

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
COMMUNICATIONS EQUITY AND DIVERSITY COUNCIL

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DIGITAL SKILLS GAP SYMPOSIUM AND TOWN HALL

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This transcript was produced from audio provided by the Communications Equity and Diversity Council of the Federal Communications Commission.

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1
2 MS. JOHNSON: Good afternoon, and
3 welcome to the Digital Skills Symposium and Town
4 Hall. This event today is hosted by the Media
5 Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission
6 and the Communications Equity and Diversity
7 Council of the FCC. The CEDC is a federal
8 advisory committee of the FCC chartered by
9 Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel.

10 One of the primary goals of the CEDC
11 is to make recommendations to the Commission on
12 advancing equity and the provision of and access
13 to communication services and products for all
14 people of the United States without
15 discrimination on the basis of race, color,
16 religion, national origin, sex, or disability.
17 Today's program was developed and planned by the
18 Innovation and Access Working Group of the CEDC.
19 The program will proceed in three parts.

20 First, we will have the keynote
21 remarks by former Acting FCC Chairwoman Mignon
22 Clyburn. And we are so grateful to have her join

1 us today. Following the keynote remarks, we will
2 have a panel discussion on the Digital Equity
3 Act, the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program,
4 and other efforts to address access to broadband.

5 Following the panel discussion, we
6 will have a short 15-minute break, then we will
7 return and have what we expect will be a lively
8 town hall discussion among a diverse range of
9 stakeholders and experts about broadband equity.

10 So let's get started. Joining us today to bring
11 welcome remarks and introduce our keynote speaker
12 is Susan Au Allen, National President and CEO of
13 the U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce.

14 Susan also serves as Vice Chair of the
15 CEDC. And we're grateful to her for all that she
16 does to support the work of diversity, equity,
17 and inclusion. Good afternoon, Susan.

18 MS. ALLEN: Hello, Jamila. Thank you
19 very much. Thank you all for coming and joining
20 us this afternoon. That's right. I am Susan Au
21 Allen, National President and CEO of the U.S. Pan
22 Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education

1 Foundation. In short, we're called USPAACC.

2 And welcome to the Digital Skills
3 Symposium and Town Hall brought to you by the
4 Federal Communication Commission's Media Bureau
5 and CEDC. I want to recognize the continues
6 public leadership of FCC Chairwoman Jessica
7 Rosenworcel, the FCC, and the Biden
8 Administration for their diligent efforts in
9 prioritizing the closing of America's digital
10 divide and digital skills gap. Since last fall,
11 I had the privilege to serve as the Vice Chair of
12 the CEDC, an honor I share with my fellow Vice
13 Chair, Dr. Nicol Turner Lee.

14 Together with Chairwoman Heather Gate,
15 our charge at the CEDC is to focus on diversity
16 and equity issues across the tech sector and
17 provide the FCC with specific policy
18 recommendations for advancing, as Jamila said,
19 equity in the provision of and access to digital
20 communication services and products for every
21 American community. Our goal is no family or
22 community will be left behind. And everyone can

1 fully access the technology and digital skills
2 that are building our future, America's future.

3 I want to thank FCC Designated Federal
4 Officer Jamila Bess Johnson and her team,
5 including Keyla Hernandez-Ulloa and Aurelie
6 Mathieu for being the guiding light that helped
7 the entire CEDC navigate this complex discussion.
8 Today's symposium and town hall will examine the
9 challenges and issues that states and localities
10 face in addressing the need of greater adoption
11 of digital skills training and what government,
12 community-based organizations, and other diverse
13 stakeholders are doing or could do more to close
14 our nation's digital divide and advance digital
15 literacy for all Americans. Our panel discussion
16 will cover the FCC's work on closing this divide
17 through its Affordable Connectivity Program and
18 other innovative initiatives.

19 We'll provide an overview of the
20 Digital Equity Act, its funding, and its
21 implications for the Broadband Equity, Access,
22 and Deployment Program. We'll explore how to

1 define equity, a critically important question,
2 how stakeholders can identify populations that
3 remain underserved or unserved and articulate the
4 impacts of the persistent divide on the
5 communities left out of this ecosystem. We'll
6 hear best practices and examples of the states
7 that have digital equity offices or that are
8 developing plans and procedures to address the
9 issue.

10 We expect an energetic and robust
11 informative town hall discussion with experts of
12 a range of perspectives, including faith-based
13 institutions, civil rights organizations, library
14 services, local government, and Historically
15 Black Colleges and Universities. We'll have a
16 dialogue on how to break down the silos among
17 corporate entities, nonprofits, and government
18 agencies as well as lessons learned so far.

19 Closing America's digital skills gap is a
20 critical policy priority for federal, state, and
21 local government, nonprofits, and businesses.

22 Frankly, it is an imperative for every

1 American who believes in equality, equity, and
2 building a strong economy for all of us and the
3 future generations. The pandemic laid bare the
4 vital necessity of more workers having these 21st
5 century skills and the need for even greater
6 digital connectivity and access, especially for
7 unserved and underserved minority communities.
8 Now I have the pleasure of introducing our
9 keynote speaker.

10 Former Acting FCC Chairwoman Mignon
11 Clyburn was sworn in for her first term as
12 Commissioner in August 2009 and for a second term
13 in February 2013 and served until June 6, 2018.
14 She also served as Acting FCC Chairwoman from May
15 through November 4th, 2013. While at the FCC,
16 she was dedicated to closing our nation's digital
17 divide.

18 She advocated for Lifeline
19 modernization which helps low income consumers to
20 defray the costs of broadband service. She
21 championed diversity in media ownership,
22 initiated inmate calling services reform. She

1 emphasized diversity and inclusion in STEM
2 opportunities while working to preserve a free
3 and open internet. Before her time at the FCC,
4 she spent 11 years as the member of the Sixth
5 District on the Public Service Commission of
6 South Carolina.

7 And prior to that leadership role, she
8 was publisher and general manager of her family
9 funded newspaper for 14 years, the Coastal Times,
10 a Charleston-based weekly newspaper focused
11 primarily on issues affecting the African
12 American community. An impressive person with
13 impressive background and impressive record of
14 successful public leadership and efficacy. And
15 that's our keynote speaker today. Ladies and
16 gentlemen, please help me welcome former FCC
17 Chairwoman Mignon Clyburn.

18 MS. CLYBURN: Thank you so much, Ms.
19 Allen, for that most generous introduction. And
20 good afternoon, everyone. I really am pleased to
21 be invited to take part in this, the FCC's
22 Digital Skills Gap Symposium and Town Hall.

1 It is an honor to be asked. Let me
2 say that to you. And I am pleased to see those
3 of you who remain committed to building digital
4 bridges.

5 There are many issues the Equity and
6 Diversity Council could commit its time, skills,
7 and resources to pursuing. I can think of few as
8 important in the 21st century as closing
9 persistent digital divides and advancing digital
10 literacy. I thought long and hard about the
11 message I want to leave with you today.

12 Like so many of our issues, there are
13 multiple complex layers to the challenges of
14 narrowing and ultimately eliminating this
15 existing gap. But I am confident that the
16 solution to this crucially important national
17 issue will come with the involvement and
18 courageous pursuit of this council. Today, I
19 will not yield to the temptation of speaking
20 about the levels of federal or private funding
21 committed to this effort nor will I talk about
22 specific program initiatives or benefit programs.

1 Those facts and figures are readily
2 available, well known to each of you, and
3 thoroughly discussed. Instead, I will use the
4 remainder of my time to highlight what I call a
5 path less traveled. When we speak about digital
6 equity, we are addressing an immensely wide and
7 varied spectrum of issues and constituencies.

8 At one end, we grapple with the
9 economic, social, and political logistics of
10 deploying broadband access to all Americans
11 regardless of where they live or what income
12 bracket they fall into. At the other end of the
13 spectrum, we contend with the hows, how to
14 improve digital literacy for all Americans, from
15 the disconnected to the most digitally advanced.
16 Additionally, this spectrum covers a subtext of
17 concerns that address numerous related digital
18 equity topics.

19 Just as this nation has in the past
20 realized the value in funding public works
21 projects, the Hoover Dam, the Tennessee Valley
22 Authority, and the interstate highway system, it

1 has fully and -- yes, I will say this again --
2 finally realized the value of an interconnected
3 broadband enabled nation. Some were slow to come
4 on board while others argued passionately that
5 broadband was a public good of equal importance
6 as other essential services like energy, water,
7 and telecommunications. But now we all agree
8 that we must address and navigate the complicated
9 art of delivering this public good to all
10 Americans.

11 How do we efficiently, successfully,
12 and sustainably ensure that affordable broadband
13 and digital skills literacy reaches every
14 student, every employee, every retiree, every
15 American? How do we not only work to achieve
16 ubiquitous access to broadband technology and
17 digital learning but elevate the notion that
18 acquisition of those resources represents digital
19 citizenship? And is digital citizenship a
20 nonnegotiable inalienable right for every
21 American, a bold and aspirational question, I
22 know.

1 The challenge, the opportunity for us,
2 I say, is to have bold and aspirational answers.
3 It is becoming more and more evident that one's
4 ability to engage in social discourse, conduct
5 business, shop, gain access to healthcare, find a
6 place to live or connect with loved ones are
7 severely restrained or effectively undermined
8 without access and confidence in digital
9 platforms. For those left behind on those analog
10 islands, they're not living in some resort
11 paradise.

12 Predominately low net worth and
13 disproportionately communities are color are
14 faced with the greatest barriers to full digital
15 inclusion because they are most likely the ones
16 stuck in communities with inadequate material
17 resources. Notably, health and educational
18 access lacking, lower rates of educational
19 attainment, and exclusion from those ambitious
20 and expansive infrastructure plans that we hear
21 about each and every day. Given these realities,
22 it would seem to make sense to think about

1 digital literacy and closing the digital skills
2 gap not simply in terms of how much money is
3 committed to any given program.

4 But how and where the money is
5 leveraged such that reasonably positive outcomes
6 can be gauged. I contend that we must be
7 vigilant custodians of measures of success, not
8 stickers on a specific dollar amount as measures
9 of success. Now we all can identify programs
10 where used and billions of dollars later outcomes
11 tend to be not significantly or irreversibly
12 improved.

13 And before I say another word, let the
14 record reflect that I am a sticker for fiscal
15 responsibility. What I am saying is a long term
16 strategy for learning makes sense. The creation
17 of a digital skills framework that is aligned
18 with proven approaches to learning that could be
19 standardized to teach specific target demographic
20 digital skills. That makes sense to me.

21 And if we are in this for the long
22 haul, and we are, right, we owe it to those who

1 have yet to realize the full digital promise to
2 first meet them where they are. Second, schedule
3 times to listen to what they have to say because
4 they actually have many of the answers. News
5 flash. They live it each and every day.

6 They see it. They know their
7 communities. They know their needs. And they
8 know what is more likely to work. What they lack
9 are the means and the resources to implement
10 those known to them, workable solutions.

11 Another stop on this road less
12 traveled to is to be realistic when it comes to
13 assisting households that are at or below the
14 federal poverty level. Many are challenged with
15 negative incomes meaning that their monthly
16 expenses are greater than their monthly incomes.
17 In other words, they are in perpetual debt.

18 While it is difficult for any program
19 to resolve 100 percent of any given issue, I
20 think it is both wise and responsible to remind
21 ourselves that there are demographics in real
22 danger of never achieving full digital

1 citizenship. It is doubtful that a monthly
2 credit in any amount that results in a bill with
3 a balance that is due will be manageable for that
4 household. This reality would result in a very
5 low take rate with this particular demographic.

6 So not only must we have the programs,
7 but we must be creative. Take continual reality
8 checks when it comes to resolving the digital
9 skills gap for all. As I close, I want to affirm
10 that the work this committee does is not only
11 impressive but crucial. The nation needs the
12 CEDC now more than ever.

13 And on behalf of the nation's
14 constituency that benefits as a result of your
15 thoughtful advocacy, those like me coming into
16 you from my local neighborhood library in
17 Richland County, South Carolina by choice and
18 those on the outside that are here by necessity,
19 I thank you for recognizing that no matter how
20 yeoman the work, success will not come from a
21 single step or a single agency's effort. But the
22 foundation for that success is often by a single

1 committee influencer like you. Thank you very
2 much, and I look forward to a robust discussion
3 today.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Well, my goodness. We
5 thank you so much, former Acting Chairwoman
6 Clyburn, for those stirring remarks. Let's
7 #analogislands are not a resort paradise. Yeah,
8 let's talk about that.

9 Thank you for taking time to be with
10 us today and to help us appreciate what's really
11 at stake in this pivotal moment in time. So the
12 stage has been set perfectly for our panel
13 discussion now. And it's my pleasure to
14 introduce the moderator, Heather Gate.

15 Ms. Gate is Vice President for Digital
16 Inclusion at Connected Nation. Heather also
17 serves as Chair of the CEDC. Heather is a well
18 recognized expert on digital equity, broadband
19 access, and deployment.

20 She is the perfect person to moderate
21 our panel discussion. And we're so pleased that
22 she is able to be with us here today. We turn

1 the program over to you now, Heather. Thank you.

2 MS. GATE: Thank you very much,
3 Jamila, for that warm welcome. I'm humbled by
4 it. I also want to thank Commissioner Clyburn
5 inspiring opening comments and reminding us what
6 is at stake for our discussion today.

7 We're extremely appreciative of your
8 public service and you're commitment to bridging
9 the digital divide for communities that have been
10 disproportionately represented on the wrong side
11 of the digital divide. And thank you again for
12 taking us through the road less traveled where we
13 should recognize that access should be a
14 nonnegotiable right for everyone to digital
15 citizenship and that we must be diligent on how
16 and where we spend the money and that it is very
17 important for us to meet people where they are
18 and also to listen to them. So I hope town hall
19 participants and members of the public take heed
20 to your word and the words will resonate
21 throughout the day as it is extremely relevant
22 for the conversation that we are about to have.

1 I also want to thank my fellow chair,
2 Susan Au Allen. Thank you. My apologies. I'm
3 on camera now? Okay. I want to thank Susan Au
4 Allen for opening for us today. Susan is a very
5 inspiring and passionate advocate for this space.
6 So I'm very honored to serve with her on the
7 CEDC.

8 I also want to thank Vice Chairwoman
9 Dr. Nicol Turner Lee who's a giant and an expert
10 in these matters and is our preacher when it
11 comes to expressing passion on these matters.
12 And now I would like to welcome everybody to our
13 panel segment of our agenda today. I will be
14 inviting all panelists to join us on camera
15 shortly.

16 But before I do, I want to talk a
17 little bit about why we prepared this agenda
18 today. So the challenging of the COVID-19
19 pandemic, as devastating as it has been, has
20 presented us a significant opportunity to reflect
21 on the challenges related to the digital divide.
22 As Commissioner Clyburn outlined, it took a while

1 for some people to get to where we are today and
2 that is understanding the digital divide.

3 But it is also an opportunity for us
4 to fix the challenges of the digital divide that
5 have persisted throughout the ages. So in
6 November 2021, President Biden signed the 1.2
7 trillion dollar Infrastructure Investment and
8 Jobs Act, also known as IIJA, also known as the
9 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This historic and
10 bipartisan legislation included 65 billion
11 dollars for addressing broadband infrastructure
12 and adoption.

13 Now this is broken down into 42.4
14 billion dollars for a Broadband Equity, Access,
15 and Deployment program that you will hear more
16 about later on our agenda, also known as BEAD,
17 which primarily focuses on funding deployment of
18 high speed internet infrastructure but also
19 supports job training and providing equipment
20 need and driving collaboration to get everyone
21 online. 14.2 billion dollars of the funding is
22 targeted toward Affordable Connectivity Program.

1 And this program is designed to help consumers
2 with discounts for high speed broadband and
3 devices.

4 2.75 billion dollars of the funding is
5 for digital equity programs. The funding is
6 designed for three different programs that
7 collectively help states develop digital equity
8 plans and advance activities related to advancing
9 digital equity and inclusion, including workforce
10 development and digital skills training. The
11 rest of the funding goes towards a series of
12 programs including Tribal Broadband Connectivity
13 Program, Middle Mile Broadband program and other
14 smaller grant programs that existed prior to the
15 Broadband Infrastructure Law.

