Digital Equity Capacity Grant Webinar Series

Equity in Digital Inclusion Project Implementation

August 7, 2024

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Presenters

Lingling Liu
Community Engagement Manager
Illinois Office of Broadband

Katie Blank
Senior Manager
Access Living

Reyna Rodriguez
Digital Learning
Program Manager
Northwest Center

Rachel Rush
Technology Coordinator
Access Living

About Me

Lingling Liu (She/Her)

Community Engagement Manager, Illinois Office of Broadband

Masters in Communication

Masters in Translation and Interpretation

Graduate Certificate in Entrepreneurship

Certified Medical Interpreter in Mandarin Chinese

Certified Diversity Professional CDP®

Over 7 years' experience in health (event facilitation,

community health, and equity, diversity and inclusion)

Business Development experience in China

Passion in immigrant advocacy and social justice

Part 2 Digital Equity Capacity Building Series

Wednesdays, 1-2pm

July 31 - **Building Digital Inclusion Coalitions**

August 7 - **Equity in Digital Inclusion Project Implementation**

August 14 - **Preparing for Grants – Deeper Dive into Grant Writing**

August 21 – **Leveraging Data for Storytelling**

Register at https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/digital-equity-grants-capacity-building-series

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Objectives

- Understand key concepts and terms around equity and access

- Understand the unique needs of each covered population and ways to remove access barriers and reduce disparities

- Learn about strategies and tips on equitable implementation of digital inclusion projects

Agenda

- Context – 8 min

- Terms and Concepts around Equity – 15 min

- Equity Considerations and Best Practices for Serving Covered Populations – 15 min

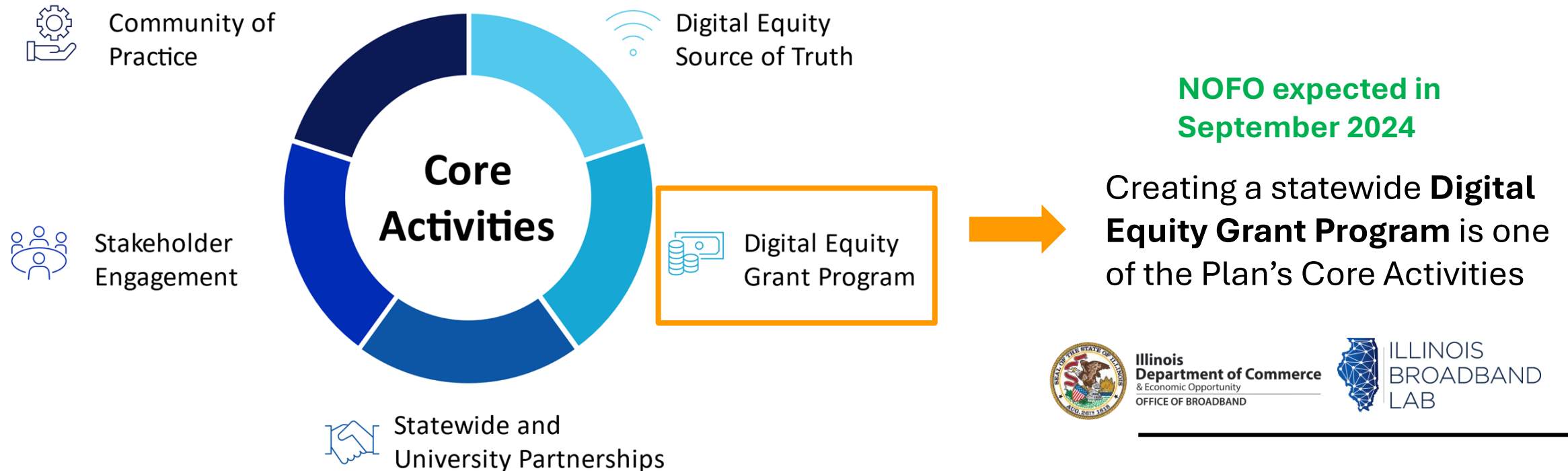- Partner Practice Spotlight – 16 min

- Q&A and Wrap Up – 6 min

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Context

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.

