Location: Macomb

Western Illinois University (WIU), a primarily undergraduate educational institution, is dedicated to expanding broadband access, adoption, and utilization within the community. Through the DECK program, WIU aims to address the digital literacy gap in West Central Illinois. The project will add digital literacy skills and training to outreach efforts, ensuring that residents not only gain broadband access but also develop the knowledge to use the internet safely and responsibly. WIU will partner with community organizations to host workshops that support ACP enrollment and offer training on internet navigation, social media use, and effective Chromebook utilization in the existing library lending program.

Carlinville Public Library | Community Tech Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Carlinville

Carlinville Public Library, serving the Carlinville community for 95 years, is a vital resource. The library has provided free public computer access since 1997, but the current equipment is outdated and insufficient for today's needs. To address this, the library plans to upgrade its computer lab by acquiring eight new patron computers, a laser printer, and six laptops for in-house classes and clubs. These updates will enable the library to offer improved access to modern technology and productivity software. The project will also enhance digital literacy through two monthly basic skills classes for adults and weekly one-on-one technology help sessions led by the library director and trained staff.

Center for Changing Lives | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Northwest/Southeast Chicago

Center for Changing Lives (CCL) is committed to offering bilingual (English/Spanish) outreach and education for the ACP program through its Northwest and Southeast Chicago offices. The CCL's focus is on increasing internet connectivity and digital skills for its target populations, including low-income Black and Latinx households and the Spanish-speaking immigrant population. The DECK award will enable CCL to expand its Resource Development Coaching and enhance its function as a one-stop service center for skills training and financial education for low-income and Spanish-speaking members of the community.

Chicago Public Library | Community Technology Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Chicago

Chicago Public Library (CPL), dedicated to promoting equity and racial justice across Chicago's diverse neighborhoods, seeks to enhance its digital literacy programs. The library's initiative aims to address the digital divide in underserved communities by providing essential technology and training. The project will equip each of CPL's six district offices with 20 new laptops, along with headphones and mice, to support digital literacy training. This initiative will enable library branches to offer regular workshops on basic digital skills, such as email usage, online safety, and job searching. By improving access to up-to-date instructional equipment, CPL will increase the number of technology programs offered, ensuring that residents across all 81 locations gain the skills needed to navigate the digital world effectively.

Chicago Urban League | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center

Location: South/Southwest Chicago

Founded in 1916, the Chicago Urban League works to achieve equity for Black families and communities through social and economic empowerment. Its Youth Services Center will lead the initiative, serving young people ages 11 to 24 through a digital literacy program and access to a community technology center. The digital literacy program offers basic and advanced classes on software, web navigation, and online workforce development tools. Together with the community tech center, these resources will enable families to use the internet to find resources and employment opportunities for all members of the household.

Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP)

Location: Chinatown

The Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) works with Asian and Asian American residents on digital literacy issues in Chicago. Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking staff members offer one-on-one help and community workshops. The DECK opportunity enables CBCAC to continue and expand its ACP outreach and enrollment programming, helping to reach many Chinatown-area residents—especially the elderly—and assisting them in navigating technology and language barriers.

ConnectLakeCounty/Connect Waukegan NFP | Community Technology Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Lake County

ConnectLakeCounty, formerly ConnectWaukegan NFP, is dedicated to bridging the digital divide in Lake County, IL. Established in 2020 to address the growing need for digital equity, ConnectLakeCounty has already made significant strides in helping over 900 residents access essential technology and support. Their latest initiative aims to enhance mobility and outreach by investing in a mobile unit—equipped with devices, hotspots, and a generator—to bring digital literacy resources directly to underserved communities. This mobile unit will facilitate ACP enrollment, provide free or low-cost devices, and offer digital skills workshops in familiar, accessible locations such as libraries, schools, and community centers. To further support their mission, ConnectLakeCounty will also hire a full-time Digital Program Manager and an additional Digital Navigator to expand their services and build a comprehensive digital skills database.

Digital Leaders Now (LatinX DLN) | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Effingham, Fairmont, Mattoon, Summit

A distinguished and effective former Illinois Connected Communities participant, Digital Leaders Now (LatinX DLN) is a leading organization uplifting Latinx voices in technology-related policies and growing Latino representation in STEM-related careers and entrepreneurship. LatinX DLN's main hub in Summit, along with its presence in West Lawn, Garfield Ridge, Pilsen, Little Village, Mattoon, Effingham, and Fairmont City/East St. Louis, enables the organization to reach several large Hispanic population centers across the state. LatinX DLN offers bilingual in-person and virtual digital literacy and tech workforce training and will continue its work co-hosting community events to provide outreach and training on ACP and other affordable broadband opportunities.