16 This marks a pivotal moment in our
17 country's history because we have a great
18 opportunity to ensure that everyone has access to
19 high speed internet connections, affordable
20 devices, digital skills, and the tools necessary
21 to participate in our democracy, and the economy
22 of the 21st century. It goes without saying that

1 we must work together with a unified purpose of
2 advancing digital equity and addressing access
3 and adoption issues that have plagued vulnerable
4 communities and now a nation, despite all the
5 work that we have been doing throughout the
6 years. Nothing could have made these issues more
7 apparent than the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020.

8 They exposed challenges faced by
9 children who did not have access to connectivity
10 and devices at home. They expose challenges for
11 older adults who did not have the digital skills
12 or access to devices in order to be able to
13 schedule vaccination appointments or the workers
14 who were not able to enjoy the opportunities to
15 telework. So the question is why are we here
16 today.

17 We are here today because the
18 Innovation and Access Working Group of the CEDC
19 aims to contribute to a diversity framework that
20 could inform the development of a national
21 digital upscaling plan. Given the backdrop of
22 the unprecedented funding opportunities, the

1 working group feels that it is important to have
2 this frank discussion about a digital skills
3 challenge in the United States on this platform.
4 Research shows us that the United States ranks
5 29th on the global platform on digital literacy.

6 As a result, American and global
7 employers are struggling to fill millions of
8 middle skill positions. Estimates suggests that
9 investments in upscaling training workers with
10 digital skills can boost the world's GDP over six
11 trillion dollars by the end of the decade.

12 Additionally, the Innovation and Access Working
13 Group believes that the United States must
14 develop and deploy new models of community-based
15 digital upscaling or rescaling or job pairing.

16 Further, given the demographics of
17 America's digital skills gap, such models must
18 address equity and diversity in all actionable
19 solutions. Therefore, the working group has
20 invited a diverse group of subject matter experts
21 from across the country to today's town hall
22 forum. The town all participants will share

1 their perspectives on digital upscaling, best
2 practices, lessons learned, and innovative ideas.
3 The town hall participants include
4 representatives from faith-based institutions,
5 civil rights organizations, digital literacy
6 services, local governments, and historical Black
7 colleges and universities.

8 And so with further ado, I would like
9 to introduce our panel. The Innovation and
10 Access Working Group felt that it was prudent to
11 proceed the town hall discussion with a panel
12 discussion with an amazing group of leaders who
13 can share critical information on the IIJA
14 programs and how we can effectively ensure an
15 effective rollout of funding and success in
16 moving the needle in bridging the digital divide
17 and advancing digital equity as the IIJA
18 requires. This panel will essentially help to
19 set the stage for the town hall -- hello? Can
20 you hear me? Okay.

21 Now I would like to introduce
22 our panelists. And as I introduce you, please --

1 I'm being muted for some reason. Okay. I'm back
2 on. So I would like to introduce Rashann Duvall.
3 And Rashann, feel free to turn your camera on.
4 Rashann is the Assistant Division Chief in
5 Telecommunication Access Policy Division of the
6 Wireline Competition Bureau with the Federal
7 Communications Commission. Thank you for joining
8 us.

9 I would like to introduce Angela
10 Bennett. Angela is the Digital Equity Director
11 with the United States Department of Commerce,
12 National Telecommunications and Information
13 Administration. Welcome, Angela.

14 I would like to introduce John
15 Horrigan. John is a senior fellow with the
16 Benton Institute for Broadband and Society.
17 Welcome, John.

18 I'm going to introduce Angela Siefer.
19 Angela is the Executive Director of the National
20 Digital Inclusion Alliance. Welcome, Angela.

21 I'll introduce Sally Doty. She's the
22 Director of the Mississippi Broadband Office.

1 Sally, if you're here, if you can jump on camera.

2 Okay. I will go ahead and introduce
3 Katherine while we wait. Katherine Keegan is the
4 Director of Colorado Department of Labor, Office
5 of the Future of Work. Okay. And Jeff is -- is
6 Sally with us?

7 Well, I'll go ahead and get started on
8 our panel. Thank you so much, panel, for joining
9 us today. I'll begin with you, Rashann.
10 Rashann, thank you again for joining us. Can you
11 talk about the FCC's role in implementing the
12 IIJA, specifically the Affordable Connectivity
13 Program? Can you offer a description of the
14 program and its status today, who is eligible to
15 participate, and how you can participate?

16 MS. DUVALL: Sure. Thank you,
17 Heather. And thank you for your outstanding
18 leadership of the CEDC. Good afternoon,
19 everyone.

20 As Heather mentioned, my name is
21 Rashann Duvall, and I'm an Assistant Division
22 Chief in the Telecommunications Access Policy

1 Division in the FCC's Wireline Competition
2 Bureau. I'm a member of the team that works on
3 the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program. It is
4 great to have this opportunity today to speak
5 with you all about the FCC's Affordable
6 Connectivity Program, and thank you to the CEDC
7 Chairwoman and her co-chairs, the members of the
8 CEDC, and the FCC staff involved in putting this
9 event together today.

10 The Affordable Connectivity Program
11 was created under the Infrastructure Investment
12 and Jobs Act. You'll hear us referring to that
13 as the Infrastructure Act throughout the panel
14 today. And Congress allotted 14.2 billion
15 dollars for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

16 Some of you may be familiar with its
17 predecessor program which was the Emergency
18 Broadband Benefit Program which that was created
19 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The
20 Affordable Connectivity Program began on December
21 31st, 2021. The Affordable Connectivity Program
22 provides a discount off an eligible household's

1 monthly broadband bill and a one-time device
2 discount.

3 The monthly service discount is up to
4 30 dollars a month for broadband service
5 including associated equipment rentals and up to
6 74 dollars a month for households on qualifying
7 tribal lands. There's also a one-time device
8 discount that is up to 100 dollars to purchase a
9 laptop, desktop, computer, or table from
10 participating providers if the eligible household
11 contributes more than 10 dollars and less than 50
12 dollars towards the purchase price of that
13 device. The benefit is limited to one per
14 household.

15 In terms of who is eligible, a
16 household is eligible if it participates in a
17 number of federal assistance programs or has an
18 income that is at or below 200 percent of the
19 federal poverty guidelines. The types of
20 assistance programs that qualify are SNAP,
21 Medicaid, federal public housing assistance, SSI,
22 WIC, or the Lifeline program. You can also

1 qualify by participating in tribal-specific
2 programs such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs
3 general assistance, tribal TANF, or a food
4 distribution program on Indian reservations.

5 Households that are approved to
6 receive benefits under the free and reduced price
7 school lunch program or the school benefit school
8 breakfast program, including the USDA Community
9 Eligibility Provision also known as CEP.

10 Households are also eligible if they received a
11 federal Pell Grant during the current award year
12 or if they meet the eligibility criterial for
13 participating providers existing low income
14 program. Households would qualify for the
15 program by submitting an application. And
16 applications are available at
17 AffordableConnectivity.gov.

18 I believe at the end of the panel,
19 we'll be circulating a link with just more
20 general information about the Affordable
21 Connectivity Program. And then that link will
22 also include the actual link for submitting

1 applications for the program. And just to
2 highlight and give people some numbers because I
3 know people like to hear numbers, we've seen
4 extensive growth in the Affordable Connectivity
5 Program since it launched in December, both in
6 terms of participation by households and
7 providers. And currently we are at over 13
8 million households enrolled in the ACP program.

9 MS. GATE: Thank you, Rashann. That
10 was great information. And we will share the
11 details at the end of the panel. Angela Bennett,
12 in March, it was announced that the NTIA was
13 hiring the first digital equity director,
14 signaling the first -- signaling a commitment to
15 digital equity by them having it in the title.

16 And I read in article published by
17 NTIA actually that this is the first ever
18 position in a federal government to have the
19 digital equity in it. So that's exciting. It
20 really does signal a commitment to fixing the
21 problem if you're willing to define it within a
22 job facility. So can you tell us a little bit

1 about your role at the NTIA? And also can you
2 talk a little bit about the DEA and what the NTIA
3 is doing?

4 MS. BENNETT: Okay. Well, thanks a
5 lot, Heather. And what I want to also note is
6 that not only did the federal government and the
7 President and Congress create the title and the
8 position because so often we see these positions
9 without funding to support and drive the work.
10 So the funding that's behind the position to help
11 fund and drive the work is really what makes it
12 so transformative for our country.

13 And so what we are charged with doing
14 in the digital equity program is to through the
15 planning and capacity grants work directly with
16 states and help them develop their state digital
17 equity plans. And what that looks like is we
18 have federal program officers that are assigned
19 to each state not just to manage the programs but
20 to really be that boots on the ground and engage
21 with communities. And so we're modeling what
22 robust engagement looks like and not only just

1 having the community come to our table. But we
2 are actually going out to the community's
3 planning table and listening and hearing from
4 them what their needs and desires are for their
5 community because they are the ones who do know
6 best.

7 MS. GATE: Thank you. Thank you so
8 much. So John, welcome. We are honored to have
9 you on this panel as a renowned expert on data
10 and just helping us understand the reality of the
11 digital divide. Tell us about your work to help
12 us level set for the discussion later on today.

13 Where are we today as far as the
14 digital divide? Who is most affected by it, and
15 where do they live? Also, if you have data on
16 digital scaling as well, that'll be great.

17 MR. HERRIGAN: Sure, Heather. Thank
18 you and thanks to the FCC and the Committee for
19 inviting me today. In terms of the digital
20 divide, we've seen over the past decade a steady
21 narrowing of the digital divide mostly because of
22 the uptake of mobile devices for people. There

1 are still significant adoption gaps across the
2 lines of race and ethnicity, particularly severe
3 divides when you look at income.

4 Low income Americans are as likely to
5 have a wireline subscription at home than upper
6 income Americans. And we see also among low
7 income Americans a departure from the norm of
8 access. And by that, I mean today the norm for
9 internet access for most Americans is to have two
10 robust ways to get online, a wireline
11 subscription at home and a mobile device with a
12 smart data plan.

13 Most Americans have two. Lower income
14 Americans can only afford one typically and they
15 have to choose. And oftentimes that's a mobile
16 device only which as we learned in the pandemic
17 has severe limits for carrying out tasks like
18 homework and telehealth. So I think it's
19 important to keep an eye on the ball of the
20 demographics of the digital divide which still as
21 I said is along lines of race and ethnicity,
22 particularly severe for low income Americans.

1 And I think also we become much more
2 attuned in the past couple years to the geography
3 of the digital divide. In terms of low uptake of
4 services, there are low income areas in American
5 cities with extremely low broadband adoption
6 rates. I live in Baltimore and I know of census
7 tracks where a third or fewer of households have
8 wireline broadband access.

9 So we know that the gaps exist. We
10 have a good feel for where they are in terms of
11 adoptions. We also know a couple things about
12 digital skills. One is if you look at survey
13 data, there's significant demand for digital
14 skills training.

15 And then secondly, it works, which is
16 to say we know from research training for digital
17 skills does have a positive impact on the scope
18 of online activities that people do. So I'm
19 happy to be here and be part of the discussion.
20 I'll turn it back to you for now, Heather.

21 MS. GATE: Thank you, John. And thank
22 you for pointing out the importance of digital

1 skills and that it works because sometimes it
2 gets overlooked by the very nature of the fact
3 that sometimes there's value in a person earning
4 quality of life skills that are not necessarily
5 registering at a college level or certification
6 level. But yet the experience of participating
7 in a class and leaving that classroom with a
8 level of comfort about going online, it's very
9 important. So thank you for introducing that.

10 Angela, thank you for joining us. And
11 congratulations on the great work. In July, I
12 read that in the -- well, I know that NDIA
13 released its first impact report, and it's a
14 fantastic report that indicates that NDIA has
15 over 750 affiliates in 48 states and that NDIA is
16 galvanizing a community of digital inclusion
17 practitioner and giving them a voice on platforms
18 such as this which prior to this was a very big
19 challenge for small digital inclusion
20 practitioners. And so can you talk a little bit
21 about why this is important, especially as we
22 prepare to develop plans for digital equity and

1 broadband plans? Why is coalition building
2 important? And why was it important for you to
3 lead?

4 MS. SIEFER: Thanks, Heather. It's
5 awesome to be here with you all. This is a rock
6 star panel. So NDIA, we formed it about seven
7 and a half, eight years ago because as you
8 mentioned those folks that are doing the digital
9 inclusion work on the ground did not have a
10 voice.

11 I think our 2.75 billion shows they do
12 now have a voice. They also included ACP and
13 other resources that we have now. So NDIA is a
14 place for those folks to talk to each other,
15 peer-to-peer network.

16 We have lots of resources on the
17 website, DigitalInclusion.org. But also we do
18 keep taking what we learn from the folks locally
19 and explaining to policymakers what the realities
20 are on the ground. And one of those realities is
21 the one John just described about folks needing
22 both, a mobile connection and a wireline

1 connection. So I really loved that covered that.

2 We see coalitions as really
3 essentially to moving the work forward because we
4 need to make sure that we are recognizing
5 existing assets and then not duplicating services
6 and learning from what's out there which often
7 happens when people talk to each other, right?
8 And so that's a really important role of the
9 coalitions and the states. And I'm sure we're
10 going to hear about this in a little bit, the
11 engagement that the state folks are doing around
12 talking to local folks.

13 The digital equity work is really a
14 local exercise. It's a local activity, right?
15 Who's teaching someone how to use the internet?
16 They're not doing it from the state capital,
17 right? They're doing it from the town where that
18 person is.

19 Who's helping them sign up for
20 broadband service? Who's explaining ACP? It
21 tends to be somebody in that area because there
22 are social considerations. There's language,

1 there's culture, right?

2 There's all the things that come with
3 trust. And if we don't have trust, then we're
4 not going to make the gains that we all want to
5 make. And so what we're seeing right now is the
6 need for all hands on deck, right? Like,
7 everybody needs to be engaged in this, and I'm
8 excited about how the states are going to gather
9 folks together.

10 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. I think
11 what's exciting is that the IIJA recognizes the
12 importance of stakeholder engagement. And so it
13 is in line with what NDIA was really -- has been
14 doing for eight years.

15 And now the next two speakers, we're
16 honored to have two representatives for state
17 offices. And state offices have this awesome and
18 challenging task of managing the big grants and
19 getting things done. And I'm sure they will talk
20 about how they would love for you to all
21 participate and help along the way. So I am
22 going to say hello to Sally. I just want to do a

1 sound check. How are you doing?

2 MS. DOTY: I'm good. Is my sound
3 coming through?

4 MS. GATE: Perfect, perfect, perfect,
5 perfect. So congratulations on your appointment
6 as the director of Mississippi's broadband
7 office. I love the name, BEAD. Just makes me
8 smile. Can you talk about your office's role in
9 the state and what folks can expect from you in
10 the coming months, especially as the money starts
11 rolling in for BEAD and for DEA?

12 MS. DOTY: I certainly will. And
13 thank you for having me today. So we are a new
14 broadband office. I think, Mississippi, we came
15 in under the wire and we're one of the last
16 states to stand up a broadband office.

17 And we did that through legislation
18 this year. So we really began work on July 1 of
19 this year. So a lot of we're working as hard and
20 as fast as we can, swimming as fast as we can.

21 But our office will be coordinating
22 the capital projects fund, BEAD funding, and also

1 the digital equity and inclusion fund. We are in
2 the process of hiring a contract worker right now
3 to manage that program for us. And I think we've
4 got somebody great.

5 I'm coming to you right now from the
6 children's section of the library in Holmes
7 County, Mississippi. Holmes County is a county
8 of about 17,000 people, has a 34 percent poverty
9 rate. Median income is about 24,000.

10 And they had a program set up today.
11 I was in the legislature prior to my time here.
12 And so several of my legislative friends had a
13 meeting this morning.

14 And so we were here to talk about
15 broadband access and half of the county is
16 unserved, totally unserved. So we were talking
17 about strategies, not only for service but then
18 looking ahead to these issues of accessibility
19 and affordability. Met some great people this
20 morning, and really that's what we're going to be
21 doing around the state working with these
22 different communities, of course.

1 We have already formed a core planning
2 team for our digital equity plan that's going to
3 be required. And we've met twice. Andy Berke
4 came down and visited with us. He was in town in
5 Jackson, Mississippi for an announcement of a
6 tribal grant.

7 And so we took that opportunity to
8 have our first meeting of our core planning team.
9 And he kind of got us all inspired. And we met
10 again yesterday, and we really have such a great
11 group of people at the table who can talk about
12 existing programs that we have in Mississippi
13 because we don't want to reinvent the wheel.