Community of Practice

Stakeholder Engagement

Core Activities

Digital Equity Source of Truth

Digital Equity Grant Program

Statewide and University Partnerships

NOFO expected in September 2024

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

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Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Tentative Grant Project Types

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.

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

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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 disproportionally impacted by digital inequity

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Terms and Concepts

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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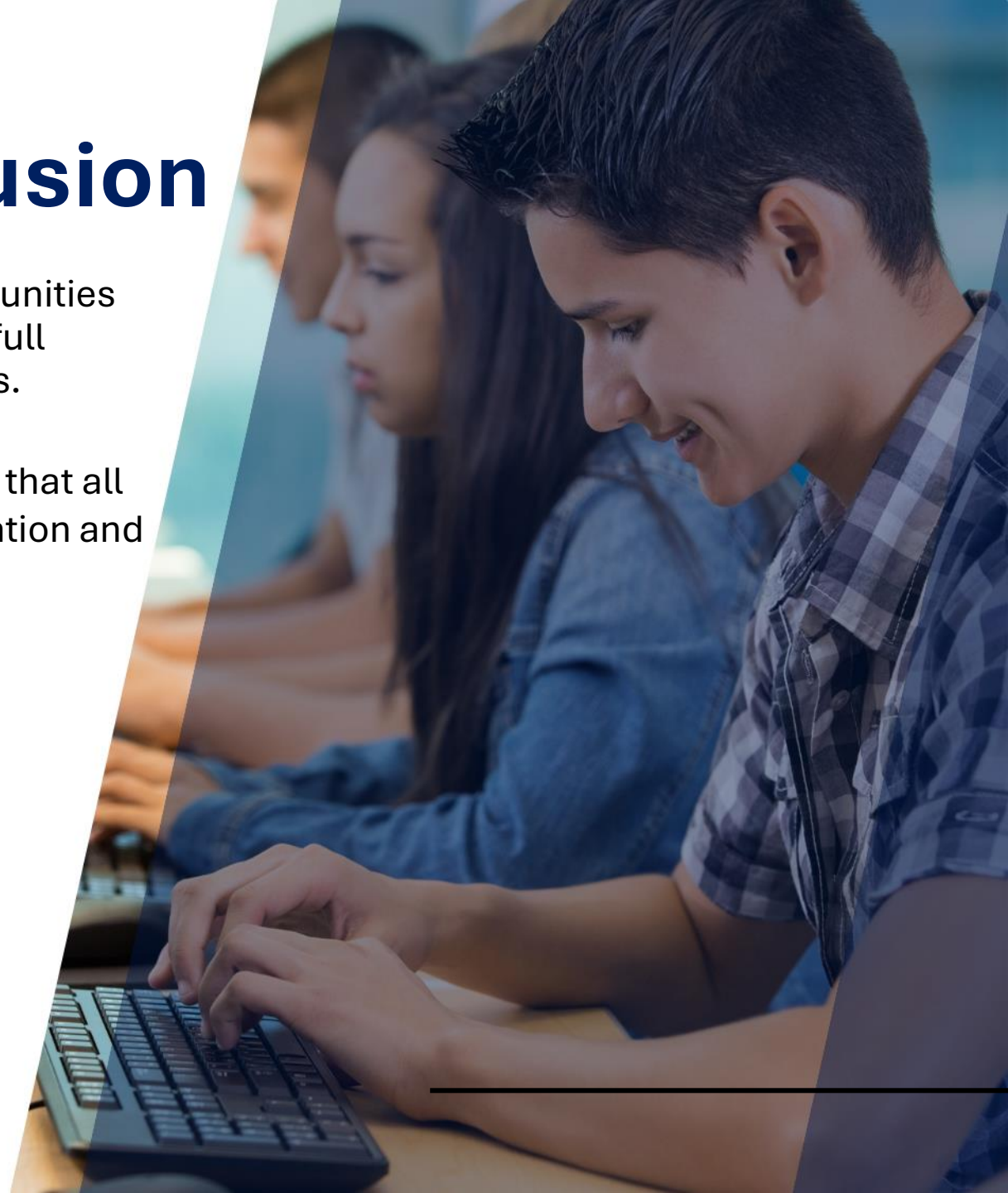
Equity

