

Illinois Digital Equity Capacity (IDEC) Grant Series

Project Type: Digital Navigation Programs

February 14, 2025



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Agenda

- IDEC Review – 10 min
- Digital Navigator(s) Overview – 5 min
- Nathalia Cardenes, Chicago State University ABE-LINC – 10 min
- Key Crandall, Lake County Digital Growth Initiative –10 min
- Additional examples of DN Programs – ~5 min
- Things to consider – 5 min
- Q&A – 10 min
- Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant (IDEC) Resources – 5 min



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Objectives

- Learn about IDEC and review grant processes
- Understand/Learn about IDEC project type: Digital Navigator(s) - Who, What & Why
- Hear and learn from organizations running digital navigation programs
- Things to consider when adding a DN to your organization



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Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant (IDEC) Overview



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Digital Equity and Inclusion

Digital Equity: The condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.

Digital Inclusion: The activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies such as:

- Reliable broadband
- Devices
- Digital skills training
- Tech support
- Privacy and cybersecurity

When we use the word equity, we accurately acknowledge the systemic barriers that must be dismantled before achieving equitable outcome for all.



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Illinois Broadband Team

The IOB was founded in 2019, yet is now one of the 50 state broadband offices tasked with **carrying out \$1B+ in federal broadband infrastructure and digital equity programs**

- Connect Illinois Broadband Grant Program (2020 - 2024)
- Broadband Equity Access & Deployment (BEAD) Program (2024 - 2029)
- Digital Equity Act Capacity Grant (2024 - 2029)



Illinois Office of Broadband

Grants Management

- Grants Manager
- Asst. Grants Manager (3)
- Fiscal Liaison

Compliance

- Compliance Manager

Community Engagement

- Community Engagement Manager (3)

