

Digital Equity Program
Public Comment on Plan Design

September 2023

Link to Public Comment Form: <https://forms.office.com/g/YQd7FpuL11>

Slide 1:

Cover Page: Digital Equity Program – Public Comment on Plan Design

Hi! I am Lauren Thompson, The state of CT Digital Equity Program Manager and along with Doug Casey the Executive Director of the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology we are supporting the Digital Equity Plan in Connecticut. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology is leading the development of a State Digital Equity Plan to ensure that all residents can participate in today's digital society. Funding for this work comes from the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (www.InternetforAll.gov) and is part of a multi-agency broadband expansion effort, with partners that include the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). The Commission seeks to identify the barriers to technology among Connecticut residents, as well as the resources and programs to increase access. This presentation is being posted to gather Public Comments on our plan design! If you have an idea to share, please fill out our form.

Slide 2:

Title: Commission for Educational Technology

Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology oversees the management and integration of technology in the state's schools, libraries, colleges, and universities. It is comprised of 20 appointed members that represent the interests of the commission's constituents.

- The commission works to ensures Equity of Access to Technology for Learning
- Addresses Needs of K – 12, Higher Education, Libraries
- Cross-Agency Membership (CGA and Executive Appointments)
- Oversee State Educational Technology Plan
- Instrumental in Remote Learning During COVID
- Now Leading State Digital Equity Plan

Slide 3:

Title: Objectives

The NTIA has outlined specific objectives that our program should seek to accelerate Connecticut efforts in the following outcome areas:

- Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes
- Educational outcomes
- Health outcomes
- Civic and social engagement; and
- Delivery of other essential services

These efforts will also enhance the ability of Connecticut agencies and organizations to serve residents, and thereby support your mission and work.

We need your input in particular because of the program's priority in addressing the needs of the following "covered populations" that you may serve:

Those living in households at or below 150 percent of the poverty level.

- Aging individuals
- Individuals incarcerated in a state facility.
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Those with a language barrier (ELL, general literacy)
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and
- Residents of rural areas

Slide 4:

Title: Federal Digital Equity Program Timeline

This is the Federal Digital Equity Program timeline. The Commission is in the process of closing out research this fall.

In the next few months, we plan to draft and then share our plan publicly.

The Final plan submission should be in early 2024.

Slide 5:

Title: Digital Equity Priorities

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Slide 6:

Title: Research Efforts

Our Research Efforts include:

- Agency engagement to index the existing programs and partner in our resident outreach efforts.

We have had agency discussions with the following organizations:

DECD, Office of Early Childhood, Secretary of the State, Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, Connecticut Technical High School System, State Library, Aging and Disability Services, Department of Developmental Services, Corrections, Education, Housing, Labor, Public Health, Social Services, Veterans Affairs.

- Partner Survey: Used to develop a "digital equity asset map" of existing support programs statewide.
- Resident Survey: We have received more than 5,000+ responses addressing barriers to access, devices, and support.
- We have also hosted Focus Groups: Where we conducted small-group discussions with members of covered populations to understand barriers and capture suggestions for Five-Year Digital Equity Plan

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Title: Barriers

Though our efforts to date we have identified the following Barriers:

While some of the barriers and technology preferences vary across covered populations. Others appear universal to CT residents regardless of covered population status.

Universal Barriers:

1. Privacy concerns "get in the way" of using the internet for many Connecticut residents.
2. Some CT residents require assistance to perform basic tasks that may affect access to services, such as:
 - Making an online account
 - Making a video call; or
 - Creating documents or spreadsheets

Slide 8:

Title: General Barriers seen among covered populations

Among those individuals that fall into a covered population.

In terms of:

- Broadband: Less likely to have a broadband connection, or any internet connection at all.
- Regarding Devices: Less likely to own a computer, and more likely not to have any device that connects to the internet.
- In the context of Competencies: Likely to report lower levels of confidence in their digital literacy and digital security skills.
- Support: Likely to face cost or location barriers to obtaining support when needed
- When it concerns services: Likely to have specific needs when accessing public services (e.g., mobile-friendly, or otherwise accessible websites)

Slide 9:

Title: Wanted: Your ideas!

We want to hear from you!

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- What strategies should the State consider in its Digital Equity Plan to address Internet and device access, affordability, training, and support?
- At what level should we implement these solutions — Statewide, Regionally, or Locally?
- Any other suggestions?
- You can email us at DigitalEquity@ct.gov or call (860) 622-2224.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this transcript from the
Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology – Public Comment on Plan Design!**