Equality: the state of being equal in status, rights, opportunities, inherent worth, etc.

Equity is the idea of providing resources that meet the diverse needs of each individual so they may be successful.
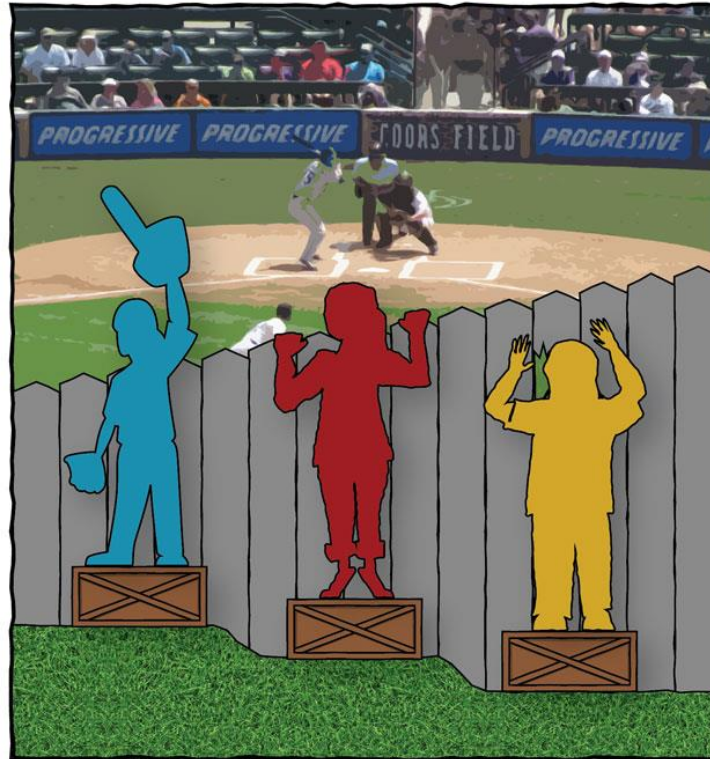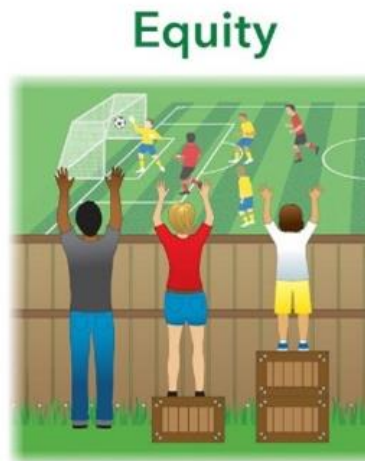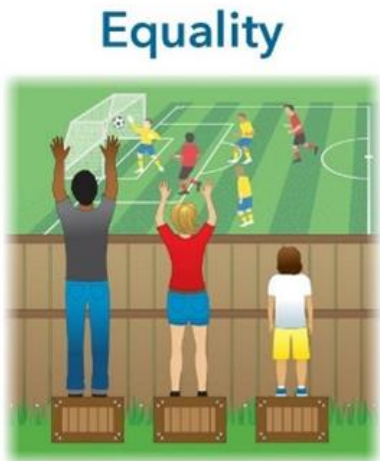

In the context of digital equity, consider the diverse needs of different populations to participate fully in today's digital world.

