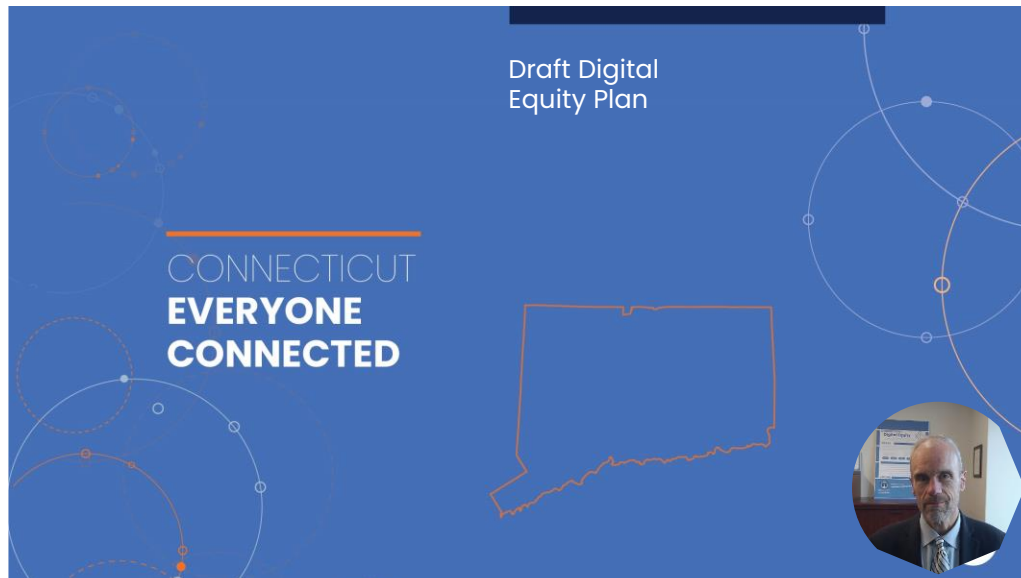


Slide 1



My name is Doug Casey, and I serve as the Executive Director of the State's Commission for Educational Technology, within the Department of Administrative Services. Our team has developed the state's five-year digital equity plan, which we call "Connecticut: Everyone Connected." Funding to support the extensive research and design that went into the plan come through the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's federal Digital Equity Program, with guidance from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Over the next few minutes, we will share highlights of that plan and invite you to share your thoughts on digital equity in Connecticut.

In our state, you can get online from almost anywhere. So why do so many people still not have home internet connections, computers, and support they need to flourish in today's digital world? And how do we close that "digital divide," especially for people who face struggles that technology access could really help?

Those two questions are at the heart of our plan.

Slide 2



The State of Connecticut defines "Digital Equity" as "a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for participation in society, democracy, and the economy of the state" (CGS § 289).



I'm Lauren Thompson, the Digital Equity Program Manager.

The State of Connecticut defines "Digital Equity" as "a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for participation in society, democracy, and the economy of the state."

The intention of this plan is to support residents in accessing the skills needed to utilize available technology. This, in turn, will provide opportunities for learning, career advancement, convenient access to state services, promotion of health and wellness, along with every other benefit that being online provides.

Slide 3

| COVERED POPULATIONS | OUTCOMES |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those living at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty line• Aging individuals• People incarcerated in State correctional facilities• Veterans• Individuals with disabilities• People with a language barrier (English learners and those with low literacy levels)• Members of a racial or ethnic minority group• Residents who primarily reside in a rural area | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic and Workforce Development• Education• Health• Civic and Social Engagement• Delivery of Essential Services |



DOUG

Connecticut's digital equity plan is designed to benefit all residents, and federal program guidelines call on states to address the unique barriers that certain residents may face to technology access. These groups are referred to as, "Covered Populations," as listed on this slide. Out of the 3.5M people living in Connecticut, the vast majority fall into one or more of the covered populations.

Getting online with a device that works for you brings a host of benefits. Coupled with strong digital literacy skills, it's how you apply for a job, pay bills, learn new skills or complete a degree, take advantage of online healthcare resources, tap into state services, and stay connected to friends and family. Connecticut's digital equity plan goes beyond the boxes and wires of technology to the outcomes and benefits shown on this slide. Our goal is to make technology accessible, affordable, and usable to make people's lives better.

Digital Equity Components



Availability and affordability of internet access and devices



Digital literacy, including training to help develop cybersecurity and other skills



Technical support



Access to public resources and services

I'm Sarah Ullom-Minnich, and I'm the Research Fellow for the Commission for Educational Technology who measured the current state of digital access and equity in Connecticut.

The Digital Equity Team has outlined four major components of Digital Equity.

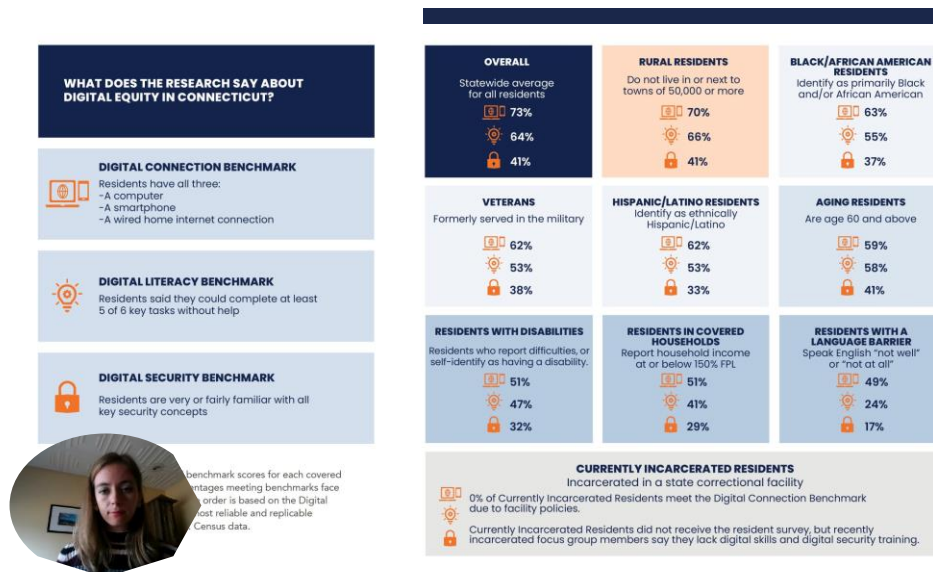
First, having an appropriate internet connection and device that is affordable and has all the functionality residents need to access basic services.