Policy


- Policy Analyst
- Illini Science Policy Scholar



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Illinois Broadband Lab

University of Illinois System

- Mapping & Data
- Regional Engagement
- **Digital Navigator Network** 

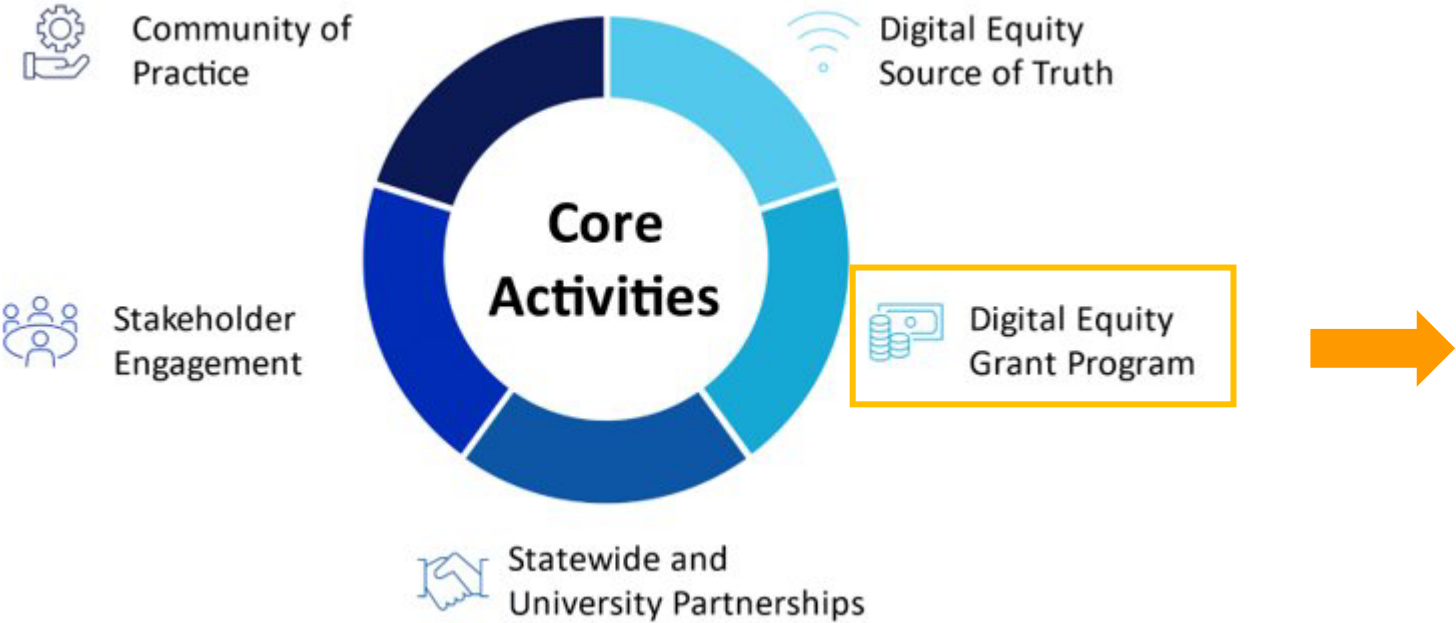
State Digital Equity Plan Vision

- Ensuring universal access to high-speed broadband that is affordable, reliable, and fully scalable for residences, businesses, and community anchor institutions (CAIs) across Illinois by 2030.
- Leveraging new and existing resources to advance the adoption of internet use through targeted digital-inclusion strategies and sustainable broadband-equity outcomes to help communities identify and address current gaps in broadband equity.
- *Empowering all Illinoisans to use and participate fully in an increasingly digital economy and society.*



Illinois State Digital Equity Plan

The **2021 Digital Equity Act** provides over \$30 million to Illinois to implement the State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP). The goals of the plan are to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy. Core Activities of the SDEP include:



Creating a statewide **Digital Equity Grant Program (IDEC)** is one of the Plan’s Core Activities



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Timeline and Funding for State Digital Equity Grant Program

All Deadlines
Are Exactly 5:00 PM
CDT

February 3
NOFO Launch

March 20
Wave 1 Grant
Applications Due

May 8
Wave 2 Grant
Applications Due

**3-year period of
performance**

**January – February
2025**

Capacity building and
education among
prospective
applicants

March 3
Wave 1 Early
Review Deadline

April 18
Wave 2 Early
Review Deadline

Est. Summer 2025
Funding distributed to
grantees and work begins

Total amount of funding expected to be awarded is up to \$13,500,000. Awards will range from \$30,000 to \$300,000 on an annual basis, for a three-year term.



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National Telecommunications and Information Administration (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

80% of Illinoisans are part of these identity groups and communities disproportionately impacted by digital inequity



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Eligible Entities

A **foundation, corporation, institution, or association** that is a not-for-profit entity and not a school.

A **partnership** between any of the entities described above.

An **Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization**

A local **educational agency**

Entities that carry out **workforce development programs**

Political subdivision, agency including those supervising adult education and literacy activities or for providing public housing

Community anchor institution, meaning a public school, housing authority, library, healthcare provider, higher education institutions and other nonprofit or community support organizations.



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IDEC Project Types

Digital Literacy and Skill Building	Classes, workshops, coaching, or other learning opportunities to help Covered Populations build digital skills.
Device Distribution	Distribution of devices, including laptops, computers, tablets, or other devices that address barriers faced by Covered Populations.
Digital Navigator(s)	Member of a community trained and designated to help Covered Populations enroll in high-speed internet service, navigate technology challenges, obtain devices, and find digital skill building opportunities.
Computer Center	Establish, improve, or expand community spaces with no-cost access to computers and the internet.
Local Broadband Planning	Resources for communities to create their own roadmaps to expanding broadband connectivity. This includes defining their access goals, assessing market and consumer dynamics, engaging internet providers, and exploring public-private partnerships and funding options.

*One application may cover one or more project type.
Please refer to NOFO for details on each project type.*

Application will require...

- Demonstrated Community Need and Service of Covered Populations
- Capacity of the Eligible Applicant
- Quality of the Proposal, including Alignment to State Digital Equity Plan
 - Particular Alignment Topics Noted in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO, page 10) and Program Application
- Support from the Community
- Budget
- Plan for Sustainability



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Grant Waves

All Deadlines
Are Exactly 5:00 PM
CDT

March 3
Wave 1 *Early Review*
Deadline

March 20
Wave 1 Grant
Applications Due,
Wave 2 Open

April 18
Wave 2 *Early Review*
Deadline

May 8
Wave 2 Grant
Applications Due

- Additional focused outreach will be conducted following **Wave 1** to ensure representation in regions and Covered Populations
- Applications that are not selected in **Wave 1** will carry over to **Wave 2** for evaluation.
- IDEC aims to support programming statewide, with a consideration for geographic diversity and awards made proportional to the regions with high portions of Covered Populations.



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Project Type: Digital Navigator(s)



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IDEC Project Type:

Digital Navigator(s)

What are Digital Navigators?

Digital navigators are individuals who address the whole digital inclusion process — home connectivity, devices, and digital skills — with community members *through repeated interactions*.

Who are Digital Navigators?

- Members of the Community They Serve
- Empathetic
- Problem Solvers
- Culturally Competent
- Service Oriented
- Patient
- Reliable



Do these characteristics sound familiar?



IDEC Project Type:

Digital Navigator(s)

What do Digital Navigators do?