Illinois
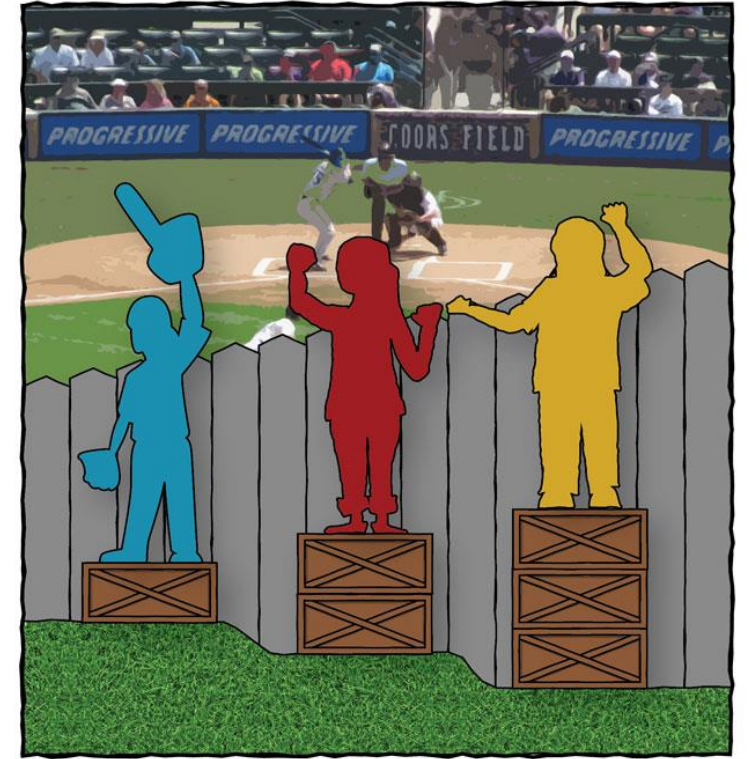**Department of Commerce**
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Equity

Equality — Equity

EQUALITY — EQUITY

❓ *What are the differences and how does it affect your understanding of equity?*

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Disparity

A **disparity** is a quantity that separates a group from a reference point (typically with the most favorable group rate).

choosememorial.thehcn.net

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity of Householder
County: Sangamon

Race/Ethnicity	Income
American Indian/Alaska Native	$81,042
Asian	$115,040
Black/African American	$29,482
Hispanic/Latino	$61,128
White, non-Hispanic	$78,517
Two or More Races	$50,811
Other	$68,750
Overall	$71,653

dollars

(scale: 0, 20k, 40k, 60k, 80k, 100k, 120k, 140k)

— Significantly better than the overall value
— Significantly worse than the overall value
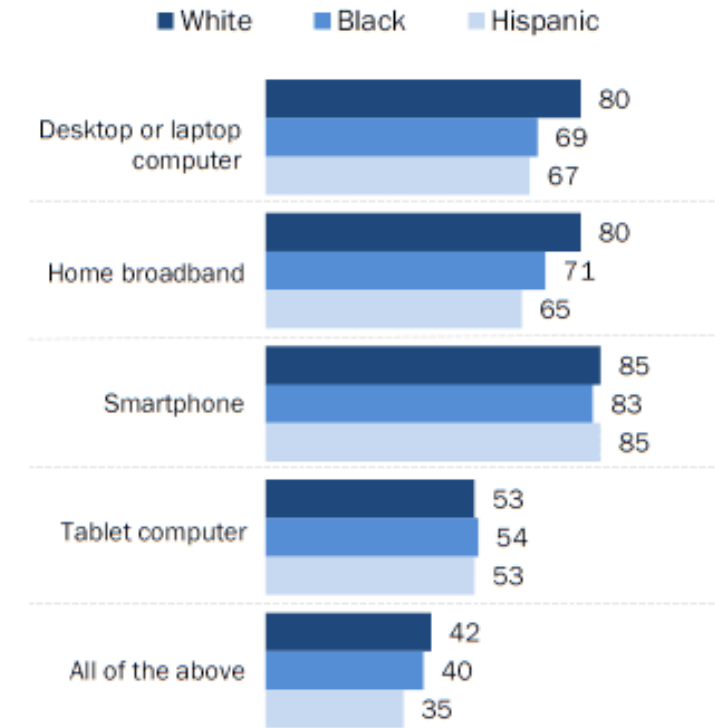— No significant difference with the overall value