14 We want to spend our money very
15 carefully and to have the most impact that we
16 can. So we had our state land grant institution,
17 Mississippi State. We had their extension
18 service there. We think they're going to be a
19 valuable partner.

20 The Mississippi Library Commission,
21 their deputy director was there. They are
22 already very engaged. And in fact, I'm in

1 Lexington, Mississippi. I knew I could find WiFi
2 at the local library, so that's why I'm here.

3 So they're doing a tremendous job
4 already. We want to help support them and then
5 just other organizations throughout the state.
6 So we're at the beginning of this. There really
7 has not been a lot of planning as far as digital
8 equity in the state of Mississippi. So we're
9 looking forward to having a good plan to submit
10 and really get to work here in our state because
11 there seems to be so many needs here.

12 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. And
13 this is unplanned, but thank you for joining us
14 from Exhibit 1 where the place where digital
15 literacy training has been happening for many
16 years and providing access to internet people
17 that didn't have service at home. So libraries
18 continue to play a critical role in digital
19 skills training. They also continue to
20 experience significant challenges in terms of
21 funding and sustaining training programs.

22 So this is a good time for libraries

1 to also be part of the conversation because
2 they're important. Katherine, thank you again
3 for joining. You work for the Colorado
4 Department of Labor's office of the Future of
5 Work.

6 If there's nothing that's more
7 progressive than an office called the Future of
8 Work, I don't know. To me, it seems to represent
9 Colorado's commitment to training and upscaling a
10 workforce, an ever changing global economy, which
11 is a great idea to have a such an office. Can
12 you tell us more about this office and how it
13 came about and then you're priorities in that
14 office?

15 MS. KEEGAN: Yeah, absolutely. And
16 thank you for the opportunity to be part of this
17 panel. It's so exciting to hear from everyone.
18 And these are all the experts I reach out to and
19 organizations that helped us with the work we've
20 done so far. So it's great to be among them.

21 So yeah, the Office of the Future of
22 Work is an office that is relatively new. It was

1 established in September of 2019 through an
2 executive order from Governor Polis here in
3 Colorado. And so when the office was
4 established, it was tasked with raising awareness
5 about what the future of work looks like in
6 Colorado and then identifying policy and program
7 solutions so that we can have a skilled and
8 resilient workforce.

9 So starting in September 2019 a few
10 months before the pandemic hit was an interesting
11 time to be thinking about the future of work
12 because it was certainly a buzzwordy term before
13 the pandemic and even more so now is on the top
14 of everyone's mind is how do we manage these
15 types of changes, how do we build resilience for
16 workers, employers, and communities. So the
17 office has a few key initiatives that it
18 oversees, one of which is our state
19 apprenticeship agency. So we believe
20 apprenticeships and work-based learning are the
21 future of work because skills are changing so
22 rapidly.

1 Needs of employers are changing. And
2 so building that lifelong learning culture and on
3 ramps and off ramps to education and work are
4 critical for our success. And then also we
5 oversee the state's digital equity, literacy, and
6 inclusion initiatives.

7 So when the office was established, we
8 were looking at places where there wasn't that
9 coordinating effort at the state level for things
10 that needed that coordination and were part of
11 the needs for the future of work. And so the
12 digital divide was a huge piece of that as
13 technology becomes part of -- is already a part
14 of everyone's job and every job is tech enabled.
15 And as technology creates new jobs for people, we
16 knew that there needed to be this coordinating
17 effort.

18 We were lucky to have a broadband
19 office in place already, a great broadband office
20 that is really focused on that infrastructure
21 side of things and has been. And so we had the
22 opportunity to think more about the adoption and

1 where we need to understand the gaps, how we
2 identify and fund those interventions that really
3 work to close that divide and increase that
4 option. So we are in partnership with the
5 broadband office as well as Colorado's office of
6 eHealth innovation leading the state planning
7 effort.

8 We also have some state funding from
9 legislation last year to deploy digital
10 navigators. So learning a lot from all the
11 resources from NDIA and Digital US to think about
12 how we do that most effectively, both to close
13 the divide and connect those that are
14 disconnected but also to inform our state plan
15 and really understand where the gaps are. And
16 then we convene various committees.

17 So we have one that will be focused on
18 the state agency partners, recognizing that we
19 all -- as we turn more and more services online,
20 how do we make sure that everyone has access and
21 the resources to benefit from our public
22 services. But then also have a digital equity

1 committee that's made up of our community-based
2 organizations and those that engage lived experts
3 and the disconnected across the state. So those
4 are our key initiatives within the digital
5 equity, literacy, and inclusion space. We have a
6 lot of work to do but excited for that work
7 ahead.

8 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. I noted
9 something interesting in listening to both of
10 you, Sally and Katherine, cross agency
11 collaboration. I think it's very critical when
12 we're talking about digital equity to not be in a
13 tunnel and sort of recognize the importance of
14 bringing those conversations into healthcare
15 because of telehealth and the different parts of
16 what constitutes digital equity. So that's
17 really great to know.

18 Angela Bennett, I'm going to go back
19 to you. So the great news is we have passed the
20 initial deadlines for apply for planning money.
21 And it's all states and U.S. territories that
22 have submitted their application -- yay,

1 everybody is doing the work or getting started --
2 and 470 tribal governments. So can you talk a
3 little bit about that and the connection between
4 BEAD and the DEA?

5 MS. BENNETT: So as far as the
6 connection between how the two programs work
7 together?

8 MS. GATE: Yes, yes.

9 MS. BENNETT: Okay. So yes, happy
10 that all states and territories and we had an
11 unprecedented number of tribal entities submit
12 their letters of intent. So Louisiana has
13 already received their award. They were the
14 first state to receive both their BEAD and DE
15 award.

16 And then early October, we will be
17 rolling out additional awards as well. And so
18 states will have one year to develop their
19 digital equity plans. And they will have 270
20 days to develop their BEAD plans.

21 And in the statute and the NOFO
22 requires that they both work together. So what

1 we're seeing is states working together. We're
2 requiring robust local engagement as evidenced by
3 Sally, right?

4 She right in the engagement as we
5 speak, right? And so what we're encourage is
6 instead of going out for BEAD and going out for
7 DE because the covered populations -- what's
8 defined as covered populations in digital equity
9 are underrepresented communities in BEAD. So
10 we're serving the same population.

11 So just really collaborating, having
12 the two departments as you're seeing with Sally
13 and Katherine, that interagency approach. And
14 what the President, President Biden talks about
15 the whole of nation approach. And so as we look
16 at this funding, it's not just NTIA or the states
17 rolling out their plans.

18 But it's really all of the federal
19 agencies working together. It's the states
20 crossing their agencies. It's working closely
21 with community-based organizations and even our
22 organizations that don't normally are at the

1 table.

2 And so states are kind of peeling back
3 that layer and just reaching those who have been
4 left out and left behind. So it's really going
5 to take all of us. And what's so great that we
6 see with the states, all of the states applying
7 is that everyone is really moving towards a space
8 where they're getting comfortable with being
9 uncomfortable.

10 Asking those challenging questions,
11 trying to identify what are those barriers, and
12 being willing to think about those solutions.
13 And the beauty of all of this is I want to say
14 the stars are all aligned. You have the states
15 and territories and tribal entities on board.
16 You have funding that's available, and you had a
17 pandemic that amplified all of these needs.

18 And so what we're seeing is people
19 truly coming together. And even if we may
20 disagree on different tactics and practices, what
21 we are all aligned on is mission. And that's to
22 ensure that every American household has access

1 to affordable, reliable high speed internet and
2 the tools and resources so that they can thrive.

3 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. I'm
4 going to move to Angela Siefert. In looking ahead
5 now that the money is starting to roll out, what
6 advice would you offer the community
7 organizations and local state leaders in
8 developing these plans? What would it take to be
9 successful? And if you have an example because I
10 know some of these have done these plans before.
11 So if you have any examples to share, that'll be
12 great as well.

13 MS. SIEFER: Sure. So we really
14 encourage we talk to each other, right? Start
15 out by figuring out who's already doing digital
16 equity work, remembering that they're not going
17 to call it digital equity. They're probably not
18 going to call it digital inclusion.

19 They might say computer trainings.
20 They might say we're refurbishing computers.
21 They might use a variety of descriptors for what
22 it is that they're doing. But find them, even if

1 it's, like, that one person in the church
2 basement that offers help with devices on
3 Tuesdays from 4:00 to 7:00, right?

4 Like, there is -- that just means you
5 still have a resource. That means you already --
6 there's somebody already in town who sees that
7 there's a need and sees that there's a resource
8 that needs to be provided to the community
9 members. So gather those folks together.

10 Start from a place of assets, right?
11 You're not starting from nothing. It's, not,
12 like our community needs all these things. Yes,
13 they do need things but start from a place of
14 positivity.

15 Yes, we are an awesome community and
16 here's what we have. And let's then figure out
17 what our gaps are. And we're going to fill those
18 in with some of the folks that are already doing
19 it, right?

20 So being able to scale programs that
21 already exist and then bring in the programs
22 where it's missing. But I think it's that

1 connecting to each other and talking to each
2 other is how we're going to move this forward.
3 And it's also then finding the partners for this
4 long term work because the other part that's a
5 little bit scary to talk about but I feel like we
6 need to do it is we're not actually going to
7 solve the digital divide.

8 I don't know if anybody wants to say
9 that out loud by the administration. But we're
10 going to make amazing gains. We're going to,
11 like, do really important work, and we're going
12 to learn lots of great things. But then we have
13 to figure out how to keep it going because the
14 technology is going to keep changing which is
15 going to keep confusing all of us.

16 And unless somebody has some magic
17 bullet, I don't know how we're going to solve
18 inequity in this country or anywhere in the world
19 really. So since those two things are going to
20 keep happening, we're going to have to keep
21 figuring out how do we help folks learn the next
22 new technology. How do we help folks have the

1 right device? How do we help folks make sure
2 that they can afford connectivity at home and
3 that they know how to use it?

4 So because that's going to continue
5 on, having the conversations about, yes, let's do
6 some amazing things right now. But at the same
7 point, let's figure out how to set up systems so
8 that this will move forward. And a lot of times,
9 those systems come from partnerships because we
10 have to find resources in places we may not have
11 looked for resources in order to keep the work
12 going.

13 MS. GATE: Thank you. And you bring
14 up a very interesting point about the digital
15 divide being nuanced and ever changing. And the
16 way we divide the digital divide today may not
17 stand in five years. And I guess the discussion
18 around that is always when we create these plans,
19 does it make sense to make them living, breathing
20 documents that will evolve with time and so that
21 they remain relevant and we look towards the
22 future?

1 And this is my pet peeve I would like
2 to mention. We cannot future proof technology.
3 That word aggravates me. You cannot future proof
4 because it gives a sense of we can solve it,
5 right?

6 We have to be open to evolution. So
7 I appreciate your point, Angela. So I wanted to
8 go back to ACP a little bit.

9 ACP obviously we can't begin to talk
10 about digital scaling until people actually have
11 access to connectivity. And so that makes it
12 really important. John, you recently did a study
13 on ACP enrollment by county to determine how well
14 communities were positioned to take advantage of
15 funding to promote digital equity. What were
16 your key findings in this study, and what can
17 communities and states looking to use funding to
18 advance digital equity learn from this?

19 MR. HERRIGAN: Sure, happy to talk
20 about this and point out this work was sort of a
21 1.0 effort doing some analysis of ACP enrollment.
22 I'm working with Hernan Galperin at USC and Brian

1 Whitacre at Oklahoma State on a Version 2.0. So
2 I do want to thank my collaborators on this
3 project going forward.

4 The motivation for looking at ACP
5 enrollment rates and performance in specific
6 geographies came from this observation. When you
7 look in any given city, you can look at the ACP
8 data and you can look at ZIP codes that have very
9 similar demographic and economic profiles yet
10 very different rates of ACP enrollment. And so
11 my puzzle that I was trying to solve was why is
12 that.

13 Why do places that look pretty similar
14 have very different ACP enrollment rates? And we
15 have a couple of findings that I think are
16 relevant to practitioners. One is rely on
17 community anchor institutions. Not really
18 necessarily breaking news on that, but places
19 with public libraries perform better with ACP
20 enrollment than places without public libraries.
21 And other anchor institutions can be brought into
22 that mix.

1 The other point is that outreach works
2 and that existing community assets make a
3 difference. I talked to my friends in Cleveland
4 who mentioned to me that they targeted by ZIP
5 code certain areas with advertising and outreach.
6 So I looked at those areas and sure enough they
7 were doing much better with ACP enrollments than
8 places without.

9 I should say overall Cleveland is a
10 city doing pretty well with ACP enrollment. But
11 places that got the outreach were doing even
12 better. In my own city of Baltimore, I'm aware
13 of neighborhoods that have had some significant
14 investment in trying to deal with abandoned
15 homes, try to basically overall increase a level
16 of social capital in these communities through
17 investments from local philanthropy, et cetera.

18 And they are going better with ACP
19 enrollment. So there's a way to match the asset
20 mapping with ACP enrollment that I think
21 communities should look at. Places with assets
22 that can affect positive change in a community

1 can be conduits to ACP enrollment.

2 And the data shows that these
3 strategies can be effective. So going to be
4 doing more analysis on this. But I think those
5 would be important takeaways on ACP enrollment.

6 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. Well,
7 your study really validates what we knew -- what
8 we suspected at least, that outreach works.
9 Meeting people where they are with local outreach
10 and having community institutions involved is
11 critical for success.

12 And so on that note, I'm going to go
13 back to you, Rashann. The FCC has rightfully
14 prioritized supporting outreach and awareness
15 activities for ACP. Can you talk a little bit
16 about the ACP toolkit that you all put together?
17 Who can access it and where can we find it? What
18 does it include?

19 MS. DUVALL: Sure. So thank you for
20 that. As the Commission has previously
21 acknowledged and many of the panelists and
22 attendees are well aware, there's still a need

1 for more outreach to raise awareness of and
2 encourage participation in the Affordable
3 Connectivity Program amongst eligible households.
4 The FCC understands that local trusted partners
5 are best positioned to raise awareness in their
6 communities, kind of along the lines of what John
7 was saying.

8 And with that in mind, we've created
9 a number of easy to use materials for partners
10 and others. These tools are free to use.
11 They're downloadable, and they're customizable.
12 And we be circulating a link at the end that will
13 have the exact link where you can access all of
14 these materials. But they're available on the
15 FCC's website.

16 These materials are available in
17 English, Spanish, and ten other languages. The
18 FCC can print these items and mail them to
19 outreach partners across the country upon
20 request. And the FCC is continuing -- while we
21 have a lot of robust materials on the website,
22 we're continuing to expand and build out on these

1 materials.

2 We also maintain an ACP partner email
3 list. And if you weren't aware of that, the link
4 that we circulate about that as well will also
5 contain information about how organizations or
6 individuals can join the ACP partner email list.
7 Some of the materials available on the FCC's
8 website include social media material such as
9 social media images, logos, draft posts,
10 newsletter inserts. We also have printables such
11 as flyers, fact sheets, cards, posters, handouts.

12 We have videos and PSAs. And in
13 addition, we have specific resources with
14 specific topics. For example, we have some
15 materials with a back to school theme.

16 We have resources that are
17 specifically focused on the enhanced tribal
18 benefit. And then we have resources specifically
19 for government partners and others that
20 administer the underlying qualifying benefits
21 program. And I do also want to highlight that
22 the FCC has also been very active in conducting

1 extensive outreach concerning the Affordable
2 Connectivity Program. In between November 2021
3 and August 2022, the FCC has completed 545
4 presentations, discussions, train the trainer
5 events, virtual town halls and briefings, and our
6 outreach efforts are ongoing.

7 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. Last
8 month, the FCC also adopted the ACP outreach
9 grant program and the Your Home, Your Internet
10 pilot program. Can you give us an overview of
11 those programs and the next steps for the
12 communities?

13 MS. DUVALL: Sure. So the outreach
14 grant program as you noted, the FCC established
15 that program in August of 2022. That program
16 will provide selected eligible governmental and
17 nongovernmental entities funding to conduct
18 outreach to increase awareness of and encourage
19 participation in the affordable connectivity
20 program among eligible low income households.
21 The outreach grant program is actually one of the
22 first grant programs that the FCC is ever going

1 to run.