- Assess Goal & Needs
- Evaluate & Discuss Solutions
- Refer to (or provide) a Relevant Resource (s)
 - *Digital Skills Training*
 - *Appropriate Devices*
 - *Affordable Broadband*
- Check In & Evaluate Progress

Do these activities sound familiar?



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IDEC Project Type:

Digital Navigator(s)

Why do YOU need Digital Navigators in your organization?

- Digital Navigators provide **life-enhancing services** to your *client / customer / resident / patrons / patient* as it relates to **access** to computers and/or relevant technical devices, acquiring **internet connectivity** in the home, and **support for building** digital skills.
- Having a digital navigator present providing **consistent digital inclusion programming** brings an extra resource to your organization that helps to **build trust** in your community.
- Adding **digital inclusion programming** to your organization will assist your organization with achieving its vision, mission and goals.

Familiar Roles: Case Manager, Community Health Worker, Library Staff Members, Social Worker



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Program Spotlight:

Advancing Broadband Equity through Learning Intermediaries Neighborhoods in Chicago (ABE-LINC)

Chicago State University



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Advancing Broadband Equity through Learning Intermediaries Neighborhoods in Chicago

Nathalia Cardenas and Pamesha Robinson
Chicago State University



CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS CHICAGO



Northern Illinois
University

Funded By A Grant From the National Telecommunications and Information Administration

About ABE-LINC

ABE-LINC is to use a high-touch, participatory Community Navigator program embedded within three MSIs and a supportive network of community partners to promote a culture of transformative connectivity within priority anchor communities and among priority populations in the City of Chicago.

Mission

- **ABE-LINC is aimed to tackle the digital divide within the 15 mile radius of CSU by expanding broadband, distributing devices, and improving digital literacy for anchoring residents through its digital navigators conducting community outreach and training**

Participants

- **Long-term unemployed**
- **Transitory Undocumented Workers**
- **Single Parents**
- **Returning Citizens**

Programs

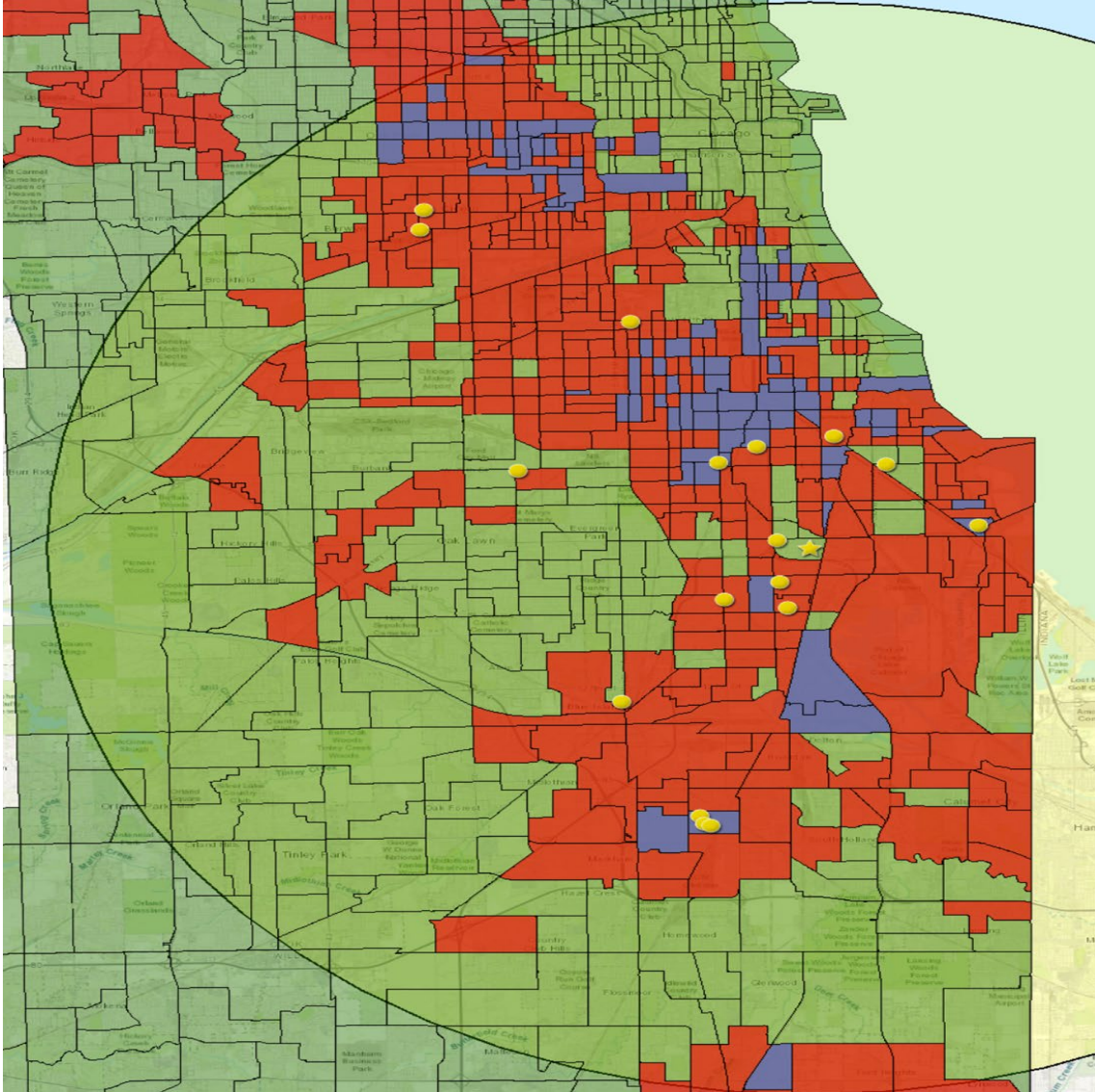
- **6-8 week Digital Literacy Courses at Partner Sites**
- **Distribution Events for Recipients (ONLY)**
- **In-person and Virtual Workshops**
 - **Cybersecurity**
 - **Opening Small Businesses**
 - **Financial Wellness**
 - **Improving Digital Skills**