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year (2018-2022)

How did this happen? What data are you collecting and how is it stratified to show improvement?

Black and Hispanic adults in U.S. are less likely than White adults to have a traditional computer, home broadband

% of U.S. adults who say they have the following

■ White ■ Black □ Hispanic

	White	Black	Hispanic
Desktop or laptop computer	80	69	67
Home broadband	80	71	65
Smartphone	85	83	85
Tablet computer	53	54	53
All of the above	42	40	35

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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Diversity

Diversity is all the social and biological characteristics that make each individual unique.

Dimensions of Diversity Includes: Age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, religious beliefs, thinking style, education, income, marital status, work experience, personal appearance, values, etc.

Consider the diversity that exists among your community and what characteristics might impact digital access?

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Bias

We all have it.

Sentiment or underlying attitude/feeling in favor of or against something compared with another.

- Explicit & Implicit

- Must be intentional about changing

- Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT)

- Anti-Blackness

Example: Folks who are low-income or unhoused are not trusted with cash, gift card or devices. People are poor because they do not work hard enough.

Consider how explicit and implicit biases might affect your way of serving the community and building trust.

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Intersectionality

- Coined by Prof. Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality originated as a way to discuss how systems of oppression overlap and create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories.

- Intersectionality acknowledges that we must consider everything that can marginalize people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc. and that these forms of oppression can overlap.
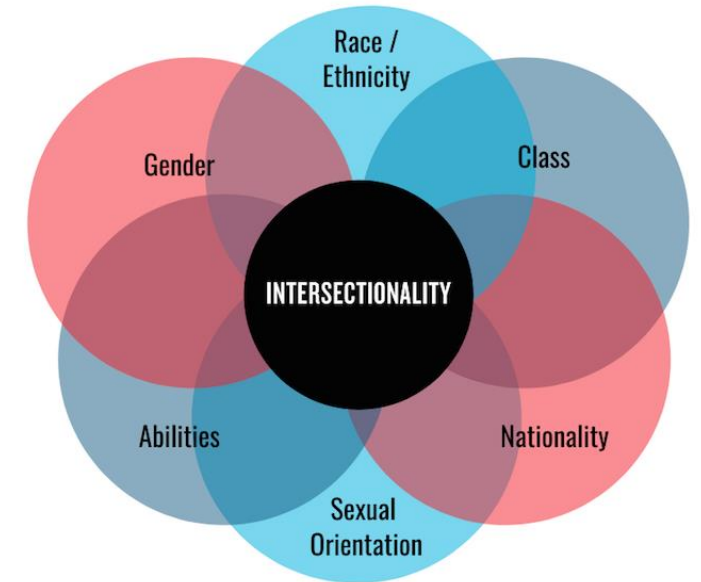

Image: First Book

Inclusion

Inclusion is creating an environment where each individual is able to be fully themselves and feel fully included and welcomed. It is the practice or policy for providing access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

Tools for Equity: The 7 As of Access

Awareness: Inform and communicate effectively at their literacy level and language.

Affordability: Address barriers to cost.

Acceptability: Ask what works for them, build a trusting relationship with them. Consider distrust, e.g. undocumented individuals.

Accessibility: Location, transportation, language access, tools for individuals with varying disabilities.

Availability: Eligibility, volume, type of equipment or services, staff capacity.