Erie Family Health Centers | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (Telehealth)

Location: Chicago and Greater Chicagoland Area

With the increased recognition of digital literacy as a social driver of health (SDOH), Erie Family Health Centers has expanded its healthcare focus to include screening for digital literacy and access and providing digital navigation support. By providing a 100% cash match for the project, Erie's participation in the DECK program will enhance their patients' awareness of and hands-on engagement with digital tools related directly to their healthcare. This includes telehealth, accessing online patient portals, promoting best practices around health data security, and connecting eligible patients to the Affordable Connectivity Program to increase home broadband access.

Gads Hill Center | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn, Pilsen

Gads Hill Center (GHC) primarily serves Black and Latinx youth and their families from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. With a long history of creating opportunities for children and their families to build a better life through education, access to resources, and community engagement, GHC serves over 5,000 children and families on Chicago's south and west sides annually. GHC offers the Digital Education for Learning Technology-focused Activities (DELTA) project,

a four-week immersive digital skills curriculum designed for disinvested communities of color.

Growing Home | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Greater Englewood

In addition to operating three USDA-certified organic farms, Growing Home has opened a full-time computer and job resources center that houses a 10-week CompTIA IT-Technology employment program. Growing Home's programming aims to expand broadband access, adoption, and use among low-income and under-resourced communities in Chicago, providing individuals with the training and wraparound services needed for quality jobs and personal success in the digital world. All programs take place in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, connecting primarily low-income communities of color to the technology job sector. Growing Home offers a free state-of-the-art Computer Resource Center, used by college students, job seekers, and seniors alike, where they receive basic computer and job training and instruction.

Howard Area Community Center | Outreach, Digital Skill Building

Location: Chicago

Howard Area Community Center (HACC) is committed to advancing digital equity in Rogers Park and the surrounding communities by targeting two critical populations: English language learners/immigrants and formerly incarcerated individuals. HACC plans to hire a full-time Digital Navigator to drive local outreach, increase enrollment in low-cost broadband programs, and enhance digital skill-building. HACC's extensive history of serving over 8,000 clients annually through programs such as Adult Education and the Fresh Start Workforce Program underscores its dedication to supporting these vulnerable groups. By expanding digital literacy resources and providing access to technology through a newly outfitted computer lab, HACC aims to deliver digital literacy classes to 350 students, with 60% achieving certification, and offer technology access to 500 community members. Utilizing the Northstar Digital Literacy Curriculum, the project will address essential computer and software skills and support personal and professional development. This initiative aligns with HACC's mission to stabilize lives and foster community integration through crucial digital skills and resources.

Law and the Fam | Digital Skills Building

Location: Danville and Chicago

Law and The Fam LLC is committed to securing economic justice across Illinois through accessible legal technical assistance programs, specializing in business law and highly regulated industries. The organization will establish a Digital Equity Incubator and Fellowship Program for young adults aged 18 to 25 within our Legit Pathways Academy. This program will address the impacts of the war on drugs, COVID-19, mass incarceration, and opportunity gaps by recruiting from our existing pipeline of LPA Fellows, primarily from Chicago's West Side and South Side neighborhoods. With the grant, the fellows will receive training, mentorship, and coaching to build professional digital toolkits, including creating Career and Business Technology Plans, assessing and enhancing their online presence, and developing Digital Investment and ROI Proposals. LPA is partnered with other organizations aligned with DECK's mission to create equitable opportunities and close the digital divide for young adults at risk of being excluded from the digital economy.

McLean County | Access Expansion Feasibility Study

Location: Countywide

As a previous participant in the Accelerate Illinois program, McLean County has been building capacity and leadership toward the goal of universal broadband access throughout the county. Planning and engagement have continued through the countywide stakeholder group, Accelerate Access McLean County. This grant will support a feasibility study to explore options for achieving universal access, including, but not limited to, formal engagement with broadband service providers to assess the county's preferred path for leveraging federal, state, and local resources toward universal access in alignment with county needs and goals.

Metropolitan Family Services | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center

Location: Calumet

Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) uses a community-centered service delivery model to strengthen families and communities across Chicago and its suburban areas. MFS Calumet is looking to hire digital navigators for its Financial

Opportunity Center in Englewood and the Family Works Program at Altgeld-Gardens-Murray Homes in Riverdale. These navigators will be responsible for local outreach and engagement to increase awareness and enrollment in low-cost broadband programs like ACP, enhance digital skill-building and navigation for community members, and expand access to each site's Community Technology Center resources.

North Lawndale Employment Network | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center

Location: North Lawndale

North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) is a place-based, non-profit workforce development organization with a mission to increase the earning potential of the North Lawndale community and surrounding neighborhoods on Chicago's West Side. Through a state-of-the-art workforce development facility in the heart of North Lawndale, NLEN offers job readiness and occupational skills training, coaching and career pathway development, and wraparound support, including free digital literacy training and access to a community technology center.