2 The application window for the grant
3 program is not yet open. I know that's critical
4 information and we do get a lot of calls from
5 people saying, is it ready? Are you ready for us
6 to apply yet?

7 Additional information outlining the
8 application process, application window, and
9 program requirements will be announced in a
10 notice of funding opportunity. And we're
11 anticipating a fall NOFO release. The outreach
12 grant program will support a wide range of
13 activities including but not limited to in-person
14 events, literature campaigns, digital campaigns,
15 and paid media campaigns to provide meaningful,
16 effective, affordable connectivity program
17 outreach tailored to targeted communities.

18 Just in the August order, it outlined
19 the following funding amounts for the outreach
20 grant program. There's 60 million for a general
21 competitive grant allocation which includes up to
22 27 million for minimum allocations to eligible

1 entities in each state, D.C., and the U.S.
2 territories. Ten million will be set aside for
3 tribal outreach.

4 Up to 5 million will be set aside for
5 participants in the digital -- sorry, the ACP
6 navigator pilot and also in the Your Home, Your
7 Internet pilot, both of which I will discuss
8 next. In terms of the Your Home, Your Internet
9 pilot program which was also established in
10 August of 2022, the goal of this pilot is to
11 increase awareness of the Affordable Connectivity
12 Program among federal housing assistance
13 recipients and facilitate enrollment in the
14 program by coupling targeted outreach with hands
15 on application assistance. This pilot program
16 will be open to state and local housing
17 authorities, travel designated housing entities,
18 other state regional or local government
19 entities, and community partners.

20 The application window for this pilot
21 program also is not open yet. Additional
22 information about the application window and

1 application process is forthcoming and will also
2 be available on the FCC's website. For this
3 pilot program, selected participants will have
4 limited access to the national verifier which is
5 a system that uses automated database connections
6 to verify applicant eligibility.

7 And we'll also provide that access to
8 application assistance or navigators to help
9 federal housing assistance recipients apply for
10 the ACP benefit. Pilot participants will be
11 invited to propose application assistant tools
12 and to test their effectiveness in the pilot
13 which the Commission will evaluate. And pilot
14 participants or pilot applicants will be able to
15 submit proposals for specialized ACP outreach
16 materials including promotion materials that are
17 directed to federal housing assistance recipients
18 and organizations.

19 And I think, Heather, you mentioned
20 the Your Home, Your Internet pilot and the
21 outreach grant program. I also wanted to
22 highlight the ACP navigator pilot program which

1 was also -- this was established in January of
2 2022. But we have not yet opened the application
3 period or process yet for this program.

4 And through this pilot, the FCC would
5 provide selected participants access to the
6 national verifier for purposes of helping
7 applicants complete and submit their application.
8 This pilot program will be open to public
9 schools, public school districts, and local,
10 state, or tribal government entities. Nonprofit
11 organizations are not eligible to apply for the
12 ACP navigator pilot program. However, neutral
13 nonprofit organizations may partner with
14 organizations selected to participate in that
15 pilot. And those partnerships must be disclosed
16 to the FCC.

17 As I mentioned, the application window
18 for this pilot program is not yet open and
19 additional information about the application
20 window and application process is forthcoming and
21 will be available on the FCC's website. And as I
22 noted while we have these two pilot program

1 opportunities which are separate from the
2 outreach grant program. There is some money that
3 has been set aside in the outreach grant program
4 order, specifically for participants in these two
5 pilot programs.

6 MS. GATE: Thank you so much, Rashann.
7 So it really makes sense for -- especially for a
8 town hall meeting to understand that particularly
9 for digital literacy training and digital scaling
10 are also good candidates for applying for funding
11 for outreach activity because as the data shows,
12 those places make sense to elevate outreach
13 activities. So thank you so much for sharing
14 that information.

15 And just to add, outreach and
16 awareness for ACP can be a funded activity in the
17 DEA application as well. On that note, I'm going
18 to go back to you, Angela. Angela, according to
19 the NOFO, next week is when NTIA will begin
20 releasing planning money for DEA. What can
21 organizations do to support the process? And who
22 can they reach out to in order to be part of the

1 process?

2 MS. BENNETT: As I mentioned, one,
3 they should be reaching out to their states,
4 their state broadband offices, and making sure
5 that their voices are heard and inviting the
6 state offices to their communities to kind of
7 share what their challenges are, share the great
8 work that's happening. We're also at NTIA
9 visiting communities. And what we know and what
10 we're continuing confirm is that a lot of our
11 communities are doing the work with very limited
12 resources and have been able to accomplish a
13 great amount with those limited resources.

14 So bringing additional resources to
15 those communities really will be able to help
16 lift up their work. Communities can also reach
17 out to us. As I mentioned earlier, NTIA, we do
18 have state, federal program officers. And their
19 charge -- one of their charges is to work with
20 local communities.

21 And then October 3rd through 7th is
22 Digital Inclusion Week. Yay. And we are working

1 with NDIA and all of our state FPOs are going to
2 be actively involved in digital inclusion week
3 and reaching out and working with communities
4 that already have events planned. And we will do
5 a really big push to do outreach and engagement
6 during that week and it will continue on, so --

7 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. Thank
8 you. So Katherine, in preparation for the town
9 hall meeting, are there any best practices you
10 can share for the benefit of other states that
11 are worth considering primarily related to
12 digital scaling given that you all have an office
13 that has been focused on this for a while?

14 MS. KEEGAN: Yeah, I don't know if
15 there are best practices. But there are things
16 we are working on and trying to continue to build
17 from. So I just want to plus one a lot of what
18 was shared already about reaching out to those
19 local partners that are already doing this work
20 that are on the ground and have been filling the
21 gap to the best of their abilities without
22 funding directed towards this.

1 So we're really excited to be able to
2 tap into their expertise and build a plan that
3 allows us to fund those efforts and make them
4 sustainable. I think one of the biggest things
5 we're trying to pay attention to is all of the
6 resources that were put out during the pandemic
7 with so many device loan and distribution
8 processes put out, different outlines for digital
9 skill development and technical resources. We
10 want to make sure that those that are working are
11 sustainable and are things that live on after
12 ARPA funding runs out and other state funding
13 might run out.

14 And we see such a huge opportunity
15 with the implementation of the state plans over
16 the next five years. So we are working to engage
17 all of our local partners and leaders. We were
18 lucky to have a committee on digital literacy and
19 inclusion that has been in place for about a year
20 where we were engaging a lot of those partners at
21 the local level.

22 Denver in particular has a digital

1 equity coalition that's been doing this work for
2 years. And so we're learning a lot from what
3 they've invested in and how they're thinking
4 about this work for a metro area. Colorado like
5 many other states has sort of that rural and
6 urban dynamic where not everything that works in
7 rural areas will work in metro areas and vice
8 versa.

9 So we are hitting the road and doing
10 listening sessions and leveraging our partners
11 and local workforce boards in rural areas to
12 understand what is in place already and what
13 resources we can build on. The other thing I
14 think that has been really important for us as
15 we're setting out on this path is thinking about
16 digital equity from that systems level and then
17 from that individual level. A lot of the
18 resources that the state can put out puts a lot
19 of requirements and responsibility on the part of
20 the individual to access resources without often
21 taking a hard look at how we are making our
22 resources more accessible.

1 I think a big example of that was with
2 applying for benefits during the pandemic and
3 having to do a lot of that online and the other
4 resources that had to be put in place to support
5 those who didn't feel comfortable being online or
6 didn't have access. So we're also lucky in
7 Colorado to have some legislation that's focused
8 on public service website accessibility for
9 people with disabilities. We have an effort
10 through our governor's office called Reimagine
11 State Government that's looking at how we make
12 more services virtual.

13 And so what we're doing is looking at
14 those and making sure that we have that digital
15 equity lens applied to those so that we're making
16 sure that we have a sort of both/and approach and
17 not move everything online when not everyone is
18 online or can be online. So I would say that's
19 one of the things that we're proud to be doing.
20 Don't have all the answers yet but is something
21 that we're being really intentional about with
22 the state plan. Other than that, I think we have

1 -- being housed in the Department of Labor and
2 Employment and partnering with our Office of
3 eHealth Innovation, we're trying to think about
4 those anchor institutions and those existing
5 leaders in the community, even if they're not
6 doing digital equity work already but have that
7 community-based location and the trust of the
8 community and thinking about where we can then
9 embed digital literacy and inclusion resources.

10 So looking at rural healthcare
11 providers, looking at the divisions of vocational
12 rehabilitation and building on, of course, the
13 libraries who are already doing this work. So
14 we're trying to identify where there are those
15 trusted centers that we can embed resources into
16 and share resources with. And then lastly, part
17 of our plans for the plan is to really look at
18 those interventions that are already in place and
19 sort of rapidly prototype and assess how those
20 interventions are working so that we can see
21 which ones might be the most promising to scale
22 with implementation dollars.

1 So we've been doing various digital
2 tool pilots with tools like Northstar Digital
3 Literacy and Engine to see where these digital
4 tools can help make services and training and
5 education more accessible for English language
6 learners, for those that are limited in their
7 digital literacy skills. So we're trying to
8 assess which tools are most promising and then be
9 able to invest strategically in those. So I
10 think those are a few of the key things we're
11 working on.

12 But yeah, just definitely reaching out
13 to a lot of other states and really trying to
14 learn from everyone as we all go down this path
15 together. And I'll say too to your earlier point
16 around future proofing. With the Office of the
17 Future of Work, a lot of people were talking
18 about future proofing when it first started.

19 So I totally agree with your critique
20 on that. And we often say future ready because
21 you can't ever be future proof. And you
22 shouldn't be because you're keeping it -- so

1 yeah, future ready is how we get around that.

2 MS. GATE: Thank you. I will scratch
3 out everybody that sends me an email and replace
4 it with future ready from now on. Thank you so
5 much for that. That makes me happy.

6 Angela, final question for you. And
7 you sort of alluded -- answered this question a
8 little bit in your previous comment. But I'm
9 going to ask it the way that the working group
10 asked me to ask it. So how do we leverage the
11 2.75 billion into much more, including support
12 and funding for corporations and foundations to
13 create lasting change? What is sustainability
14 look like?

15 MS. SIEFER: Yeah, I think part of
16 that is helping all of those organizations, those
17 entities understand the value to them. So yes,
18 this is the right thing to do for society. But
19 it's also the right thing to do for corporations
20 and philanthropy because it helps them meet their
21 other goals, right?

22 So philanthropy, what are your

1 missions? What are the things you want to change
2 in your communities? Technology is wrapped
3 through it whether you intended to be wrapped
4 through it or not. It is.

5 So in order to reach those goals, you
6 should also address digital equity.

7 Corporations, do you want folks to participate as
8 workforce, as customers? All of that requires
9 that access to technology and ability to use it.

10 So there's a bottom line kind of
11 question that it would be helpful for those folks
12 to understand. And part of what will happen
13 during these planning processes and then during
14 the implementation of this amazing investment
15 that we have coming is that some of that
16 awareness should happen, right? Because if we're
17 really doing stakeholder engagement or really
18 inviting everybody, there should be a lot of
19 learning that goes on to recognize the impact on
20 their own selves and their communities and their
21 businesses.

22 MS. GATE: Great. Same question for

1 you, John. How can we leverage this money
2 including private money as well for lasting
3 change?

4 MR. HERRIGAN: Metrics, metrics,
5 metrics. And that just builds off of what Angela
6 just said. If you're going to try to convey the
7 value proposition to doing this work, you have to
8 build in metrics from the get-go to tell people
9 what the impact is.

10 When these monies expire to sustain,
11 these undertakings will require partnerships,
12 engagement with local philanthropy. They will be
13 asking these questions about metrics. So
14 building those in from the get-go makes a lot of
15 sense.

16 MS. GATE: Thank you so much. Yes,
17 metrics, measure, measure, measure. So we are
18 almost at the end of our discussion. And now we
19 will open up for questions. And I think my last
20 email said that we didn't have any questions from
21 the public. Is that still -- I do have one
22 question and the question was for Rashann. Did

1 you say the NOFO for the outreach money is coming
2 out in the fall?

3 MS. DUVALL: Yes, correct. Sometime
4 this fall.

5 MS. GATE: Okay, sometime. Yes,
6 confirmed, the fall. Jamila, any other questions
7 from the public?

8 MS. JOHNSON: Not a present, Heather.
9 You all are doing such a great job. But one of
10 our CEDC members, Sherman Kizart, has a question.
11 So Sherman, feel free to come on camera and open
12 up your microphone and ask your question. Thank
13 you.

14 MR. KIZART: Thank you, Jamila. And
15 good afternoon, everyone. My question is
16 directed at the government agency that's managing
17 the Affordable Connectivity Program.

18 What I understood was that there was
19 going to be paid media outreach as part of the
20 Affordable Connectivity Program. Is that
21 actually happening and can you talk about the
22 status of that outreach? Because part of what

1 I've heard in the joint meetings between the
2 White House and the FCC was that there's a focus
3 on getting that message out through trusted
4 voices in our communities.

5 And I've talk about it. And part of
6 that would encompass paid media. So if you could
7 talk about that if you would, please.

8 MS. DUVALL: Sure. So paid media is
9 definitely something that is contemplated in the
10 Infrastructure Act that the FCC can conduct and
11 engage in. The FCC is committed to using all the
12 tools that are available to us for promoting the
13 Affordable Connectivity Program. I can't speak
14 to the specific status of those efforts.

15 I do not work in the organization that
16 actually does the outreach. So I cannot speak to
17 the status of those efforts. But again, just
18 stressing that paid media is something that was
19 envisioned in the Infrastructure Act and that the
20 FCC is committed to using all the available tools
21 to conduct outreach for the Affordable
22 Connectivity Program.

1 MS. GATE: Thank you. I believe our
2 Vice Chair Susan Au Allen has a question. Susan,
3 please adjust your camera and go ahead.

4 MS. ALLEN: Hi, thank you so much for
5 this wonderful presentation, a diverse opinion
6 and contribution. Rashann and also Angela from
7 NDIA, you came up -- you gave us a lot of
8 information, dates and events. And I tried to
9 write notes down as much as I could.

10 I'm just wondering with all the rich
11 information you could provide us with some bullet
12 points on certain things. You don't give the
13 exact dates. So that we can send it out to our
14 community because they are the hardest thing that
15 has been articulated here today is our ability to
16 get the information out to the community.

17 Getting information in my experience,
18 running our organization on a full-time basis for
19 the last 15 years is that they have difficulty
20 accessing information first. Relevant
21 information in a timely basis secondly. To whom
22 did you talk to.

1 So we can start now from today, get
2 some of that. And we can raise some awareness
3 and outreach. And then we can then begin to
4 think about metrics, yes, impact, the impact
5 statement of all the money that will be spent.

6 We can do something with our folks and
7 get the feedback from them, especially Angela,
8 you talk about some of the information that you
9 shared today. I couldn't even put it all back
10 together into a bottle. Shake a little bit, the
11 pepper shaker and send it out. Wonderful.

12 MS. GATE: Thank you, Susan. We will
13 share websites. And I think the working group
14 will have a compilation of information to share
15 with participants. And so panelists, please do
16 send us any supporting material from this
17 discussion so we can share it and memorialize it.

18 So I think that we are going to go
19 ahead. And I'm going to open it up for closing
20 statements. So I'm just going to go around what
21 I'm looking at my screen and start with Angela
22 Bennett. If you would like to offer some closing

1 comments, particularly aimed towards our town
2 hall meeting that's about to begin at 2:00
3 o'clock.

4 MS. BENNETT: Okay. I guess what I
5 will say is that it's important for us even as
6 we're moving out of the pandemic into this new
7 sense of normalcy and living within the pandemic
8 that we don't lose a sense of urgency in getting
9 out to our communities. But it's also while
10 we're maintaining that sense of urgency,
11 recognizing that we have to balance that with the
12 time to plan so that we are inclusive of our
13 communities that have been left out and left
14 behind. So too as you prepare for the town hall,
15 encouraging communities to reach out to us.

16 We will be publishing on our Internet
17 for All website the contact information for all
18 of our state and federal program officers so that
19 we will be accessible. Because one of the
20 challenges for communities when we tell them to
21 get a seat at the planning table, they often
22 don't know where the planning table is. And so

1 it's a hunt first. And so we're trying to remove
2 the barriers so that the community can be active
3 participants so that they co-design these
4 solutions. And so thank you so much for having
5 me as well.