Accommodation: Flexibility in hours of operation, walk-in, phone and virtual access, cultural and language considerations.

Accountability: Build mechanisms to track metrics for access and equity and hold staff accountable for their attitude and actions.

Let the community guide your work. "Nothing for us without us".

"The Seven As of Access" by Kevin Ahmaad Jenkins, PhD

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Equity Considerations and Best Practices for Serving Covered Populations

Common Digital Equity Barriers Across Covered Populations

Cost of Broadband

Reliable internet

Suitable devices

Digital skills

Privacy and security concerns

Socio-economic factors and injustices

Overarching Best Practices

- Remember complexities of people's identities and needs, and meet folks where they are.

- Design programs to meet the specific needs. Consider both quantitative and qualitative data. Anecdotes and personal stories are as valid as numbers.

- When possible, look for trusted entities and persons to collaborate in your work.

- Hire from a specific covered population to ensure your programs have a lens of specific needs throughout the implementation. It can also help build trust.

- Accommodation is not a burden and shouldn't be an afterthought. Access is a right not a privilege.

- Take family-based and social approaches, making programs accessible and friendly to the whole family unit. Provide meals, transportation, childcare, etc. when needed.

- Tap into the vast pool of resources and expertise within the digital equity ecosystem.

- Use effective awareness campaigns.

- Define success and progress and know that it varies depending on regions and populations.

Adapted from NDIA

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Serving Low Income Households

Quick facts

- 4 out of 10 adults with lower income do not have broadband service or a computer to access the internet.

- 62% percent of low and lower-middle-income households would require considerable cost relief for broadband access.

Strategy

For low-income households, the overarching best practices are designed with their needs in mind.

Serving Aging Individuals

Quick facts

- 10.9% of aging individuals experienced poverty in 2022
- Economic insecurity and isolation

Strategy

- Build supportive partnerships such as with meal delivery providers;
- Promote community-based environments for learning, such as peer groups and intergenerational learning;
- Provide age-friendly digital skills programs;
- Provide accessible education and resources.

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Serving Incarcerated Individuals

Quick facts
- An incarcerated individual may have no prior knowledge about a computer or smartphone
- Limited access and high cost of access to communication, minimal wages
- Limited platform availability

Strategy
- Establish specialized platforms for communication
- Multi-layer partnership to address access barriers to digital resources (correctional departments, individual facilities, ISPs, CBOs, etc.)
- Measure skill levels and specific digital needs
- Institute solutions that remove costs

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Serving Veterans

Quick facts

- Average age of 61 and two times as likely to be disabled.
- More likely to live in rural areas, overrepresented in unhoused populations
- More than 1/3 of veterans receiving care through VA do so via telehealth.

Strategy

- Hire veteran staff who understand military life and can easier connect with veterans
- Address cost barrier and digital skills needs.

Serving Individuals with Disabilities

Quick facts
- 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. have some type of disability
- 20.4% of people with disabilities live below the national poverty line.

Strategy
- Accessible spaces such as buildings, facilities, furniture, and devices.
- Train staff on technical support for using and teaching assistive technology and devices.
- Work with organizations like Independent Living to support people with disabilities in their efforts to make their own choices and control their own lives.
- Advocate for and adopt accessible web design.
- Offer assistive devices in your services.

Accessible Website – YMCA Springfield

Serving Individuals with Language Barriers

Quick facts

- Limited career options, challenges with communication and accessing information, difficulty navigating healthcare and other systems, struggles with education and training.

- Underrepresentation in data, research and design of solutions.

Strategy

- Collaborate with organizations that serve individuals who are English learners and intentionally include them in your research and assessment by offering various language versions.

- Build language access cost into your grant proposal.

- When using a translator/interpreter from the community, compensate them equitably. Refrain from using family members, especially underaged children for language assistance.

- Provide "Know Your Rights" training to equip learners to advocate for themselves.

