Appendix A

In 2021, NTCA published *Rural Imperatives in Broadband Adoption and Digital Inclusion,* examining adoption data for fixed and mobile broadband services across categories defined by age, race, household income, and educational attainment. This paper revealed two critical findings:

1. While engagement rates are increasing steadily across all categories defined by age, race, household income, and educational attainment, overall engagement rates still differ among various demographic categories.

2. Affordability remains the single largest barrier to adoption.

Home and Mobile+Home Broadband Adoption by Annual Income

Home and Mobile+Home Broadband Adoption by Race
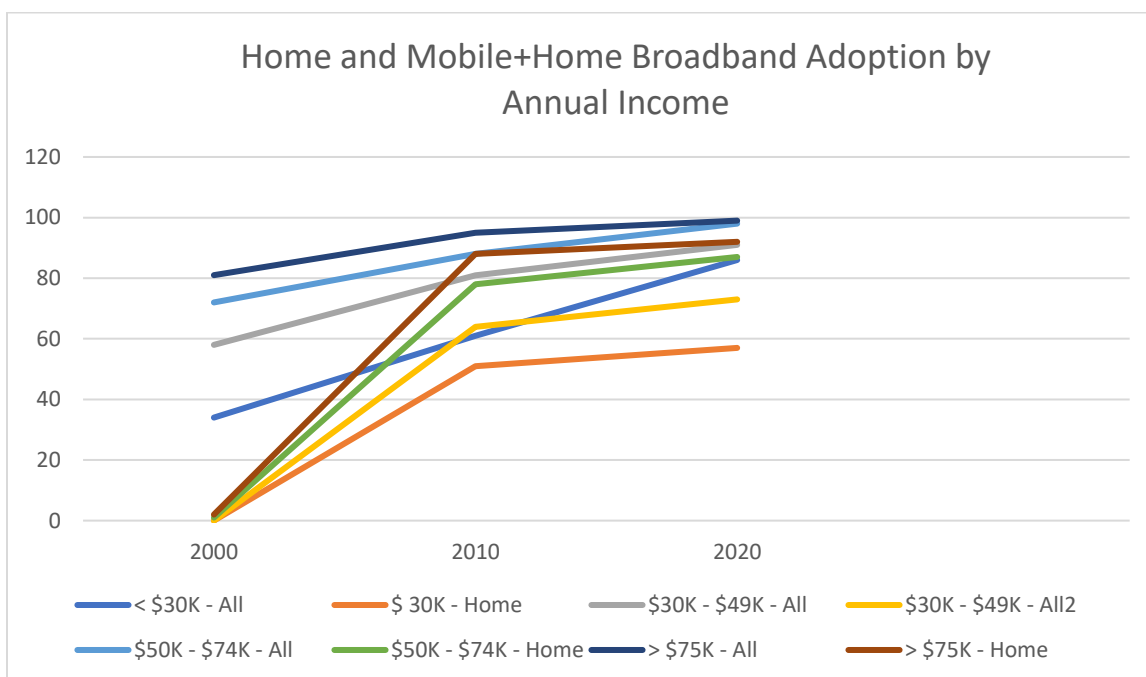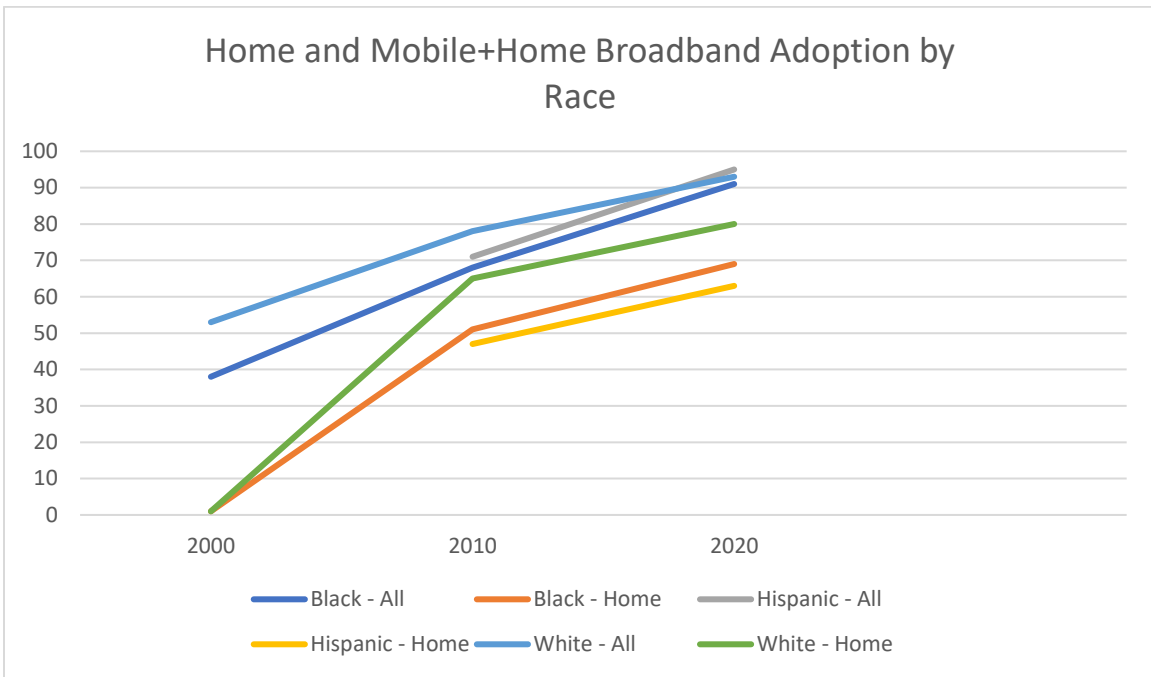
Effective digital inclusion strategies are tailored to the unique populations the ISP seeks to engage. While digital and cybersecurity literacy are critical as more users engage broadband, affordable user rates are the gatekeeper to engagement.