6 MS. GATE: Thank you so much, Angela.
7 And John, for your closing comment.

8 MR. HARRIGAN: I will share my pet
9 peeve which is when people say, let's look at
10 digital inclusion programs and scale them. I'm a
11 seed guy, not a scale guy which is to say look
12 into your communities. See where there are good
13 models.

14 See other parts of the community with
15 those models and help them grow. Don't -- to me,
16 scaling connotes top down approach. And so I
17 like the word, seed, as a way of really
18 emphasizing the bottom up nature of that. So
19 that's my closing thought, sharing my pet peeve.

20 MS. GATE: Thank you. At least I'm
21 not the only one sharing a pet peeve today.
22 Angela Siefert, closing comments for our town hall

1 audience?

2 MS. SIEFER: I just welcome anyone
3 who's working on these issues to join NDIA. It's
4 free. We're a 501(c)(3). It's a place to
5 connect, DigitalInclusion.org.

6 And we have Digital Inclusion Week as
7 Angie mentioned earlier, October 4th through the
8 7th. That's a great way to engage and learn from
9 others because you can do a lot online or you can
10 choose to do an event in person. And our annual
11 conference is coming up in February 2023.

12 MS. GATE: Okay. Thank you so much,
13 Angela. And Katherine, closing comments?

14 MS. KEEGAN: Yeah, just thank you
15 again so much for the opportunity to participate.
16 I'm definitely going to update my language, John.
17 So appreciate that. I really like the term
18 seeding. And that does have much better
19 connotations. So thank you for that. I'm happy
20 to have that takeaway.

21 And I think for me just really want to
22 make sure that we're all ambassadors for this

1 work and continue to talk. I think there are
2 still so many assumptions people have about who
3 has digital skills they need and who doesn't when
4 this is something that we all need to have as
5 part of our own plan for our careers and our
6 learning that every employer need to invest in
7 and think really critically about. And so I
8 think there's still a lot of language of, like,
9 how do we help those that are disconnected
10 without also acknowledging the fact that I had to
11 learn a lot of digital skills during the
12 pandemic.

13 I'm going to continue to have to
14 learn. And so we'll only be as successful as the
15 actual infrastructure and systems we build to
16 make sure that we have the opportunity to
17 continue to learn as technology keeps changing.
18 So really excited again for the work ahead and
19 appreciative of all the work of everyone on this
20 panel. Like I said, we benefit from it a lot in
21 Colorado and look forward to continuing to work
22 with everyone.

1 MS. GATE: Thank you so much.

2 Rashann, closing comments?

3 MS. DUVALL: Sure. I think I just
4 want to stress that many hands are still needed
5 to continue to support the success of the
6 Affordable Connectivity Program. And I encourage
7 everyone when we circulate the links to access
8 and use the FCC's outreach materials and also to
9 be on the lookout for additional information that
10 will be released concerning the pilot programs as
11 well as the outreach grant program. And we
12 definitely have an interest in seeing broad
13 participation in all of those programs.

14 MS. GATE: Okay. Well, thank you. I
15 believe Sally was multitasking. Sally, are you
16 still on? She is ready to roll. She's doing
17 meetings and participating in meetings. That's
18 amazing.

19 So thank you. Thank you, panelists,
20 subject matter experts. Thank you for your
21 leadership in this area. Thank you for your
22 continued passion for this work and the work that

1 you are about to do for the next year or so in
2 planning.

3 The work doesn't stop today, I know,
4 once the money gets into the communities. A year
5 seems like a long time for planning but it's not.
6 And so I am excited to continue to interact with
7 you all. And please continue to share
8 information with the CEDC. And we are happy to
9 share it with our audience as well.

10 And now I am going to wrap up this
11 segment of our meeting today. We are going to
12 take a break and we will return promptly at 2:00
13 o'clock for the town hall meeting. And when you
14 return at 2:00 o'clock, you will meet the
15 Innovation and Access Working Group Chair.

16 That's Robert Brooks who's responsible
17 for really leading and guiding the working group
18 to where we are today. And he will introduce the
19 moderators and introduce the activities for the
20 town hall segment. Again, thank you so much to
21 our panelists. We appreciate your time.

22 I know you all are very busy right

1 now. But I know you understand this was a very
2 important discussion. And so Jamila, Jeff, I
3 think we are good to wrap this session. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, Heather. And
6 thank you so much for all the panelists. We'll
7 be right back at 2:00 p.m. Thank you.

8 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
9 went off the record for a brief recess.)

10 MR. BROOKS: Good afternoon. Thank
11 you for coming back and being with us for the
12 second half of our Digital Skills Gap Symposium
13 and Town Hall. My name is Robert Brooks. I am
14 the Chair for the Working Group of Innovation and
15 Access. And this morning before we continue to
16 the town hall, I want to thank everyone that was
17 part of the first half of this that made such a
18 great conversation.

19 That includes our DFO, the Designated
20 Federal Officer, Jamila Bess Johnson, Susan
21 Allen, our CEDC Vice Chair, our CEDC Chair and
22 moderator for the symposium, Heather Gate, our

1 keynote address speaker who was the former Acting
2 FCC Chairwomen Mignon Clyburn, and all of our
3 panelists and the information they shared with
4 us. They provided us a lot of insight as to the
5 efforts they are doing and putting in place to
6 push things forward in broadband access and just
7 opportunities for individuals and organizations
8 to get more involved and take advantage of what
9 they're able to provide. The town hall that
10 we're about to transition into is talking about
11 this similar conversation but from a different
12 perspective.

13 The individuals you'll be hearing from
14 come from a diverse background of expertise. And
15 these are the individuals that our previous panel
16 were referencing in terms of those who are kind
17 of boots on the ground in the community working
18 to make things happen and help get that access
19 expanded and can share things from their
20 perspective as to -- and will be sharing things
21 from their perspective as to what they've been
22 doing and what can be done to encourage and

1 increase the success of this effort as we go
2 forward. With that said, I would like to
3 introduce the moderators for this, Dr. Dianne
4 Lynch who is the president of Stephens College,
5 Leticia Latino-Van Spluteren who is the president
6 and CEO of Neptuno USA Corporation, and the
7 workstream chair who oversaw this entire
8 execution, Matthew Bauer who is the VP of
9 Connected Communities at WRC.

10 MR. BAUER: Thank you, Robert.

11 DR. LYNCH: Greetings. Thank you,
12 Robert.

13 LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Thank you,
14 Robert, for your kind introduction.

15 MR. BROOKS: Thank you.

16 MR. BAUER: Thank you, Robert.

17 DR. LYNCH: Good afternoon. Welcome,
18 and thank you all for being here. Our town hall
19 meeting today maintains our focus on increasing
20 digital equity and closing the digital gap in
21 every community in our country. We have brought
22 together a remarkable and diverse group of

1 experienced and insightful experts who are doing
2 the work on the ground.

3 We've asked them to share their best
4 thinking and lessons learned about the
5 opportunities and challenges we face in meeting
6 our shared goals. We have about 90 minutes for
7 this session, and we've divided it up into a
8 series of topics, from what works and what
9 doesn't to ensuring that we remain laser focused
10 on the centrality of diversity and equity in
11 every initiative we undertake. We hope this will
12 be an inspiring, informative, and dynamic
13 discussion and that every person in attendance
14 will leave the event with new insights, a new
15 idea, a new colleague, and a more informed
16 perspective.

17 Takeaways we hope you will all share
18 with your networks and colleagues. I'd like to
19 ask each of our speakers to introduce themselves
20 and to briefly share a little bit about their
21 current work in the areas of digital equity and
22 upscaling. When I call on you, please turn on

1 your microphone and camera while you speak and
2 then turn them off again while others introduce
3 themselves.

4 Once we've met everybody, we'll open
5 up the discussion and ask you to turn your
6 cameras back on. Let us begin introducing this
7 remarkable and extraordinary group of committed
8 and passionate professionals. Susan Corbett,
9 founder of the National Digital Equity Center,
10 Innovation and Access Working Group member.

11 MS. CORBETT: Good afternoon. Thank
12 you for having me this afternoon. My name is
13 Susan Corbett. I am the Executive Director of
14 the National Digital Equity Center.

15 The National Digital Equity Center has
16 a mission of closing the digital divide in the
17 state of Maine and across the United States. We
18 do that by promoting digital inclusion efforts,
19 affordable broadband, affordable equipment,
20 digital skills training, and public computer
21 access. I look forward to meeting with all of
22 you this afternoon. Thank you.

1 DR. LYNCH: Thank you, Susan. Dr. Jon
2 Gant, the Dean of School of Library and
3 Information Sciences at North Carolina Central
4 University and a member of the Digital
5 Empowerment and Inclusion Working Group. Hi,
6 Jon.

7 DR. GANT: Hi. Well, good afternoon,
8 everyone. And really look forward to our town
9 hall discussion and really enjoyed the first part
10 as well. I serve as the Dean of the School of
11 Library and Information Sciences at North
12 Caroline Central University. And we're the only
13 HBCU in the country that has an accredited
14 program in library science.

15 We also offer a degree in information
16 science. And part of this, I founded the Center
17 for Digital Inclusion at the University of
18 Illinois and work on the front lines of building
19 broadband networks to serve underserved
20 communities as well as developing digital
21 literacy programs and so forth and focus really
22 on upscaling and scaling our workforce, both

1 across our community and across the country as
2 well too. So I look forward to today's
3 conversation. Thanks.

4 DR. LYNCH: Thanks, Jon. The purpose
5 here in terms of our introductions is yes, so
6 that we put names to faces but also so at the end
7 of these intros, we have a sense of the richness
8 and depth of the experience of the people who are
9 going to be having the conversation this
10 afternoon. Kari Gray, the Digital Equity Program
11 Director of the Community Tech Network.

12 MS. GRAY: Good to see you all. So
13 the Community Tech Network works with local,
14 regional, and national partners to provide
15 in-person and virtual digital skills training
16 directly to communities and also to support
17 organizations that want to provide those digital
18 skills training themselves. So I talk a lot --
19 we're one of the founding members of the National
20 Digital Inclusion Alliance. And so I talk a lot
21 about partnerships and collaborations and
22 listening to communities. So I look forward to

1 participating in our town hall today.

2 DR. LYNCH: Great. Thank you so much
3 Kari. Alison Grubbs is the Director of the
4 Broward County Libraries Division in the State of
5 Florida.

6 MS. GRUBBS: Good afternoon,
7 everybody. Thank you for having me here today.
8 So as a representative of South Florida and
9 public libraries, I am here to really speak to
10 our efforts to bridge the digital divide in an
11 urban setting.

12 We typically think of the digital
13 divide strictly in rural communities. But it is
14 quite high in wealthier, urban areas as well.
15 Broward County along with our neighbors,
16 Miami-Dade County and Palm Beach, we have roughly
17 50 percent broadband access in our households.
18 And that's not good enough for us. So I'm here
19 today to speak to you about our efforts to bridge
20 that gap, build skills and competencies, and help
21 people live their best lives.

22 DR. LYNCH: Great goals. And we know

1 how incredibly important libraries are in our
2 communities in undertaking this work. So thank
3 you. We're delighted to have you with us. So
4 Elizabeth Gillum, the Digital Navigator for SOAR
5 Kentucky. Is Elizabeth with us? Okay. Well,
6 we'll circle back. Erica Hixon, North Carolina
7 Program Director for Digital Bridge, Wireless
8 Research Center.

9 MS. HIXON: Hello.

10 DR. LYNCH: Hello.

11 MS. HIXON: Good afternoon. My name
12 is Erica Hixon, and it's a pleasure to be here
13 today. I am serving as North Carolina's program
14 director of Digital Bridge for WRC. Just a
15 little bit about my background.

16 I come from 30 years of technical
17 experience in such fields as IT semiconductor
18 quality analysis and also education and technical
19 management and electronic technology. At Digital
20 Bridge, we just opened our first hub early this
21 year which is strongly supported by the town of
22 Wake Forest by the American Rescue Plan funding.

1 And we've launched additional hubs as well.

2 So our goal is to continue to open up
3 hubs across the state and in other locations.

4 Within Digital Bridge, our hubs are focused on
5 providing training, technology, and support to
6 communities we serve to improve opportunities for
7 higher paying jobs, entrepreneurship, and
8 everyday digital skills. So our goal is to meet
9 people where they are, serve underserved
10 communities, reaching their digital skill goals.

11 And our job isn't complete until
12 people in the community and surrounding
13 communities have jobs, the skills, and confidence
14 to use technology independently. And using
15 skills confidentially is what really matters. So
16 I'm glad to be here. Thank you for having me.

17 DR. LYNCH: Thank you so much. And I
18 think we're going to hear a lot about meeting
19 people where they are and employment. At the end
20 of this process is that goal of employment and
21 satisfying and enriching careers. Thank you so
22 much. Kermit Kaleba who's the Strategic Director

1 for Employer Aligned Credential Programs at the
2 Lumina Foundation.

3 MR. KALEBA: Hi, thank you so much.
4 It's a pleasure to be here. I'm Kermit Kaleba,
5 and I'm here representing Lumina Foundation.
6 Lumina Foundation is the nation's largest private
7 foundation focused exclusively on post-high
8 school education and training.

9 We're probably best known nationally
10 for our national attainment goal where we're
11 seeking -- in America where 60 percent of adults
12 have some form of post-secondary degree or other
13 recognized credential by the year 2025. So as a
14 foundation, we make grants to institutions of
15 higher education and other stakeholders that are
16 intended to advance policies and practices that
17 support that goal. We're particularly focused in
18 our work on addressing racial disparities in
19 post-secondary attainment.

20 We know that Black, Hispanic, and
21 Indigenous learners are less likely than their
22 White counterparts to have degrees or

1 credentials. And as a result, they're less
2 likely to have access to the economic
3 opportunities and career advancement. And so
4 everything that we do is focused on seeking to
5 advance opportunities for BIPOC learners.

6 And digital literacy, of course, is a
7 critical component of learning and education in
8 the 21st century. So we're looking at ways to
9 help support communities as they build in this
10 space. Thank you for the opportunity.

11 DR. LYNCH: Thank you so much for
12 being here. Alonso Melendez, Digital Equity and
13 Inclusion Coordinator of the Multnomah County
14 Library in Portland, Oregon.

15 MR. MELENDEZ: Hi, good afternoon,
16 everyone. Yes, my name is Alonso Melendez. I do
17 work for Multnomah County Library as the Digital
18 Equity Inclusion Coordinator.

19 And what the Multnomah County Library
20 has been doing and has been doing for some time
21 is providing internet service and access to
22 computers to the community. Currently, we're

1 running a program. I have the privilege, the
2 luxury, the honor to manage is our tech lending
3 program. We lend out devices for six months at a
4 time.

5 That includes Chromebooks and hot
6 spots with unlimited data prioritizing BIPOC
7 communities and focused on low income
8 communities. So that's one of the things that we
9 get to do. But we also provide mobile computer
10 classes and mobile computer labs.

11 So I get to go out to the community
12 and provide access to folks and classes in the
13 community also meeting people where they're at.
14 And doing it also culturally and linguistically
15 as responsive as possible. So we do have
16 multiple folks from different communities that
17 help provide classes as well.

18 DR. LYNCH: Great, busy.

19 MR. MELENDEZ: Yes.

20 DR. LYNCH: And the work is just
21 getting started. Thank you so much. Appreciate
22 it so much. Pamela Price is the Deputy Director

1 of Balm in Gilead.

2 MS. PRICE: Hi, good afternoon,
3 everyone. Thanks so much for having us be a part
4 of this conversation and town hall today. So I
5 am Pamela Price. I'm the Deputy Director here at
6 the Balm in Gilead.

7 For 34 years -- almost 34 years now,
8 this organization has been working to be a bridge
9 between our faith communities and public health
10 or the issues that really impact African American
11 and other minority communities. So really at
12 that crux and that intersection of culture across
13 policies, across systems, across different
14 environments and really using the faith vehicle
15 as a way to both education, as a way to raise
16 awareness, as a way to mobilize these communities
17 around central issues that our communities are
18 facing. And obviously, like our conversation
19 today around digital equity is a huge, huge issue
20 and challenge.