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Serving Racial and Ethnic Minorities (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)

Quick facts

Unique barriers due to systemic racism and inequities including income and wealth gaps, access to education and employment.

- Half of Black workers and more than half of Hispanic workers report lacking digital skills in the workplace.

- Black and Hispanic adults across income levels are less likely to say they own a computer or have access to high-speed internet compared to their white counterparts.

- Discriminatory and predatory practices target racial and ethnic minorities

- Historical and current inequities in government investment

- Lack of trust and fear for deportation

Strategy
- Center racial equity – reviewing and updating policies, processes, practices to prioritize measurable change in the lives of BIPOC.
- Provide education on fraudulent schemes so that learners can protect and advocate for themselves.
- Work with trusted organizations and individuals, such as places of worship, etc. for outreach.

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Serving Rural Residents

- 19 million of Americans residing in rural areas lack broadband access
- Limited resources and service organizations

Strategy
- Consider agriculture demands and seasonality with programming and activities
- Partner with churches and farm cooperatives
- Use traditional communication platforms, such as radio, bulletin boards, etc.
- Consider cost of travel

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Building Trust – Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network's Food Delivery Program

- Mixed-immigration status community

- Culturally appropriate food items

- Word of mouth through trusted community members

- We do not ask for income information to determine worthiness of food. No strings attached. Everyone deserves access to sustenance and nutrition.

- We do not document names. We do not disclose served populations' location. We do not ask or share their traumatic stories.

- Volunteers are trusted advocates who do not put folks we serve at risk.

- Walk alongside the community.

- They now trust us when they need assistance with healthcare, legal support, school support, etc.

Equitable Process in Grant Making

Awareness: we are ramping up social media presence, especially on LinkedIn; we set up events to increase awareness of webinars and workshops.

Affordability: we do not require matching fund for the Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant application. We provide capacity building webinars to help organizations prepare for grant application.
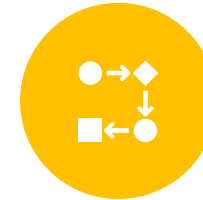
Acceptability: we hosted grant co-design input sessions to ask stakeholders what would work for them with the grant design.

Accessibility: we are accessible by phone and email, and we respond timely to inquiries. We host office hours to support stakeholders.

Accommodation: we used ASL and Spanish interpreters for engagement sessions.

Accountability: We listen to feedback and incorporate in our actions.

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Partner Practice Spotlight

ACCESS LIVING

Katie Blank-Senior Manager

Katie holds a Master's degree in Social Work and Education. She has worked with people with disabilities for 20 years as a Social Worker, Therapist, and Educator. She has worked at Access Living for over 14 years as a homeless prevention case manager, nursing home reintegration coordinator, supervisor for the IL training program, Determination of Need assessor, and mentorship coordinator for consumers moving out of nursing homes. Currently, Katie is the manager of youth, technology, nursing home engagement and support, survivors of gun violence programing at Access Living.

Rachel Rush-IL Technology Coordinator

Rachel recently joined Access Living as it's Independent Living Technology Coordinator, where she teaches digital literacy classes and provides one-to-one technology support to people with disabilities. Prior to joining Access Living, she taught ESL to migrants and refugees in the Chicago area. She also lived in Hong Kong for 10 years, where she worked on research related to labor rights and environmental justice issues. Rachel holds a PhD in Public Policy.

ACCESS LIVING AND THE INDEPENDENT LIVING TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

Access Living

- We are a local, disability consumer-controlled, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit.

- As a CIL, we believe in dignity, community integration, civil rights, and equal access for all people with disabilities.

IL Technology Program

- We teach basic computer and internet skills to people with disabilities to help them meet a technology focused independent living goal.

- Program Lessons:
  - Basic computer or tablet skills
  - How to use internet, Zoom, Word, Excel, and email
  - Job search skills
  - Internet fraud and protection

- Walk-in hours and 1:1 support

- If a consumer qualifies, they can receive a device, hot spot, and 1 year of internet service free.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Considerations

- Location and accessibility of space

- Transportation limitations

- Personal assistant support, if needed.