Data: Pew Research

The complete report is available at *https://www.ntca.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03/src-whitepaper-broadband-adoption-and-digital-inclusion.pdf*

Appendix B

State Digital Equity Plan Requirements

The following is excerpted from "[Internet for All: Digital Equity Plan Guidance,](#)" published by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

7.1 Digital Equity Plan Statutory Requirements

The statutory requirements for the contents of State Digital Equity Plans are set forth in Section 60304(c)(1) of the Infrastructure Act, and are listed below and in Section IV.C.1.b.i of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant NOFO:

1. Identification of barriers to digital equity faced by Covered Populations in the State.

2. Measurable objectives for documenting and promoting, among each Covered Population located in that State—

    a. The availability of, and affordability of access to, fixed and wireless broadband technology;

    b. The online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services;

    c. Digital literacy;

    d. Awareness of, and the use of, measures to secure the online privacy of, and cybersecurity with respect to, an individual; and

    f. The availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices.

3. An assessment of how the measurable objectives identified in item 2 above will impact and interact with the State's—

    a. Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes;

    b. Educational outcomes;

    c. Health outcomes;

    d. Civic and social engagement; and

    e. Delivery of other essential services.

4. In order to achieve the measurable objectives identified in item 2 above, a description of how the State plans to collaborate with key stakeholders in the State, which may include—

    a. Community anchor institutions;

    b. County and municipal governments;

c. Local educational agencies;

d. Where applicable, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations;

e. Nonprofit organizations;

f. Organizations that represent—

      i. Individuals with disabilities, including organizations that represent children with disabilities;

      ii. Aging Individuals;

    iii. Individuals with language barriers, including—

      1. Individuals who are English learners; and

      2. Individuals who have low levels of literacy;

      iv. Veterans; and v. Individuals in that State who are incarcerated in facilities other than Federal correctional facilities;

g. Civil rights organizations;

h. Entities that carry out workforce development programs;

i. Agencies of the State that are responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities in the State;

j. Public housing authorities in the State; and

k. A partnership between any of the entities described in clauses (a) through (k).

5. A list of organizations with which the Administering Entity for the State collaborated in developing the Plan.

7.2 Digital Equity Plan Additional Requirements

In addition to the above requirements, the State Digital Equity Plan developed with planning grant funds shall, at a minimum, include the following:

1. A stated vision for digital equity;

2. A digital equity needs assessment, including a comprehensive assessment of the baseline from which the State is working and the State's identification of the barriers to digital equity faced generally and by each of the covered populations in the State;

3. An asset inventory, including current resources, programs, and strategies that promote digital equity for each of the covered populations, whether publicly or privately funded, as well as existing digital equity plans and programs already in place among municipal, regional, and Tribal governments;

4. To the extent not addressed in connection with item 4 of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant NOFO, Section IV.C.1.b.i, a coordination and outreach strategy, including opportunities for public comment by, collaboration with, and ongoing engagement with representatives of each category of covered populations within the State and with the full range of stakeholders within the State;

5. A description of how municipal, regional, and/or Tribal digital equity plans will be incorporated into the State Digital Equity Plan; 6. An implementation strategy that is holistic and addresses the barriers to participation in the digital world, including affordability, devices, digital skills, technical support, and digital navigation. The strategy should

     (a) establish measurable goals, objectives, and proposed core activities to address the needs of covered populations,

     (b) set out measures ensuring the plan's sustainability and effectiveness across State communities, and

     (c) adopt mechanisms to ensure that the plan is regularly evaluated and updated;

7. An explanation of how the implementation strategy addresses gaps in existing state, local, and private efforts to address the barriers identified pursuant to Section IV.C.1.b.i, item 1, of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant NOFO;

8. A description of how the State intends to accomplish the implementation strategy described above by engaging or partnering with:

     a. Workforce agencies such as state workforce agencies and state/local workforce boards and workforce organizations;

     b. Labor organizations and community-based organizations; and c. Institutions of higher learning, including but not limited to four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, education and training providers, and educational service agencies;

9. A timeline for implementation of the plan; and

10. A description of how the State will coordinate its use of State Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding and its use of any funds it receives in connection with the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, other federal or private digital equity funding.