Structure of Navigator Program

MSI Partners

- **CSU, NEIU, UIC**
- **Trainings: DL; RL; CL; SBL; CCL**
- **Role of navigator: (1) serving as role models to the student navigators (2) reaching out to and engaging with both community partners and the community beneficiaries. 3) Delivery of training**
- **15 mile radius**
 - **Each navigator has specific targeted areas**

Targeted Areas



- **Eligible Census Tracts**
- **Built partnerships with existing organizations in eligible areas.**
- **Digital navigator provides trainings at 3 sites**

Training provided by Digital Navigators

- NorthStar Platform
- Connectivity
- Cyber Safety
- Job Search
- Navigate Resources
- Financial Literacy
- Troubleshoot
- How to Navigate Amazon, Spotify and other apps
- Emotional Intelligence
- Parenting Skills by using the Milestones Charts

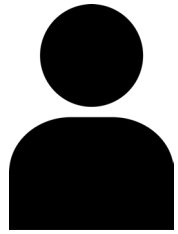
Funding Sources

- **NTIA - Connecting Minority Communities**
- **Collaborations with State Funding**
- **Working directly with Institution Foundation**
 - **Donations**

Challenges

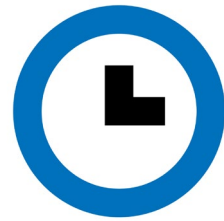
- **Sustainability of funding of the program and continuation of DL services for beneficiaries**
- **Climate in our communities- critical to build trust**
- **Bureaucratic processes at the federal level and internally on campus- setting timelines and keep up with procedures**

ABE-LINC Milestones



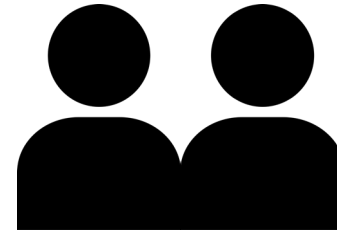
346

Participants



1,931

Hours



3,432

Engagements



368

Devices

ABE-LINC Partners:



“The entire workshop topics and all the instructors were Excellent. I learned something new in each workshop and I really do appreciate this program. Thank you.”

Digital Navigator Spotlight







Digital Navigator

Pamesha Robinson

Email: probin31@csu.edu



Project Manager

Nathalia Cardenas, M.Ed.

Email: ncarde20@csu.edu

Program Spotlight: Digital Navigator Program Lake County Digital Growth



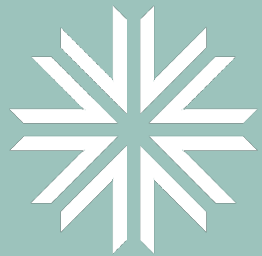
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LAKE COUNTY
**DIGITAL
GROWTH
INITIATIVE**



LakeCounty

Lake County, IL Digital Navigator Program

February 14th, 2025

Keay Crandall, Lake County Digital Equity
Manager

- Summary of the Lake County Broadband and Digital Equity Action Plan and Strategies
 - Current Digital Growth Initiative Funding
 - Budget Overview
- Strategy 5-1 Digital Navigators
 - External Digital Navigator programs
 - Internal Digital Navigator programs
- Digital Skills Curriculum
- Reiew of Digital Navigator Program Challenges
- Get in touch with us!