Northwest Side Housing Center | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Belmont Cragin Northwest Side

The Housing Center (Northwest Center) is looking to build upon its nationally recognized digital equity initiatives in Belmont Cragin, the fastest-growing Latinx neighborhood in Chicago. Their 1:1 computer basics course curriculum provides digital literacy education and hands-on experience with side-by-side support. Northwest Center will use the funding to support digital literacy coaches, monthly workshops, and ACP application assistance for community residents.

Partnership for a Connected IL | Feasibility Study, Digital Skill Building

Location: Springfield

Partnership for a Connected Illinois (PCI) aims to enhance K-12 schools' ability to support mental health through digital and teletherapy resources, addressing validated barriers such as digital access and equity challenges. The program will tackle these issues at three levels: addressing the overarching societal challenge, focusing on equitable broadband access to digital mental health resources, and implementing community-specific pilots for scalable and equitable statewide adoption. Funding will support the identification and implementation of pilots in selected counties, with results guiding broader adoption across Illinois. The project aims to meet DECK priorities by building digital skills, expanding access, and overcoming broadband and device access barriers.

Pathlights Human Services | Community Tech Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Palos Heights

Pathlights aims to address the significant issue of internet underuse among older adults, which affects their ability to reduce loneliness, manage finances, and access telehealth services. Recognizing this need, Pathlights developed the TechWise program to improve digital literacy among seniors. The program includes increasing access through a marketing campaign, referrals for affordable internet connections, and provision of low-cost devices through partnerships with AT&T, Comcast, and PCs for People. TechWise features a six-part technology instruction series for adults aged 60 and older, focusing on building digital skills through small, supportive classes. The program includes a student screener to tailor instruction, a resource directory, and comprehensive technology courses covering basics, troubleshooting, online security, social media, and more. The successful pilot demonstrated high satisfaction and effectiveness, with participants achieving their goals and forming new connections.

Phalanx Public Library | Community Technology Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Chicago

Phalanx has established a community technology center in Chicago, supported by the SGA Broadband grant and the Chicago Connected program, to address the technological and economic needs of the community. The center's outreach and enrollment campaign for the Affordable Connectivity Program includes one-on-one engagement, social media content, print ads, email marketing, newsletters, and distribution of flyers at community events. To address affordability, Phalanx collaborates with the Chicago Device Pledge to provide refurbished devices to low-income families. Impact is measured through both quantitative and qualitative data, including curriculum completion rates, program effectiveness, ACP outreach efforts, and improvements in digital equity. The goal is for participants to achieve proficiency in digital skills,

secure internet access, and reduce inequities, ultimately improving their quality of life.

Region 1 Joint Planning Comm | Feasibility Study

Location: Rockford

The R1 Planning Council, focused on enhancing quality of life and economic development in Northern Illinois, is dedicated to extending broadband access in alignment with its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) goal. This initiative seeks to address broadband service gaps in rural areas of Winnebago and Boone Counties, which are crucial for local business growth, education, and access to governmental and job search services. The program will support this effort by funding a consultant to map existing broadband infrastructure, identify service gaps, and collaborate with public and private stakeholders to prioritize expansion. The project aims to create a comprehensive map of current infrastructure and assess the feasibility of expanding broadband to underserved areas. The plan will detail associated costs, timelines, business models, and funding mechanisms, building on previous planning efforts. The selected consultant will work with R1 and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan, providing guidance on funding opportunities, partnerships, and service to rural areas. This approach will pave the way for broadband infrastructure expansion, increasing access and strengthening regional economic resilience.

ScaleLit | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use

Location: Cook County

scaleLIT, a nonprofit literacy and workforce development organization headquartered in Chicago, deploys digital equity strategies through its Northstar Digital Literacy training platform and the Illinois Digital Learning Lab. With this grant, scaleLIT will leverage its current role as the One-Stop Operator for the Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 in Cook County to support its Career Pathway Navigators in increasing outreach and enrollment in the ACP program. Additionally, scaleLIT will integrate digital literacy training alongside career pathway support in 10 American Job Centers across Cook County.

Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use | ACP Outreach

Location: Southwest Chicago

The Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) brings together 41 member institutions—including religious institutions, schools, health and social service providers, and community development corporations—to ensure that both long-time and new residents have a voice in decisions that impact their neighborhoods amid large and rapid demographic shifts in Chicago's Southwest communities. Leaders of SWOP have dedicated themselves to building relationships across racial, ethnic, generational, and faith differences, and the organization leads the Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P) anti-violence program. SWOP's goals for their DECK initiative are to build on their work with the Chicago Connected program, increase ACP enrollment in Southwest Chicago, and enhance the digital literacy of community stakeholders, including CP4P participants.