21 Our ability to be able to not only
22 have jobs but to attain the education that we

1 need for those jobs, to access healthcare that we
2 need. Our ability to be able to have access to
3 utilize it and have the skills is critical to us
4 to be able to meet those markers to really kind
5 of have a full life. So that's what a lot of
6 work hinges on. And so I'm really happy to be a
7 part of the conversation today.

8 DR. LYNCH: That's so terrific. We've
9 talked a lot about faith communities as being one
10 of those trusted community resources. So we'll
11 be looking forward to hearing more of your
12 thoughts on that. Andrew Tein, the Public Sector
13 Partnerships and Customer Success Director at
14 Coursera.

15 MR. TEIN: Thanks, Dianne. Hi,
16 everyone. Really happy to be here. As Dianne
17 was mentioning, what customer success in that
18 area means working across our 30 local state and
19 government partners and growing to help to make
20 sure where everybody has been mentioning, meeting
21 the learners where they're at.

22 And so Coursera is an online learning

1 and training platform. We reach 107 million
2 learners. And increasingly, that is through our
3 several thousand business, higher ed, and
4 workforce partners.

5 And so digital skills, I mean, two
6 sides that I'll mention and we'll talk more. We
7 know that these skills are in need by employers.
8 We also know that the jobs of the digital economy
9 are ones that pay higher wages. So how can we at
10 scale help to upscale in these areas?

11 I think another thing that we're
12 working on too, especially with the Digital
13 Equity Act, is how to through our partnerships,
14 reach more, create playbooks for this once in a
15 lifetime funding. And also acknowledging
16 importantly while we do look at -- very much
17 focused on underserved learners, those who are
18 nontraditional that there's probably more on
19 ramps we need to create for people to learn and
20 work and engage on Coursera. So that's a thing
21 we're working on and excited to connect with all
22 of those who are doing similar work.

1 DR. LYNCH: Terrific. So we're also
2 going to talk about scale. How do you scale
3 these efforts when you meet people where they
4 are? And I'd love to hear from Coursera because
5 you probably know a lot about how you get your
6 learners to persist so they can start. But then
7 how do we help them complete?

8 Because I know Coursera is challenged
9 with that, right? But so too are the rest of
10 educators. So looking forward to that. Thank
11 you so much, Andrew. Dr. Harold Trulear,
12 Associate Professor of Applied Theology at Howard
13 University School of Divinity, National Director
14 of Healing Communities.

15 DR. TRULEAR: Good morning. And good
16 afternoon rather. It's morning somewhere. And
17 glad to be with you all today. One of the things
18 that I focus on at Howard University is the
19 intersection between faith and the criminal
20 justice system.

21 And to that end, I direct a national
22 project called Healing Communities USA which

1 trains faith communities to assist in reentry and
2 family unification. As such, we're helping these
3 congregations work with men and women who are
4 coming home from prison and who are deeply
5 affected by virtue of poverty and very often race
6 by the digital divide. So we are now partnering
7 with Sampson Jefferson Associates, a not for
8 profit here in Maryland not far from Washington
9 where we will be working with them to do computer
10 training skills through the congregations.

11 And we believe the congregations are
12 an important component of this because job
13 readiness is not simply a matter of technical
14 skills but it's also soft skills. And for people
15 coming home from prison, a critical employment
16 skill is having a support network that supports
17 the change in ideas and changes in mind. So it's
18 the resource of the faith community, the
19 resources of digital training, putting people in
20 a position to be good citizens and good
21 employees.

22 That's terrific. Can't wait to hear

1 more about that. What a combination, a
2 collaboration of resources and services. Thank
3 you. Joseph Valandra, Sr., Vice President of
4 Tribal Communications.

5 MR. VALANDRA: I'm sorry. I was
6 having a small technical difficulty. I'm very
7 pleased to be part of this, this afternoon. I'm
8 Joe Valandra. I'm the member of the Rosebud
9 Sioux Tribe from South Dakota.

10 I'm also Vice President of Tribal
11 Communications. We're working with the tribal
12 nations across the country in all 50 states
13 really to live a more fundamental problem in the
14 Indian country in that there's very little
15 connectivity. So it isn't just a question of
16 adoption and devices, although that's a big part
17 of things.

18 It's actually getting a viable
19 connection to those communities. But as we all
20 know with those communities comes better economic
21 development, better healthcare, and better
22 education. And this is particularly true for

1 native communities.

2 And one thing that we're doing,
3 recognizing that there's a shortage of trained
4 workers across the telecommunication industry, we
5 partnered with a very established workforce
6 development company that had been working with
7 the service veterans for years and years. And
8 now we're going to extend their expertise in the
9 Indian country so we can train Natives and other
10 community members to work at home on these newly
11 established networks. So thank you for allowing
12 me to be part of this today.

13 DR. LYNCH: Glad to have you.
14 Exciting work. Jeff Wissel, Chief Accessibility
15 Officer for Disability:IN. Jeff?

16 MR. WISSEL: Hi, everyone. Thank you.
17 So yes, Jeff Wissel, Chief Accessibility Officer
18 of Disability:IN. Disability:IN is a leading
19 nonprofit organization, and we're kind of
20 different than a lot of other nonprofits in the
21 sense that our clients are corporate America as
22 well as global corporations.

1 And at Disability:IN, we essentially
2 help empower corporations to achieve disability
3 inclusion as well as accessibility. So over 72
4 of the Fortune 100 companies are members of
5 Disability:IN. And Disability:IN offers lots of
6 different programs, everything from helping
7 companies to set up employee resource groups of
8 all different types, executive sponsors of those
9 employee resource groups.

10 We have a next gen leaders program
11 where we usually have over 325, 350 college
12 students who all have at least one self-disclosed
13 disability and a six-month long mentoring
14 program. And many of those students actually get
15 employment -- very good employment through the
16 partner companies. We are a certifying
17 organization for disability owned businesses. So
18 making sure that disability owned businesses --
19 majority disability owned have a chance to be
20 part of the purchasing ecosystems of the Fortune
21 1000 companies by certifying them as disability
22 owned.

1 And we work with chief diversity
2 officers, talent and acquisition, talent and
3 recruiting departments and so forth, really
4 focusing in on the disability communities and
5 making sure that there's a quality there as well
6 as a meeting like this. The technology behind it
7 to make sure that it's accessible, usable,
8 inclusive for individuals with disabilities is
9 definitely one of our key focuses as well. So
10 very honored to be part of this panel.

11 DR. LYNCH: Glad to have you here.
12 Juliet Fink Yates, Digital Inclusion Manager, the
13 Office of Innovation and Technology, the City of
14 Philadelphia.

15 MS. YATES: Good afternoon. I'm
16 Juliet Fink Yates. It's a pleasure to be here.
17 As mentioned, I'm the Digital Inclusion Manager
18 for the City of Philadelphia. And really in that
19 role, it's a very exciting moment in time to be
20 at the city or at a big city and doing this work.

21 What we're really focused on around
22 digital equity is we've developed a plan, a

1 digital equity plan that captures needs around
2 devices, internet access, and skills for work and
3 life. And then my role is really to connect our
4 systems, our workforce system, our adult ed
5 system, our free library system, our parks and
6 rec system, our education system and have
7 everybody think about how we can provide digital
8 skills and how we can use similar platforms or
9 frameworks. How we can do professional
10 development across those systems and work
11 together to ensure that everybody has access to
12 the training that they need.

13 DR. LYNCH: Great. So much to talk
14 about. So many things to talk about. Thank you
15 so much for being with us. I'm going circle back
16 to see if Elizabeth Gillum, Digital Navigator
17 from SOAR Kentucky has joined us.

18 MS. GILLUM: Hello, Dianne. Can you
19 see me okay?

20 DR. LYNCH: I can. Thank you.

21 MS. GILLUM: Awesome. So my name is
22 Lizzy Gillum. And I am the Digital Navigator

1 from SOAR. We're a regional nonpartisan
2 nonprofit that champions local projects,
3 programs, and advocacy for 54 distressed
4 Appalachian regional commission mandated counties
5 in Eastern Kentucky.

6 So my job as a digital navigator is to
7 bridge the literacy gap in rural communities by
8 connecting people with ACP and Lifeline, scaling
9 up the workforce through digital literacy
10 courses, and helping households gain access to
11 devices. The six counties we're currently
12 working in have access to the best internet in
13 the state. But 30 percent of those households
14 don't actually have any internet access.

15 So our plan is to connect them to
16 better internet and attain better quality of
17 life. We believe that digital scaling up is the
18 future of the workforce development. And we
19 believe that means every Eastern Kentuckian, no
20 matter sex, age, race, income must be digitally
21 competent. And we're planning on working with
22 community action agencies, libraries, and other

1 organizations to make that possible.

2 DR. LYNCH: Great. Thank you so much.
3 I'm glad you made it to join us. So am I missing
4 anybody? Is there anybody here who somehow
5 didn't make my list? Okay, terrific.

6 Again, thank you all so much for being
7 here. Clearly, this is going to be the kind of
8 conversation we had hoped it would be. It's now
9 my pleasure to turn this over, the program over
10 to Matt Bauer, as he was introduced, workstream
11 lead, fearless leader for our first set of
12 questions.

13 MR. BAUER: Thank you, Dianne. And I
14 can see myself I'm just wowed by this group. And
15 I'm so thankful you all are here. And I wish we
16 had days to talk about this, but we don't. So
17 let's get going.

18 I'll just sort of lead in with a few
19 points, and then we'll get into the first
20 question. As CEDC Chair Heather Gate noted
21 earlier just to kind of set that table again,
22 broadband access is a human right from the UN.

1 U.S. is ranked 29th on a global digital literacy
2 scale. At the same time, American global
3 employers are struggling to fill millions of
4 middle skill positions and the demographics of
5 our digital skills gap mandate that we must
6 address equity and diversity in these actionable
7 solutions.

8 And I love Chairwoman Clyburn's
9 opening. It was amazing. And we need to be
10 bold, actionable. And she painted a few possible
11 solutions. But what we want to hear and get from
12 this session is what are those solutions that are
13 working, what's not working, and so on.

14 And let's start illuminating those
15 analog island that are not a resort paradise. So
16 into our first question, let's dive in. The
17 question on the table is what's going well in
18 digital scaling, upscaling program efforts.
19 Let's start on a positive note.

20 Please share with us success stories,
21 cross sector examples as we had just heard the
22 story about working with corporate and nonprofit

1 and small businesses. There's great solutions
2 out there. And to kick off this dialogue, I'd
3 like to call on Susan Corbett who has a few years
4 of working in this area. So I think, Susan, you
5 can give us some historical perspective, where
6 we've been, where we are, where we're going to
7 help kind of set the tone here.

8 MS. CORBETT: I can, Matt. And I
9 think we're called seasoned at this point, right?
10 It's been so many years. So when the pandemic
11 hit, we were concerned about three different
12 groups of people.

13 They were the students who were not
14 able to connect to school, maybe because they
15 couldn't afford a broadband connection or they
16 didn't have a broadband connection. And then
17 there were workers who may or may not have
18 broadband connections, may or may not have been
19 able to afford a broadband connection. Maybe
20 they didn't have equipment in order to become
21 remote workers.

22 And then the group I lost a lot of

1 sleep over where our older adults who are already
2 battling isolation and loneliness. And maybe
3 they did not have a broadband connection. And
4 they didn't have devices, and they didn't have
5 the skills in order to participate in our digital
6 economy.

7 So our digital inclusion efforts
8 became really, really important. At the National
9 Digital Equity Center, we're working really hard
10 to meet people where they were, our favorite
11 expression for today, I think. Over the last
12 year, we've enlisted other people to help us
13 because we're just one organization.

14 And there's an awful lot of work to do
15 as we can hear from all of our practitioners on
16 this call today. We started to do a partner
17 onsite program where we could have facilitators
18 at a location bringing our instructors over Zoom
19 and be able to provide more classes across the
20 state of Maine. The host organizations would
21 give us -- would offer a facilitator.

22 The facilitator would choose classes

1 to have at their location. Sign students up, and
2 be in the classroom with that student. I think
3 the takeaway of that, there are many reasons why
4 that is a really important program.

5 One, we're able to expand our reach
6 with the resources that we have. But more
7 importantly, I tell everyone it's not my job to
8 close the digital divide. It's all of our job to
9 close the digital divide.

10 And bringing in partners to help us
11 with that makes -- everybody takes ownership of
12 that. So I think that's where -- I think that
13 when we look at partnerships, that's what we're
14 looking at. Who else can help us? Who else
15 wants to help close that digital divide across
16 the United States? So thanks, Matt.

17 MR. BAUER: Wow, it's a wonderful
18 opening. Thank you, Susan. Let's go to high
19 level just a little bit and then I'd like to dive
20 into some more examples of what's going on, on
21 the ground. Andrew Tien, calling on you to --
22 Coursera not only is a provider to millions and

1 millions of learners out there but also does this
2 annual survey of kind of where things stand in
3 the world, right?

4 And just sort of hitting those notes
5 from the survey and/or what you're seeing in
6 terms of what's working. I know the U.S. has got
7 a lot of catching up to do. We can talk about
8 that in the next section which you're -- like,
9 what's inhibiting progress or challenges, but on
10 any high notes that you might see or that you
11 have your hands on.

12 MR. TIEN: Sure. Well, I think Susan
13 was alluding to this as well. For all the many
14 challenges of the pandemic, the forced migration
15 of learning and work online has helped to grease
16 the wheels for those of us who have been focused
17 on digital skills training. There's just much
18 more openness and adoption at the sort of
19 institutions level.

20 And also urgency because we were
21 seeing from employers already. And everybody has
22 read all the surveys, right? Digital

1 transformation driving this flywheel of skills
2 and impossible for learners for keep up.

3 That only got faster and worse in
4 terms of the half-life. This is meant to be
5 positive. So I'm just saying more, like, the
6 pieces of the puzzle were coming together because
7 the urgent and important started to align.

8 And I think another important thing
9 I'd highlight is just that fact that we have a
10 signed piece of legislation called the Digital
11 Equity Act that helps to, as this meeting itself
12 is doing, bring all the stakeholders together to
13 work and connect in new ways. So we're seeing
14 where the initial focus on digital transformation
15 has only gotten faster. That has gotten into the
16 mindspace of stakeholders at the senior political
17 and corporate levels. And that's translating
18 into new sort of mobilization that we can now act
19 on and bring into communities.

20 MR. BAUER: Wonderful. Thank you.
21 Let's get down in the ground level. I'd like to
22 pull in a handful of you folks, Erica, Kari,

1 Lizzy, Allison. And then I'm going to include a
2 few more as we go along there.

3 But if you could all sort of jump on
4 and let's sort of go around. In this important
5 work that you're doing and you're physically
6 seeing and touching folks every day that are
7 doing this with your services and your work, why
8 don't we go around in terms of what's working, in
9 terms of your programming, and what's on the
10 ground there. Kari, why don't you start and then
11 Erica and then Allison.

12 MS. GRAY: Well, I think something
13 everybody has said is now many people beyond our
14 own group of collaborators sees the need. And a
15 lot of the programs that we support, for example,
16 workforce development. We had seen a need for
17 folks to be able to use their devices and connect
18 to the internet before they could even take any
19 training classes.

20 And so a lot of workforce development
21 agencies had presumed that their clients were
22 coming in with enough digital skills to

1 participate in training. And so now they've seen
2 that they don't, that they may not have touched a
3 computer. So it's a great opportunity for us.

4 And I feel that funders, especially
5 government funders, have a lot more, I guess,
6 compassion for the situation. And I love seeing
7 the support for it. But I also appreciate how
8 different organizations -- different government
9 agencies who don't normally work together have
10 been working together to solve this problem
11 together.

12 So for example, in San Francisco, we
13 work with seniors through the Department of
14 Disability and Aging Services. And we also work
15 through the Mayor's Office of Housing and
16 Community Development on their properties, some
17 of which have seniors and some of which have
18 families. And so we're being able to serve
19 everybody in a community now rather than limiting
20 it to one population or another. So that's
21 working really well.

22 Just I really appreciate that. And

1 the fact that now we have a portfolio of things
2 we can offer them. One of the things that
3 Allison mentioned in her introduction was she had
4 this list of five or six services that they
5 offer.

6 And we have a portfolio. We have an
7 Affordable Connectivity Program that we can
8 suggest. We have subsidized internet programs.
9 We have funding for middle mile. So yeah, that's
10 really working -- or will work or continue to
11 work for us.