Lake County Digital Equity Plan



- 1-1 Support BEAD Process
- 2-1 Implement a Dig Once Policy
- 3-1 Pilot Public Wi-Fi Hotspots
- 4-1 Device Distribution Campaign
- 4-2 ACP Outreach & Enrollment Campaign
- 5-1 Expand Digital Navigators
- 5-2 Coordinate Digital Literacy Programming
- 6-1 Hire a Digital Equity Manager and Broadband Coordinator
- 6-2 Create a County-led Broadband Digital Equity Coalition
- 6-3 Launch a Digital Equity Resource Website
- 6-4 Outreach and Marketing Campaign
- 7-1 Establish a Digital Equity Fund

**View the Lake County
Broadband and Digital Equity
Action Plan at
lakecountyl.gov/broadband
or scan the code below**



Lake County Digital Equity Plan: Funding



American Rescue Plan Act

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law to provide federal funding to local governments for response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is in addition to the \$121.5 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds that Lake County allocated in 2020 to support our residents, communities, taxing districts, businesses, and countywide services in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ARPA provided \$135.2 million in direct local recovery assistance to Lake County Government. The funding that Lake County received is supporting projects and programs to improve lives, solve problems, and make our County more resilient to future challenges.

The Lake County Board has remained committed to both addressing immediate pandemic response needs and pursuing long-term equity-informed initiatives. Lake County's focus has been to maximize strategic investments that benefit residents for years to come by funding improved outcomes rather than short-term fixes. Learn more by viewing Lake County's annual recovery plans.



Budget Overview



Lake County Digital Growth Initiative Budget	
Support the BEAD Process	\$ 884.16
Implement a Dig Once Policy	-
Public Wi-Fi Pilot	\$ 800,000.00
ACP Outreach Campaign	-
Device Distribution Program	\$ 2,200,000.00
Digital Navigators Including Internal and External	\$ 1,777,713.25
Digital Literacy Program Coordination	\$ 44,805.00
Broadband and Digital Equity Coalition	\$ 36,460.00
Digital Equity Staff	\$ 659,325.97
Outreach Marketing Campaign	\$ 300,000.00
Digital Equity Asset Inventory Website	-
Digital Equity Fund	-
Total Budget	\$ 5,819,188.38

Initial DGI Program

Budget: \$11,945,303.00

Budget from August: \$5,947,783.00

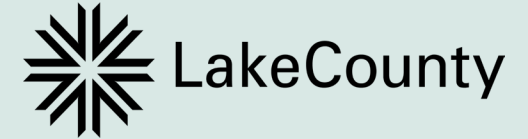
Funds Remaining after Final Budget that went into different ARPA projects: **\$128,594.62**

All funds are contracted as of December 2024

Sustainability Challenge: This funding is available until December 31, 2026

Procurement Challenge: Maintaining Compliance with ARPA and County Policies

External Digital Navigator Programs



External Digital Navigators

- Developed competitive RFP process to deploy county-wide Digital Navigator Program
- RFP released May 16th, 2024
- Two agreements were executed with external organizations
 - *Sustainability Challenge: agreements are currently funded through December 31, 2026*
- Training and deployment of Digital Navigators throughout the County began Fall 2024


Training and Program Development

- Lake County Digital Navigator Implementation Guide
- Community Tech Network



[Online Courses - Community Tech Network](#)

The African American Museum, Waukegan, IL



The African American Museum *at the England Manor* Learn-to-Earn Genealogical Research Project Navigating Ancestry Research Tools!



The African American Museum at the England
Manor & the Zion Genealogical Society Presents

"Exploring Ancestry Through Digital Experiences"

Thursday, January 23, 2025
8-Week, In-Person Classes
Thursdays at 11:00am-1:00pm
The Waukegan Public Library
128 N County Street
Waukegan, IL 60085

**Come Learn About Your Ancestry
While Earning a Free Computer!**

Seats are limited and filling up fast, so don't wait!
Give us a call to reserve your spot (224) 409-3421



2/25/2025

GENEALOGY CLASSES AT THE MUSEUM

The Museum is hosting a second, "Ancestry Through Digital Experiences" class. Participants in the class will explore their ancestry, increase their technological skills, and earn a free laptop upon completion of this class. Classes will begin on Thursday, January 23, 2025. Please contact the museum to register for this event.



Highwood Library & Community Center, Highwood, IL



Computer Basics • Clases de Computación Basica

February 3 @ 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm [Recurring Event \(See all\)](#)

This class will be offered in Spanish and will focus on exploring Google Drive. Please contact Aurora at adultlit@highwoodlibrary.org for more information and registration.