DEP Template

The following template builds upon a template excerpted from [Internet for All: Digital Equity Plan Guidance,](#)" published by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Section numbers provided below refer to the above-noted guide.

Executive Summary
Refer to Section 1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert summary of State Digital Equity Plan, restating purpose and key points of the plan]

Introduction and Vision for Digital Equity
Vision
Refer to Section 2.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert state/territory's vision for digital equity]

Does the state face particular or unique obstacles? Is it a largely rural state, or one with pockets of persistent poverty? Does it have an aging population, a large agricultural industry, or a significant proportion of covered populations?

Alignment with Existing Efforts to Improve Outcomes
Refer to Section 2.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert overview of how the State Digital Equity Plan is aligned to the Eligible Entity's priorities and other existing or planned efforts]

How can broadband's positive impact on agriculture, economic development, healthcare, public safety and essential services promote those sectors for overall state gains?

Strategy and Objectives
Refer to Section 2.3 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert strategy and objectives, including how the strategies will help meet the State's goals]

Explain how the state will implement strategies to meet specific goals. For example, if the state has a goal of increasing engagement with telehealth, it can consider a strategy aimed at supporting telehealth deployments in clinics and educating consumers as to their availability. Or, if the state has a goal of increasing broadband usage among K-12 students, it can implement a strategy to support the distribution of laptops or other devices in schools.

Current State of Digital Equity: Barriers and Assets

Asset Inventory
Refer to Section 3.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[See sample survey, SMART Toolkit, page 9, above.

Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population
Refer to Section 3.1.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

Confer with representatives of each of the covered populations to assess broadband engagement among their constituents, and barriers to adoption that might exist.

Existing Digital Equity Plans
Refer to Section 3.1.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

Does the state or local government branches have current digital equity plans? How will the DEP compliment or supplement those plans? Can the DEP fill gaps that are revealed by the needs assessment?

Existing Digital Equity Programs
Refer to Section 3.1.3 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

For example, does the state have existing low-income programs to assist broadband subscribers? Does the state or private sector have outreach programs to enable access to devices?

Broadband Adoption
Refer to Section 3.1.4 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify and detail the assets in the state/territory]

How will the DEP encourage adoption? Will the state implement outreach planning with local governments, ISPs, and other organizations? How will the DEP identify reasons for non-engagement and craft strategies to overcome them?

Broadband Affordability
Refer to Section 3.1.5 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify and detail the efforts in the state/territory]

What role does affordability play in broadband engagement among each of the covered populations? Will the state implement affordability programs? Does the DEP envision coordinated outreach by the state and representative organizations that serve or have contacts within the covered populations?

Needs Assessment
Refer to Section 3.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify baseline and barriers to digital equity]

See Needs Assessment Survey, page [X], above.

Covered Population Needs Assessment
Refer to Section 3.2.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify baseline and barriers for covered populations]

Using the Needs Assessment Survey proposed above, identify engagement trends for covered populations.

Broadband Adoption
Refer to Section 3.2.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify needs and barriers]

Include strategies that address the respective needs of each covered community. Note that needs may be similar across different covered communities. For example, affordability may be a barrier among several distinct communities, as may perceived relevance likewise be a barrier in various different communities.

Broadband Affordability
Refer to Section 3.2.3 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify needs and gaps]

Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Coordination and Outreach Strategy
Refer to Section 4.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert state/territory's plan to identify stakeholders and stakeholder groups, develop an inclusive engagement model and associated mechanisms, and facilitate the stakeholder engagement process]

See Assets Inventory survey, SMART Toolkit, *page 7, above. Who is a trusted partner for planning, and an effective ambassador for outreach? How can each group participate, and what are the DEP strategies for recruiting their participation?*

Implementation

Implementation Strategy & Key Activities
Refer to Section 5.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert strategy and associated activities]

How will the state, ISPs, and other digital champions coordinate to encourage digital inclusion and engagement? Will outreach efforts include Town Hall type meetings, or events at organizations that serve the covered populations? Does the DEP envision outreach via traditional media, social media, or other avenues (for example, private sector organization mail lists)? How will the DEP generate excitement, enthusiasm, and interest in broadband to overcome gaps in perceived relevance? Does the DEP support the use of translators to reach prospective users with insufficient levels of English fluency? Does the DEP propose affordability programs?

How will the DEP measure and report progress, and will ISPs and other organizations continue to be part of a long-term program?

Timeline
Refer to Section 5.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Insert timeline for plan implementation]

Conclusion
Refer to Section 6.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.