Southwestern Illinois College | Digital Skills Building

Location: Belleville

The mission and vision of Southwestern Illinois College - Adult Education and Literacy (SWIC-AEL) focus on providing lifelong learning by ensuring access to educational services for all individuals. SWIC-AEL aims to address the state's skills gap through digital literacy, contextualized adult education, and supportive services, helping adult learners meet their literacy and English language needs, enter the workforce, and pursue post-secondary education or self-sufficient employment.

St Augustine College | Community Tech Center, Digital Skill Building

Location: Little Village and South Lawndale

St. Augustine College seeks to address digital inequities through infrastructure investments, affordable broadband connections, devices, and digital literacy training in Little Village and South Lawndale. The college and its partners will provide laptops and broadband subscriptions at no cost, with no expectation of return. The primary goal is to offer broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to communities with significant gaps in digital inclusion. Designed for long-term impact, the project aims to advance digital skills assessment and training beyond the initial period, with findings and resources shared to contribute to the broader discussion on digital access and equity.

TCA Health | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (Telehealth) + Community Tech Center**Location: Chatham, Riverdale**

As a federally qualified health center, TCA Health (TCA) believes that digital inequity is a social determinant of health, and that digital determinants of health are a subset of social determinants of health. TCA aims to establish two Kickstarter Computer Technology Centers in Chicago's South Side neighborhoods of Riverdale and Chatham, where residents face significant structural and social barriers, health disparities, and racial inequities. These community technology centers will operate within TCA's Employment & Training Department, increasing patient telehealth opportunities.

Teague International Corporation d/b/a The Trep School | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach) + Community Tech Center**Location: Danville, Vermilion County**

Teague International Corporation (The Trep School) aims to create the Trep Digital Incubator to train, develop, and coach entrepreneurs in the City of Danville and the wider Vermilion County, helping them compete in Illinois' digital economy. With the goal of establishing a dedicated community technology center within its Soar Space Business Center, the Trep School seeks to offer specialized technology training and recruit digital navigators to address the technology needs of businesses.

The Center: Resources for Teaching & Learning | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)**Location: Hoffman Estates, Palatine, Rolling Meadows**

The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning will serve as the fiscal agent for the United Palatine Coalition (UPC) to enhance digital equity efforts in Palatine, Rolling Meadows, Hoffman Estates, Arlington Heights, and Inverness. The initiative will support UPC's bilingual community navigator and focus on expanding outreach and awareness to ACP-eligible households. The funding will help UPC build on the digital equity work developed through its participation in the Illinois Connected Communities program.

The QUILT Corporation (2) | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use + Community Tech Center**Location: North Lawndale and Woodlawn Based in Naperville,**

The QUILT Corporation is dedicated to closing the digital divide in the Chicagoland area and helped launch the Chicago Area Broadband Initiative to increase broadband access in economically neglected communities. QUILT is being awarded two DECK grants and will work with various partners to address the significant digital equity challenges experienced by residents of Chicago's North Lawndale and Woodlawn neighborhoods. One grant will support the North Lawndale Digital Equity Connect Project, focusing on increasing access to affordable broadband internet, establishing a community digital navigator program, and creating a community technology center. The second grant will be used to implement the Technology Economic Mobility Initiative (TEMI) in the Woodlawn community, in collaboration with the Woodlawn Resource Center (WRC), Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), and other partners, to provide residents with equitable access to affordable broadband and devices, digital literacy training, and outreach for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Touch Gift Foundation | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use**Location: Archer Heights, Roseland**

The Touch Gift Foundation (TGF) is a young, BIPOC-led nonprofit service provider aiming to break the cycle of poverty by offering programming in the Archer Heights, Near West, Roseland, and Woodlawn communities of Chicago. TGF seeks to build on its digital literacy training and online adult education programs by providing a mini digital learning lab, digital skills certifications, and expanding its online adult education programs and ACP outreach initiatives.

Women's Business Development Center | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use**Location: Chicago and Greater Chicagoland Area**

Using its proven Hub and Spoke Model, the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) aims to be a connector in the entrepreneurial ecosystem by disseminating digital knowledge and tools through its comprehensive offerings and

expertise. Headquartered in Chicago, WBDC serves low-to-moderate income communities in the Greater Chicagoland Area with dedicated staff and programming focused on advancing digital equity and providing underrepresented small business owners with access to digital tools, business assistance, and funding needed to thrive.

YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago | Digital Skill Building, Navigation, and Use (ACP Outreach)

Location: Irving Park, Logan Square, Lakeview, Little Village

The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago aims to extend its long history of strengthening community by connecting people to their purpose, potential, and each other. With this funding, the YMCA seeks to enhance and expand its Digital Equity Initiative, which is dedicated to increasing access to high-speed Internet and promoting digital literacy and navigational skills among residents of under-invested Chicago communities. Specifically, the funding will be used to sustain the YMCA's bilingual IT Helpdesk staff, who provide a direct point of contact for community members seeking internet access, computers, and tech support.