...

Esta clase se ofrecerá en español y se centrará en explorar Google Drive. Comuníquese con Aurora en adultlit@highwoodlibrary.org para obtener más información e inscripción.

Explaining Genealogy through Digital Experiences • Explicando la Genealogía a través de Experiencias Digitales

February 20 @ 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

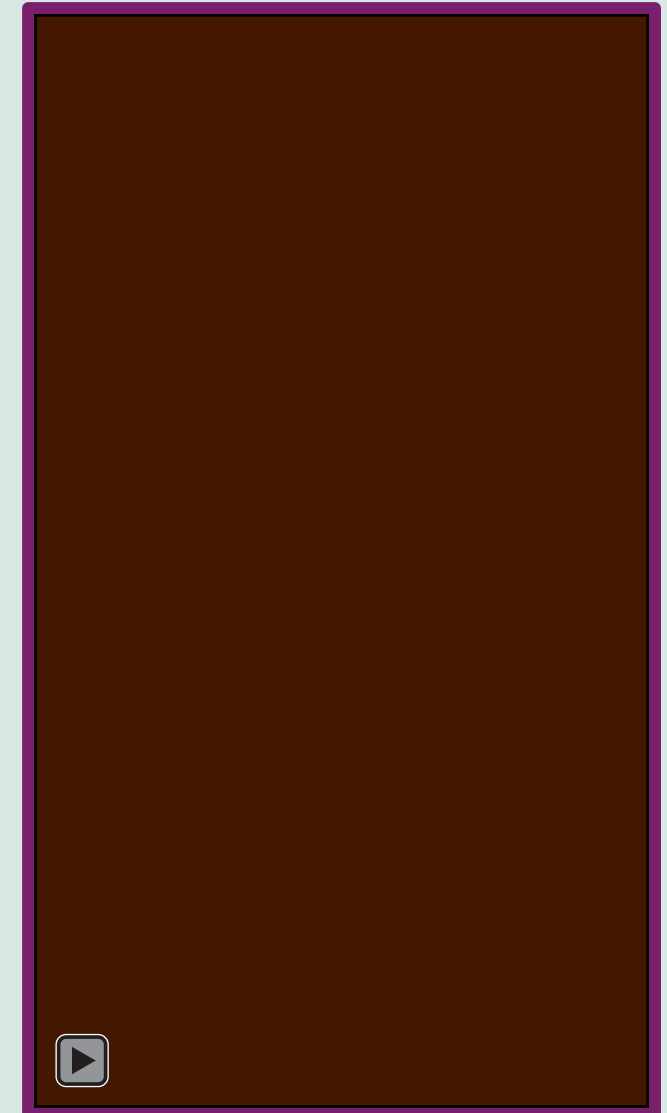
In this hands-on session led by Sylvia England, you will learn how to use online resources to uncover your family's history.

...

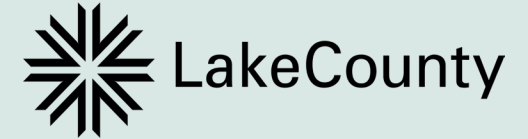
En esta sesión práctica dirigida por Sylvia England, aprenderá cómo utilizar re



Aurora Santos,
Digital Navigator at
Highwood Library &
Community Center



Internal Digital Navigator Programs



- **Chandes Atkins**, Digital Navigator Coordinator, to directly facilitate programming across the County. Supports the Digital Equity Manager with scheduling/coordinating Digital Navigator programming.
- **Hector Guifarro**, Digital Navigator, assigned to Workforce Development out of the Lake County Job Center in Waukegan, IL
- **Genesis Avila**, Digital Navigator, assigned to the Health Department out of Midlakes Health Center in Round Lake Beach, IL

Looking ahead: Plan to hire additional Digital Navigators in March 2025

Procurement Challenge and Administrative Benefit: Working with external hiring agency to recruit and onboard Digital Equity Staff

[Lake County, IL - Digital Navigator\(s\) | MGT \(formerly GovHR\)](#)