Second, digital literacy. This means having the basic digital skills to achieve goals and stay safe online.

Third, access to technical support when devices malfunction or digital skills are insufficient.

And fourth, having access to inclusive online public resources and services. This includes things like multilingual support and compatibility with accessibility software such as screen-readers.

Slide 5



The Digital Equity Team conducted in-depth research on this topic, including a survey of more than 7,000 residents, targeted focus groups, and an analysis of data from the U.S. Census. Using this data, we created several benchmarks to measure current levels of digital access and skills in Connecticut. The benchmarks work like yardsticks to compare how members of covered populations experience the different components of digital equity.

In general, members of covered populations scored lower on the benchmarks, meaning they were more likely to be digitally disconnected compared to statewide averages. Four covered populations were especially likely to face significant disparities in digital access. These include residents with disabilities, residents living in covered households, residents with a language barrier, and residents who are currently incarcerated.

For more information on the research and the digital disparities in Connecticut, see the Needs Assessment section of the plan, which starts on page 47.

Slide 6

Goals

- Promote Development of Digital Skills and Technical Support Programs
- Increase Public Awareness of Digital Equity Resources
- Ensure Residents Have Affordable Options for Getting Online that Meet Their Needs
- Support Development of Accessible and Inclusive Digital Government at the State and Local Levels
- Support High-Speed Broadband Infrastructure Buildout
- Foster Ongoing Learning About Digital Equity Best Practices

We welcome you to explore the extensive research reflected in Section 3 of our plan. Those findings helped us to design six key goals in our plan.

First, because Connecticut's biggest challenge is technology adoption, the plan puts as the top priority the expansion of programs that equip residents with the tools they need to flourish in digital society.

In addition to launching programs and making technology available, we focus on connecting residents to those important resources.

We also know that cost is a significant barrier for residents, so we will work to ensure that our neighbors have affordable options for internet access and computers. The State has rapidly moved services online, giving residents choices around when and where they take advantage of services. The digital equity plan will help accelerate that work and provide local towns and cities with the resources they need to make services more accessible.

Working with our partners in the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Connecticut Education Network, we will support the expansion of broadband internet service to unserved and underserved areas.

And finally, the plan will foster communities of practice, with support to the libraries, community centers, houses of faith, and other partners who are already doing inspirational work in equipping our residents with the technologies and skills they need to find work, advance their learning, tap into health and wellness resources, and enjoy all of the other benefits of being online.

Slide 7



"Connecticut: Everyone Connected", is Connecticut's Draft Digital Equity Plan. It aims to define the resources, challenges, and path forward to making sure all residents can flourish in a society that depends ever more on access to digital tools and the skills to use them.

Slide 8

Opportunities for Comments



Regional In-Person Events



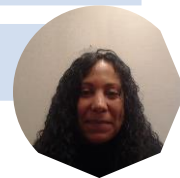
Online (Web) Events



Written: Public Comment Form or Email



Phone Line: 860-622-2032



Over the past 12 months, the Commission has engaged with residents and conducted in-depth research into the barriers to technology access. The draft plan would help ensure that all Connecticut residents can benefit from life in the digital world. Right now we are in the public comment phase for our plan. This is a great time for you to see what information we have gathered and offer us feedback.

You can participate in the following ways:

- In-Person Events: Events will be scheduled in every region in the state to allow for the widest representation of resident and stakeholder voices. The digital equity team is targeting presentations at preexisting community events, increasing the likelihood of attendance. The digital equity team will share an overview of the Plan and then welcome community feedback and questions.
- Online (Web) Events: We will host live as well as recorded presentations to share the Digital Equity Plan and collect responses.
- Written: A short public comment form is available to share any comments or thoughts on the digital equity plan. We would also love to hear your thoughts by email. The email address and link to the public comment form are available on the next slide.
- Phone Line: Most recently, we created a phone line (860-622-2032) to accept suggestions from residents and stakeholders on the Digital Equity Plan.

We want to hear from you! Please share your thoughts, questions, and concerns.

Slide 9

Tell us what you think!

Email: DigitalEquity@ct.gov

Website: [Digital Equity \(ct.gov\)](http://DigitalEquity.ct.gov)

Phone: (860) 622-2032



We appreciate your time in learning about Connecticut: Everyone Connected, the state's five-year digital equity plan. Please see the full plan as well as executive summaries in English and Spanish from our Web site, www.CT.gov/DigitalEquity. Whether you are a resident or leading a program that already helps improve the lives of our neighbors here in Connecticut, we want to hear from you. We have created several easy ways to share your thoughts. Scan the QR code on screen use the form on our Web page email us at DigitalEquity@ct.gov or call us at (860) 622-2032.

Whatever way you choose, we look forward to your thoughts.

Slide 10



WE ARE BETTER
**WHEN WE ARE
CONNECTED**