12 MR. BAUER: Wonderful. Thank you,
13 Kari. Erica?

14 MS. HIXON: Thank you, Matt. So what
15 we're seeing that is working is building that
16 collaborative partnership and relationship with
17 corporation and groups. And some of the
18 partnerships at Digital Bridge has built is with
19 such companies as Microsoft which is providing
20 discounted systems, Cisco which has provided
21 network academy curriculum, and Coursera -- thank
22 you, Andrew -- Coursera which has granted a

1 selection of in demand training and
2 certification.

3 And also, AT&T which has provided
4 funding. And also, we're working with local
5 partners and nonprofits where we have a chance to
6 share information and resources. When you share
7 resources and talent, you open the door to
8 solutions.

9 So we are working with such
10 organizations as Step Up Ministry which is a
11 nonprofit organization that annually helps
12 hundreds of individuals in Wake County which
13 helps them to transform their lives through
14 employment and life skills training. We are in
15 the process of providing six weeks of training to
16 that organization. So just having that
17 collaboration is how we're working together.

18 Another group that we're working with
19 is Dress for Success. It mostly targets -- is
20 geared towards women. It is a global nonprofit
21 organization that empowers women to achieve
22 economic independence.

1 And just the other day, I talked to a
2 new Digital Bridge client. And I asked her how
3 did she hear about our program. And she said
4 that she received information from an event that
5 was given by Dress for Success.

6 So there's room at the table for
7 everyone. We have similar goals and different
8 resources. And together we create an empire and
9 break down the silos.

10 Since we early opened the doors, our
11 success story kind of starts with opening more
12 hubs, giving opportunities in different
13 locations. And you partner with different
14 organizations to do that. We're opening up in
15 Wilmington, North Carolina, and that's the
16 support of the city.

17 But it is also we're partnering with
18 Step Up Wilmington. And we have other
19 partnerships that we are working with. So that
20 seems to be working a lot just to -- it takes a
21 village to do this. So it's, like, if we all can
22 come together, we create that empire of getting

1 the job done.

2 MR. BAUER: Awesome. Thank you.

3 Thank you, Erica. Allison?

4 MS. GRUBBS: So as mentioned, one of
5 the benefits of the pandemic is that there is a
6 growing recognition that devices alone or
7 internet alone does not bridge the digital gap,
8 right? There needs to be a baseline of skills,
9 competencies, knowledge on how to actually
10 utilize these devices. And one of the things
11 that while I'm sure all of us were aware of well
12 before the pandemic, but as a result of it that
13 technology is such an incredible tool to reduce
14 social isolation.

15 And that was something that we really
16 recognized when people were either quarantined at
17 home, working from home. Our senior citizen
18 cohort were really missing out on the familiar
19 social interactions that really lead to an
20 improved life.

21 And so that's something that we have
22 really worked hard. So we've had a program for

1 years and years. And it's our grandparent's
2 program at the library where they could come and
3 help children with their reading skills.

4 And how are we able to pivot so that
5 they could continue helping younger generations
6 improve their literacy digitally, right? Digital
7 literacy is definitely a focus of ours and
8 partnering with wonderful community partners to
9 stakeholders as well to address these needs that
10 some of them are just so fundamental that it goes
11 beyond needing a device in your hand. But it's
12 that how do you make a meaningful connection and
13 improve your social network and really feel that
14 your world is secure in a very insecure age,
15 right?

16 And now we're seeing all of these
17 articles about inflation and recessions and
18 interest rates and how are we tying this into
19 again security in the digital world. It all ties
20 together. And so as a community anchor in our
21 neighborhoods, in our cities, the public library
22 has really -- we've been stepping up for a long

1 time.

2 And so now we're stepping up even
3 more. And I'm sure my colleague from Multnomah
4 will agree with me on this that it's so
5 incredibly important to be able to navigate not
6 only the internet but the device you own so that
7 you can make these important social connections.
8 So that would be a kind of high level, mid level
9 range for us.

10 MR. BAUER: That's awesome, Allison.
11 Thank you. And I do -- we will shift to -- I
12 think I'm going to change the title to what's not
13 working but just more challenges that we're
14 having out there and opportunities. But I did
15 want to touch, Dr. Trulear and Juliet as well, on
16 what's happening in your worlds. Very excited to
17 hear about Healing Communities USA. Dr. Trulear,
18 if you can give us a minute on what's working
19 there and your progress with reentry folks coming
20 out of prisons.

21 DR. TRULEAR: Well, we're focusing at
22 Healing Communities USA on the two most critical

1 factors of recidivism reduction. And that's a
2 change of attitude and a social support network
3 that supports that change of attitude.

4 Everything else is secondary in that I can give
5 you, say, in this case of what we're doing now,
6 digital skills.

7 But if you've not made a shift in your
8 attitude towards society, towards yourself, if
9 you don't have a support group that's supporting
10 you in those changes, then -- well, I'm a
11 formally incarcerated person. And I was locked
12 up with some very digitally talented people. So
13 it's a matter of giving people the kinds of
14 supports they need in making the transition back
15 from prison into society that supplements the
16 kind of digital training that we're talking
17 about.

18 One of the challenges that we're
19 facing, I know in this bridge over towards
20 challenges, is, one, just the attitude of
21 corrections itself because if you're dealing with
22 a corrections system that is primarily punitive

1 and not rehabilitative, then the kinds of efforts
2 that we're talking about are frowned upon because
3 why are we giving these people computer skills?
4 Why are we giving them access to computers?
5 They're bad. They should be punished.

6 I remember when I was locked up, I was
7 reading the book that became a movie, The Girl
8 with a Dragon Tattoo. And in the open scene, the
9 protagonist is working on his laptop. And I
10 said, wait a minute. He's in prison and he's
11 working on a laptop? I don't have a laptop.

12 And I didn't have computer access
13 either. In fact, I needed computer access for
14 work to finish some projects up that I didn't
15 finish because I was locked up and I was denied
16 access. And so we live in a society that wants
17 to punish people and not rehabilitate them.

18 And so that's one of our biggest
19 obstacles is getting people to see the need for
20 rehabilitation for a redemption and getting
21 people back into the workforce and seeing how
22 productive it is. And that for every dollar that

1 we spend on education which includes digital
2 skills, we save four dollars in reincarceration.
3 So that's been a real challenge for us. We've
4 seen some people come home and be very
5 successful. But we still have a lot more work to
6 do and a lot more attitude change in our culture.

7 MR. BAUER: That's amazing, Dr.
8 Trulear. And I think this will come out in one
9 of our later sessions is digital, digital,
10 digital. But the soft skills actually and the
11 transitional pieces, that is a river that runs
12 through a lot of this work because whether it's
13 reentry or folks just getting back into work or
14 having challenges, that is something we're
15 hearing a lot. Juliet Fink Yates, I'd love to
16 hear more about a little deeper diver on the work
17 you're doing. And I had some unique perspectives
18 I think on this topic.

19 MS. YATES: Yeah, I just want to
20 acknowledge how thankful I am that Dr. Trulear
21 shared that information. I really want to uplift
22 that work around remembering kind of in our

1 communities who has access and who doesn't and
2 who can reach folks. And so we talk about this
3 trusted messenger.

4 Some of the work that we're really
5 doing the city runs something called the digital
6 literacy alliance. It's a network of
7 community-based partners, higher ed, or telecoms
8 are part of it. But it's also a seed fund, and
9 we do small grants for community-based
10 organizations to do innovative digital literacy
11 projects.

12 And so during the pandemic, we
13 launched one for digital navigators. But we also
14 launched one for serving communities with limited
15 -- immigrant communities or limited English
16 proficiency communities, English learners which
17 we kept hearing was really, really struggling,
18 isolated because of both language barriers during
19 the pandemic and technology barriers. And so
20 there was some really great projects that came
21 out of that work.

22 We had small organization -- a

1 Cambodian organization working with Cambodian
2 seniors doing really innovative digital
3 storytelling and skill based around safety using
4 digital -- using their phones. But also then
5 expanding that into other digital skills that
6 they were learning. So really capturing the
7 attention of what do you need, how do we help our
8 community, a really specific community.

9 And then once we've got you, how do we
10 increase those skills? What are your next steps?
11 Is it an adult ed program? Is it an ESL program?
12 Is it a workforce program?

13 So lifting up those small
14 organizations that have that real focus and then
15 bring folks into other spaces where they can get
16 more skills. We also had an organization working
17 with our African communities and business owners,
18 helping them teach digital skills. So really
19 innovative work there.

20 And then the second thing that we've
21 been doing as a city that I just want to mention
22 because we work with both large and small

1 organizations is we are really helping all of
2 these organizations think about their practice
3 around how to teach digital literacy and digital
4 skills. And one of the things that we've done is
5 adopted Northstar as a city which is many folks
6 may be familiar with it. It's called Northstar
7 Digital Literacy.

8 It's great for those foundational
9 skills. And so our adult ed and our workforce
10 systems together aligned on that system. Our
11 library uses it. Our parks and rec uses it now.

12 And so for the first time we can
13 really help folks in our smaller community-based
14 organizations help them use the system,
15 demonstrate where folks are in their skills when
16 they come to them at first and show the progress
17 once they've completed their programs. And
18 that's not something we've ever been able to do
19 as a city to demonstrate progress over time. And
20 I think it's a really important component to this
21 work.

22 It's a great perspective. Thank you,

1 Juliet. I know we're running over time slightly
2 for this section. But if Leticia -- I'll capture
3 back my balance in a second. I wanted to ask
4 this one question to a small group of folks and
5 maybe have them just do a quick hit if we can.

6 So in terms of challenges and sort of
7 changing it from what's not working, if you could
8 just list, like, in 30 seconds, like, what's your
9 biggest challenge, Pamela, Lizzy, Alonso, and
10 Joe. If you can come on with us and just -- and
11 each of you kind of mentioned that, I think, in
12 your opening in terms of, Lizzy, maybe geography,
13 Alonso, language, Joe, in terms of getting the
14 broadband, and Pamela, you use the term challenge
15 in your intro. So if each one of you could just
16 give a quick synopsis of your biggest challenge
17 if it comes to mind.

18 MS. PRICE: Sure. I'll get started to
19 try and just be succinct as I've been listening
20 to the other individuals speak. So we've been
21 kind of talking about meeting people where they
22 are. I think one of the challenges that we use

1 whereas geographically where are people located.
2 And we need to start to shift to say it's not
3 just where they are geographically.

4 It's where people are mentally. It's
5 where they are physically. It's where they are
6 spiritually. And it's meeting them there and
7 everything that kind of comes with that and is
8 connected to that. I think also one of the
9 challenges is that the way our infrastructures
10 are set up right now which are very siloed, they
11 typically do not have community-based,
12 faith-based, these kind of external partners at
13 the table.

14 They're more externally based. And I
15 think we need to start to bring more of that at
16 the center of our decision making, of our policy,
17 of our advocacy. And I think the third thing I
18 would say is to really think about existing
19 railroad tracks and how do we again not duplicate
20 certain efforts but really to look at seeing what
21 has been built and what can we now put on top of
22 work that other organizations have already done.

1 MR. BAUER: Awesome, awesome. Thank
2 you, Pamela. Lizzy Gillum --

3 MS. GILLUM: I think --

4 MR. BAUER: -- some perspective.
5 Yeah, go ahead.

6 (Simultaneous speaking.)

7 MS. GILLUM: Oh, sorry.

8 MR. BAUER: No, go ahead.

9 (Simultaneous speaking.)

10 MS. GILLUM: -- Pamela, I think
11 mentally where people are is a big thing because
12 here in Kentucky you've always heard that people
13 are very clannish. People are very
14 superstitious. And I think that they're very
15 exaggerated to an extent, but it's also true to
16 an extent.

17 We do have our communities, and we
18 like them small and we like what's working. So
19 just working with trusted voices, I think, in the
20 communities, to get this information out working
21 with school administrators, with county judges,
22 with librarians especially because here in

1 Kentucky libraries have really become a central
2 gathering point for the community. So working
3 with those people and trying to overcome that a
4 little bit.

5 MR. BAUER: Awesome. Thank you.

6 We'll go Joe and then Alonso.

7 MR. VALANDRA: All right. Well, thank
8 you. Yes, as I said in my opening, there's sort
9 of a fundamental challenge in Indian country and
10 that is just the connectivity overall. It just
11 isn't there.

12 On my home reservation in South
13 Dakota, Rosebud, most of the connectivity is DSL
14 speed at best. So to participate in a medium
15 like this, for example, would be almost
16 impossible unless it was just voice. And that's
17 just one small example.

18 But the influx of federal funding and
19 other resources that are being brought to bear
20 finally is creating another challenge for tribal
21 governments and that is capacity. Now the
22 expertise, the number of people, the knowledge

1 base needed to take full advantage of the money
2 and information and other resources for Indian
3 country is also limited. So that's one of the
4 challenges that we at Tribal Communications are
5 trying to overcome is provide that kind of
6 expertise.

7 But we're now realizing, and I've
8 heard others say it, we're bringing in lots of
9 partners, lots of trusted partners. So they have
10 experience in other areas like workforce
11 development, but a lot of other technical areas
12 so that we can try to fill in those gaps. But I
13 would say of all the challenges in Indian country
14 and there are many, but just to get this
15 connectivity up and running and meaningful and
16 useful, we're trying to fill those gaps of
17 capacity right now. And that's a big challenge.

18 MR. BAUER: That's a great
19 perspective, Joe. And I think there are a lot of
20 entities, right, that are -- how do we do this in
21 a equitable way? But how do we -- you have to
22 have the infrastructure to be able to deliver the

1 -- accept the funds and put them out into the
2 field. So thank you so much for that. And
3 Alonso, you have the last word.

4 MR. MELENDEZ: So the challenges, I'm
5 going to kind of work a little backwards. I'll
6 try to make this quick and short as possible. So
7 challenges I think something that was just
8 mentioned a few seconds ago, meeting people where
9 they're at, what does that really mean?

10 So with the mobile libraries that
11 we've been doing, Multnomah County Library, it's
12 been really meeting people where they're at.
13 Giving people the chance to kind of create the
14 programming that they need when they need it, how
15 they need it, where they need it, and what
16 language they need it. So that's been great.

17 But that was a challenge before. Now
18 with the mobile libraries, it's not so much a
19 challenge. Another challenge is actually
20 responding to the demand. So I could do five
21 classes a week and still have a wait list of
22 people that want and need classes.

1 Most of my classes are averaging about
2 ten people in a class. If I'm doing five a week,
3 that's 50 people a week. And I still have people
4 waiting asking for more.

5 So that's the challenge right now is
6 being able to actually provide the demand that we
7 have. The need is there. We're not really able
8 to address all of the needs for all the people.

9 With our tech lending program, we have
10 a wait list of over 100 people waiting for a hot
11 spot. So those are some of the challenges. I
12 think it is recognizing or maybe not recognizing
13 funding all the work, all the staff that it takes
14 to be able to provide and actually respond to the
15 need that's there.

16 MR. BAUER: Excellent. Thank you,
17 Alonso. So now I'll hand it to my colleague,
18 Leticia Latino. Please take it away, Leticia,
19 and then we'll go quiet.

20 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Thank you,
21 Matt. Well, you're doing such a great job that
22 you should say with us. Hello, everybody. Such

1 a pleasure to be here with you. This is a
2 fascinating conversation.

3 And you all have such knowledge that
4 is hard to even know how to let you all speak.
5 So I want to encourage you if you hear us talking
6 about something and we don't call on your names,
7 please raise your hand because we can call upon
8 you. We don't want you not to share some
9 valuable knowledge of wisdom if you have some to
10 share.

11 I want to switch gears a little bit
12 into small businesses because I'm a small
13 business owner. The co-chair of the CEDC, Susan
14 obviously is very, very passionate about
15 advocating for small businesses and minority
16 owned businesses. So I invite any of you that
17 has any good advice, strategies of what we need
18 to rescale and upscale the employees of such
19 entities of the minority owned business.

20 I invite you to join me by camera and
21 share your knowledge. And I hope somebody turns
22 on. Oh, there you are, Kari. Hello.

1 MS. GRAY: Hi, so I love this
2 question. One of the things I think it was
3 everybody's tendency to give people digital
4 skills based on they're going to get a job with a
5 company. So people have training programs for
6 Microsoft Word and Google Office Suite.