2/25/2025



Digital Skills

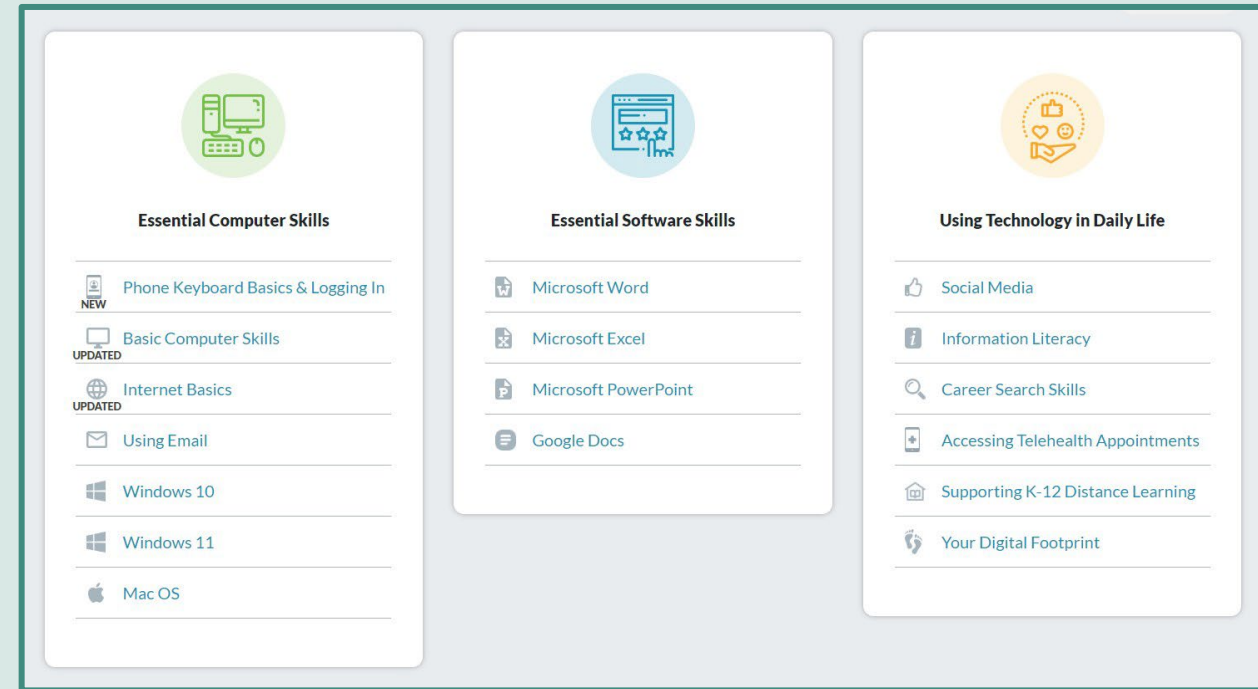


Vendor selected through RFP process: Northstar Online Learning (NSOL)

- 30 licenses to be distributed to Community Partner Organizations

Looking ahead: Strategy to distribute licenses to Community Partners is in development

- Online, self-guided assessments measure mastery of basic skills in each of 17 areas.
- Classroom curricula provide detailed lesson plans for teachers and can be used remotely or in person.
- Northstar Online Learning (NSOL) provides individualized online instruction and practice.



Get in touch with us!



- Keay Crandall, Digital Equity Manager
 - Kcrandall@lakecountyil.gov
 - Phone: 847-377-4526
- Lake County Digital Navigator Program
 - digitalnavigators@lakecountyil.gov
 - Phone: 847-377-3442
- Lake County Broadband and Digital Equity Team
 - Broadband@lakecountyil.gov

Lake County Digital Equity Coalition

Next meeting will be held virtually
Tuesday, February 25th, 12:30 – 1:30PM

Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8473774526>



More Digital Navigation Programs

Chicago Housing Authority

- [Digital Inclusion Associates Program](#)

Chicago Public Library

- [Cyber Navigator Program](#)

Lead for America | American Connection Corps

- [AmeriCorps Service Program](#)

YMCA Chicago

- [Digital Navigator Program](#)



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Digital Navigator Projects

Consider these things when crafting your DN program

- **Digital Navigator vs Digital Skills/Literacy Instructor**
- **Position Description:** Clearly defined
- **Training/Resources**
- **Integration into current programming:** That's digital inclusion!
- **Employee vs Contracting:** Which will serve your organization AND your clients better?
- **New Hire vs Current Staff:** Do you need a new staff person, or can you build capacity with current staff?
- **Full-Time Employee vs Part-Time Employee:** It depends.
- **Wages and Benefits**
- **Sustainability:** What happens after the funding ends?
- **State Digital Equity Plan Goals:** Will your Digital Navigator Program aligned with Illinois' SDEP goals?