- ASL Interpreter, Braille, CART (Closed Captioning)

- There are different types of disabilities: visible and invisible.

- Different learning or comprehension levels

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Tips and Recommendations

- Ask the person what they need concerning assistive technology.

- You might need to work with them to discover what they need.

- As you are working with the person, new needs might arise. Be prepared to support them in meeting those needs.

- Know the comfort and experience a person has with technology.

- Provide guidance and step-by-step instruction in different formats: handouts, digital, PowerPoint, etc.

- As a provider, learn how to install or activate the accommodations on the device in multiple languages.

- Peer support is helpful when teaching someone how to use a device.

ACCESS LIVING

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Accessibility/Modifications

- Screen readers (text to speech or speech to text)
- Voice control
- Magnifiers or enlarged texts
- Contrast of screen
- Alternative mouse for limited hand control
- Modified keyboards
- Modified Touch controls
- Headset with a microphone connected
- Different types of tablet cases due to different types of disabilities and needs.

SUCCESS STORIES
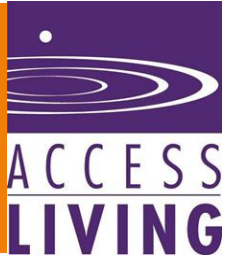
- Consumers increased their independence by having a laptop or tablet and internet at home. Most consumers had limited access to a device and internet prior to program participation.

- Consumers have been able to search and apply for jobs online from home.

- Consumers have been able to communicate with doctors and family/friends virtually when they couldn't go in person. They would have missed their appointment without this support or had limited communication with their family and friends.

- Consumers have continued to develop their digital literacy skills and have been able to teach other people how to use the device with their new knowledge.

- Consumers have learned how to cook different types of foods, allowing them to stay healthy and maintain their well-being.

- Consumers have been able to make travel plans with the device and their new knowledge about how to use the internet, which they couldn't before.

Northwest Center Covered Populations

- Low income households

- Racial and ethnic minorities

- People with language barriers

- Aging populations

northwest center

What to consider

What do these populations already have access to? Will they need devices? An open computer lab?

- Through **surveys** with CPS parents
- **Focus groups** with participants from other programs

How can you be culturally competent?

- Is technology **welcomed or feared** at home?
- **Inclusive language** (are lower reading levels needed?)
- **Inclusive images** (POC folks on marketing & curriculum)

What resources are already available and translated?

- Talk to **CBOs** with similar missions & demographics
- Find web pages & exercises that can be taught in **multiple languages**

Recommendations Based on Covered Populations

Low-income households

- Compile list of low cost internet & device options
- Encourage folks to go to open computer labs (libraries, community centers, coffee shops, etc.)

Racial & ethnic minorities

- Make class examples relatable
- Bonus points if instructors are from the community

People with language barriers

- Be ready to do some translating yourselves
- Suggest and remind folks of translation tools available to them when interpretation or translation service is not available, such as translation tools on web pages or apps like Google Translate & Google Lens.

Aging populations

- Will need to be the most patient with them
- Know how to explain things in more than one way

General Recommendations

- Go out into your community to promote classes
- Give space for those students who will need review & extra practice
- Thank them for continued engagement
- Tailor curriculum and know that things will need to change along the way

Success Story

Our **final project** is a mini research project that is sent to the instructor via a

professional email.

- Made adjustments to original curriculum- which gave participants ease

- Lots of practice times are offered before day of project

- Participants have felt more prepared because it has been mentioned

  several times throughout the class

- Leads participants to feel more confident to write professional emails to

  others - and they do!

Questions?

Stay Connected

Be our partner: bit.ly/IOBPartner

https://bit.ly/m/IllinoisBroadband

Broadband@Illinois.gov

Thank You!