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Digital Equity Resources

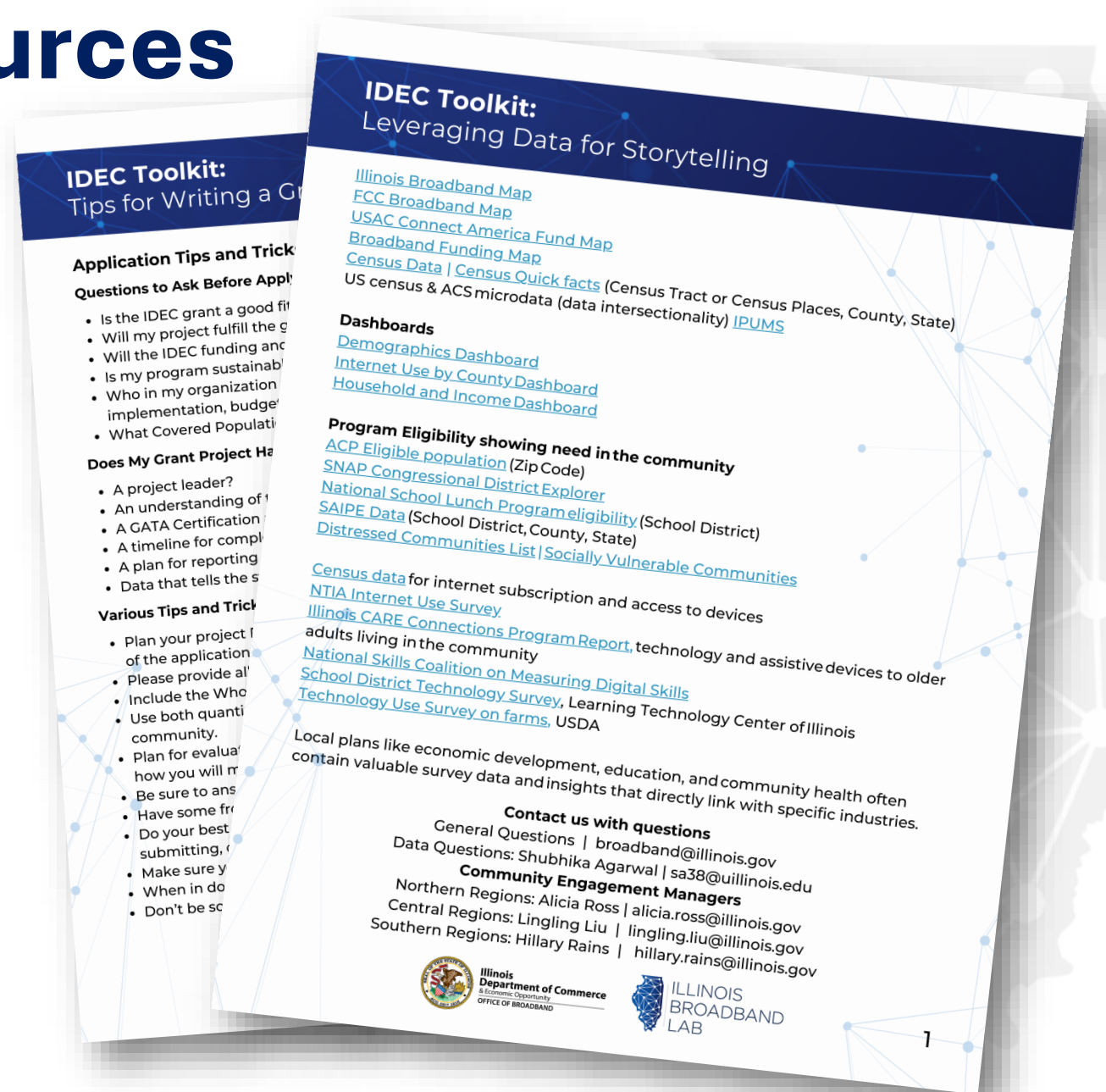
Illinois Office of Broadband Website

- Digital Equity Act
- Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Previous Webinars
- *How to Write a Great Grant Application*

Illinois State Digital Equity Plan

Illinois Broadband Newsletter and Partner Sign Up

IDEC Toolkits



IDEC Technical Assistance

IDEC Office Hours: Tuesdays at 10:00 am & Fridays at 2:00 pm

Enter the virtual office using this link:

<https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=md69fe1c061a002f04fa8a69655c74cf0>

Find all upcoming events and grant deadlines on the Illinois Office of Broadband [Events Calendar!](#)



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Q & A

**For specific questions email:
broadband@illinois.gov**



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Get support and stay in the know!

Not sure where to start? Email broadband@illinois.gov

For questions, guidance, or to schedule a guest presentation, contact your **Illinois Office of Broadband Community Engagement Manager**:

- Northern Region: alicia.Ross@illinois.gov, 217-720-8149
- Central Region: lingling.Liu@illinois.gov, 217-720-7718
- Southern Region: hillary.Rains@illinois.gov, 217-720-4768

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View our website dceo.illinois.gov/broadband and [other helpful links](#)



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