7 And so in San Francisco, we had been
8 training people in these kind of computer
9 processing skills. What we found was there were
10 a lot of folks especially in long term unemployed
11 communities that the skills themselves weren't
12 enough. And so we were partnering with
13 organizations who were helping them get job
14 search skills, but they still weren't getting
15 jobs.

16 And when the City of San Francisco
17 reached out to the folks who had participated in
18 those training programs to ask what did they
19 need. And this goes back to as everybody says,
20 ask the community what they need. What they
21 wanted to do was become online entrepreneurs.

22 And so there are two programs that

1 were launched. One was a program for
2 entrepreneurs over 50 and teaching people over 50
3 the digital skills they would need to launch an
4 in-person business as an entrepreneur and also an
5 entrepreneur program for people who specifically
6 wanted to be an online entrepreneur, who wanted
7 to set up a Etsy shop, and eBay shop. And these
8 programs have been hugely successful.

9 And it really gives a section of our
10 population that had been excluded from employment
11 that self-sufficiency, autonomy, and the skills
12 they need to be in control of their own economic
13 self-sufficiency. And so we're creating small
14 businesses by helping people see that digital
15 skills can be applied across a variety of work
16 environments. So it's not just about, oh, I need
17 to learn Excel spreadsheets. It's that people
18 can see how they can become economically
19 self-sufficient by using their digital skills.

20 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: That's
21 great. Thank you, Kari. I know, Joe -- thanks
22 for coming on. Let me give one moment to Kermit

1 that I know that had the hand raised and we'll go
2 after with you. Thank you.

3 MS. KALEBA: Thank you so much. And
4 I'm really appreciating this conversation so far.
5 I've learned a lot and excited to see so much
6 work that's happening across the country.

7 Just a couple quick thoughts
8 particularly on the role of small and medium
9 sized businesses. I think small and medium sized
10 businesses often struggle to develop training
11 programs or to connect the training programs
12 because in many cases they don't have a training
13 department. They don't have an internal learning
14 function.

15 And so one of the strategies that we
16 know is very effective in connecting small and
17 medium sized businesses to education and training
18 is what we think of as industry or partnerships.
19 So bringing together multiple companies connected
20 to a local or regional industry with community
21 colleges, community-based organizations, and
22 other stakeholders and developing industry-wide

1 training programs. And I think that's a strategy
2 that is fairly common in the higher education and
3 the workforce space.

4 But I don't know that -- I'm not
5 familiar with a lot of partnerships that are
6 really wrestling with the digital skills
7 challenge. And I think that is something that we
8 need to do a better job of. I'll also note we
9 don't do a lot around incumbent worker training
10 or career advancement training.

11 So I know there's a lot of training
12 that's focused on getting someone into a job.
13 And that's really important. So getting those
14 foundational digital literacy skills that are
15 necessary.

16 But we also want to be focusing on how
17 do we advance people within a company or what are
18 the pathways that are in that company. So I'm
19 thinking about partnering beyond just the entry
20 level training and making sure that people get
21 access the training that takes them from the
22 front line to a management job. And I think that

1 is also something a small or medium sized
2 business can sometimes struggle with when they
3 need help from other partners.

4 The last point I'll make here is I
5 think it's really important to think of digital
6 skills not in isolation from the job that you're
7 training for, right? So digital skills are part
8 of manufacturing. Digital skills are part of
9 healthcare jobs.

10 Digital skills are essential now to
11 really do almost any job. And I think one of the
12 things we know from the higher education space is
13 that we made a lot of mistakes in earlier years
14 on how we thought about foundational literacy, so
15 literacy and numeracy in English language
16 acquisition. We should try to avoid making those
17 mistakes where access to literacy programs became
18 a barrier to access to skills training.

19 I think one of the things we're
20 looking for is how do we make sure that people
21 can get digital literacy in a contextualized
22 manner in way that allows them to be successful

1 on the job without serving as sort of a stepping
2 point to the skills training they're interested
3 in. So that's something that we're really
4 looking into is how can community colleges and
5 other institutions of higher education made
6 digital literacy training a part of the overall
7 curriculum and make sure that people are able to
8 acquire digital literacy skills while also
9 acquiring the skills -- other skills that they've
10 need in order to be successful on the job.

11 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Wow, that's
12 a very powerful perspective, Kermit. Thank you.
13 Joe, we are ready for you. I'm sure that your
14 perspective on what the tribal communities are
15 doing is very interesting.

16 MR. VALANDRA: Well, thank you. Yes,
17 it's only picking up on sort of the theme here,
18 meeting people where they are. Tribal
19 communities tend to, it's not exclusively, but
20 they tend to be more isolated, a little more
21 insular, geographically and culturally. And it's
22 understanding that the overall community, the

1 connections between the tribal community is very
2 important.

3 So the way that you address workforce
4 development, training, digital literacy, all of
5 those things have to take into account the unique
6 culture of most tribes and tribal communities. I
7 think that sometimes gets overlooked because as
8 others have said here, it isn't just an isolated
9 skill set. If it can be related to how am I'm
10 going to benefit not only my family and myself
11 but how am I going to benefit my community in
12 what I'm learning today will make a big
13 difference.

14 And that sounds fundamental. But I
15 think it's as important in tribal communities as
16 it is in any other cultural community. So I
17 really wanted to make that point. It sometimes
18 gets lost or gets overlooked because the rush to
19 train is so overwhelming sometimes that that
20 cultural component gets lost. So again, it's
21 part of meeting people where they are.

22 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: I love

1 that. I love that. And thank you for
2 highlighting. And well, I know we have time for
3 one more. And this is such a great conversation
4 that we should have had more time. But Allison,
5 let's close this cycle with you, please.

6 MS. GRUBBS: Absolutely. So I just
7 had a wonderful -- what you were just saying
8 about meeting people where they are
9 psychologically and mentally, I just had a
10 wonderful conversation with our career online
11 high school coordinator. And she was telling me
12 some frustrations that her team was having with
13 individuals who are coming for literacy, just
14 reading, tutoring, so that they could take that
15 next step in their life. And that we have to be
16 mindful of if we're committed to reaching people
17 where they are that we need to be compassionate
18 to their situations.

19 Here in Broward County we have over 40
20 languages being spoken. We have asylum seekers.
21 We have refugees from various wars across the
22 world.

1 And often their needs for shelter,
2 food are going to rank more highly than their
3 digital training. So even though they may sign
4 up for that, they're not going to always be the
5 most reliable in terms of attending our courses.
6 So it's an extra level of flexibility that we
7 have to be aware of going into these processes.

8 And how do we adjust midstream to meet
9 their needs? When something comes up, they have
10 to get a job all of a sudden their schedule
11 shifts, right? So if we're really truly
12 committed to that point, we also have to be
13 incredibly flexible, incredibly compassionate to
14 those needs and to adjusting ourselves as well
15 for those situations.

16 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Thank you
17 so much. As a Broward County resident, I want to
18 give you special thanks for leading us into this.
19 So I want to pass it on. There's so many
20 questions. But I know Matt is taking a more
21 accounting to what we haven't touch upon. So
22 Matt, back to you.

1 MR. BAUER: Thank you, Leticia. And
2 so I've changed what I was going to say a little
3 bit here. We had such great comments from the
4 panel session. And some of the highlights around
5 -- and I love the discussion around Angela Siefer
6 brought up the need to develop systems, need to
7 continue.

8 Director Doty, accessing from a rural
9 library and how this work has to be
10 community-based. I think the most common theme
11 of the day so far has been meeting people where
12 they're at. And so my question was, how do we
13 scale this?

14 And now I feel kind of weird saying
15 that after the discussion of John Horrigan, as he
16 appropriately -- because as a startup guy, that's
17 what I've been doing most of my life. Scaling is
18 a very typical term we use. But I love seeding.

19 And I think that is a more appropriate
20 term. So how do we seed? How do we -- the goal
21 of we want to see a lot more of this. And as
22 Angela has said earlier, we're not going to solve

1 every problem in the world.

2 But we can really grow this. And so
3 the question is, how do we seed this? How do we
4 grow more deeper into communities that exist and
5 existing efforts that are going on today as well
6 as expanding it to localities and places that
7 don't have it?

8 And I'd like to get Kermit back on the
9 stage if I could and also Dr. Gant and Jeff
10 Wissel, if you could all join in for -- and then,
11 please, everyone raise your hand as you would
12 like to come in. And if you had your hand raised
13 before, please unraise it. But Kermit, why don't
14 we start with this.

15 Lumina sits in a unique spot in terms
16 of this sort of leading foundation that's square
17 in this work. And I know that Lumina really
18 looks to invest in organizations that are
19 seeding, that are growing. It's not one. It's
20 two. There's going to be more copies of it. How
21 do we go deeper, go farther, and do it in an
22 equitable way if that's something you can

1 address?

2 MR. KALEBA: I'll give a couple of
3 thoughts. One is just thinking about how we
4 measure digital literacy and who's measuring
5 digital literacy. And I know there's a number of
6 states that started taking steps like Hawaii and
7 Colorado and others.

8 There's been research from National
9 Skills Coalition that shows states are starting
10 to assess digital literacy and identify where
11 their gaps are on the state level, on a local
12 level, and working to try to think through what
13 are the strategies that we need to connect
14 communities, particularly communities of color
15 that have often been left behind by investments
16 and initiatives. So I think that's one thing. I
17 think another thing we should be thinking about
18 is sort of how are we rewarding and incentivizing
19 digital literacy?

20 So you think about a lot of our
21 funding streams, whether it's higher education
22 funding, workforce funding, there's no -- we

1 don't really have a way of assessing whether or
2 not you -- of investing in digital literacy as an
3 outcome. And so I think thinking about how
4 higher education institutions and other workforce
5 providers can not only figure out how to assess
6 digital literacy and assess progress towards
7 digital literacy but be rewarded for helping
8 people get to higher digital literacy skills. I
9 know we had the panelist mentioning that this
10 program, the Northstar, as an assessment tool.

11 I think that's really useful. But
12 I'll just note, for example, in the Adult
13 Education of Family Literacy Act which is the
14 primary federal investment of the Department of
15 Education on adult education. We don't have a
16 definition of digital literacy embedded in that.

17 And so if we think about where adult
18 literacy funds are going right now, they aren't
19 necessarily being used to incentivize digital
20 literacy instruction. So I think there's a
21 couple of ways that we can start to think about
22 expanding and incentivizing. And as I say, I

1 think engaging -- thinking about how we engage in
2 employers and how they think about digital
3 literacy training and what does digital literacy
4 look like in their industry.

5 There are foundation digital literacy
6 skills. But as I said, this shows up in
7 different ways and different industries. And so
8 thinking about how is digital literacy embedded
9 in any workforce development program where you're
10 going to be interfacing with technology or with
11 computers. That's going to be really important.
12 And I think we're looking for opportunities to
13 support that work at each stage along with way.

14 MR. BAUER: Oh, that's wonderful.
15 Thank you. Thank you, Kermit. Dr. Gant, such
16 clarity around this and so much experience and so
17 many things. And you come at it from the library
18 information sciences side, the HBCU, and all the
19 different things you're involved with, really
20 interested to hear your thoughts on how we go
21 deeper, wider, seed this movement at this time.

22 DR. GANT: Yeah, I think the term,

1 seeding, is really important as well. I think
2 there are a lot of lessons even from BTOP, the
3 Broadband Technology Opportunity Program with a
4 term of 2009-2010 that helps us to think about
5 what good seeding means. If I throw on my Sunday
6 morning preacher hat, you think about this.

7 In terms of seeding also means how
8 good is the ground in which it's being seeded.
9 And there's different types of conditions that
10 are necessary to understand as you're planting
11 the seeds. So when I founded the Center for
12 Digital Inclusion, I was at the University of
13 Illinois.

14 I worked closely with our extension
15 service. And one of the things that we did was
16 try and address that very particular question.
17 You can have ten different ways to drop in a
18 digital literacy program within a community,
19 whether urban or rural.

20 And we work with our extension service
21 all across the state. And what was really
22 awesome about working with them was the intimacy

1 with which they knew their community. And we
2 worked with folks to then try and understand how
3 do you measure that.

4 John Horrigan talked about those
5 metrics. And so how do you systematically go in
6 and assess the readiness of a community as well?
7 And so one thing that we can think about from a
8 university point of view or community college is
9 working with your stakeholders in your community
10 to bring the expertise that we have on campus to
11 look at those stakeholders and assess what is the
12 quality of the ground that you're going to be
13 embedding these in.

14 And then identify where the gaps are.
15 And so the more that we can use metrics to see
16 these gaps, the more we can really put together
17 strategies that are co-developed with the
18 community and have the university be a partner
19 and an industry, civil society, nonprofits,
20 faith-based work together. So the more we can
21 visualize that I think makes a big difference.

22 Second important thing is you've got

1 to remember we have to work with the community
2 and be of the community, not parachute in and
3 tell folks what to do. And so I think secondly
4 it's important to take approaches that really
5 embrace a deliberative democratic processes that
6 are about the ground up, getting the voice of
7 everybody and making that part of the metrics
8 that we're using and the approach for really
9 visualizing and seeing it. And then thirdly, I
10 think it's also important to say, okay, what
11 other resources can we leverage from our
12 universities, from our colleges to really help
13 make a difference?

14 We've got programs from computer
15 science, information science, library science,
16 and education and so forth that can leverage. So
17 how can we build effective digital navigator
18 programs using the university kind of as a place
19 to incubate and develop sort of these folks?
20 Leverage our community-based mission that we
21 have, but then do it in a way that we can learn
22 and inform and truly be a partner in making all

1 these things happen.

2 And then especially that I'm a dean of
3 a School of Library and Information Sciences, we
4 work with libraries on a daily basis. And we're
5 trying to help build that capacity within the
6 library. So how can we entrench these kinds of
7 values, these types of skills into our curriculum
8 so that we're training the next generation, the
9 generation after that of how to do these kinds of
10 things?

11 And we did a lot of work through
12 grants by MLS on how to look at developing these
13 kinds of things. And we did a lot of work which
14 were the early precursors to the digital
15 navigator programs to try and figure out what
16 works and what doesn't. So I think all those
17 things together are ways that we can really make
18 a difference.

19 And then lastly, being at a
20 historically Black college and university and
21 I've got colleagues here that are part of
22 minority serving institutions or Native-serving

1 colleges and universities as well too. There's a
2 special role that we play that I think we take
3 what we learn and working with our communities
4 and share that more broadly as well because there
5 are a lot of very specific things we've got to
6 work through to really understand the context in
7 which we're working so that we can really make a
8 difference. And I think there's a lot of work
9 and ground that has been accomplished so far.
10 But there's still room for us to do even more.

11 MR. BAUER: Thank you, Dr. Gant. You
12 have a unique experience and perspective for
13 sure. And it's wonderful. Thank you. Pamela,
14 you have your hand up and then we're going to
15 finish with Jeff for this segment.

16 MS. PRICE: Thanks so much. I wanted
17 to piggy back a little bit about what Dr. Gant
18 just said and kind of tie in what I mentioned
19 earlier about how do we scale this. How do we
20 look at this. So infrastructure and I mentioned
21 railroad tracks.

22 So the way we've kind of

1 conceptualized this idea about utilizing railroad
2 tracks as an organization that serves
3 predominately African Americans is that by really
4 thinking that our ancestors got to freedom by via
5 the Underground Railroad. It was not a physical
6 railroad. It was a network.

7 It was a community. It was an
8 infrastructure. And so with that kind of concept
9 in mind the way that we've worked as an
10 organization to scale everything from health
11 literacy to health education awareness and
12 including in this digital equity space about the
13 issues around not just access to broadband and to
14 devices but also how do we utilize them.

15 The capacity of our communities to be
16 able to do that. But also really just building
17 in the ownership of these communities. And
18 that's the way that we've kind of gone about it
19 is by harnessing those infrastructures that exist
20 within our faith-based and community-based
21 organizations as trusted leaders, as trusted
22 resources, building their capacity to actually

1 meet these needs.

2 So we've got six -- across six states
3 now. We started out solely focused in on
4 diabetes prevention four years ago. And now
5 we've created hubs across these six states that
6 now not only house diabetes prevention programs
7 but they also house mental health interventions.
8 They house brain health and Alzheimer's and
9 dementia initiatives as well.

10 And they also now are engaging their
11 communities around the Affordable Connectivity
12 Program, assisting individuals with getting
13 enrolled into that program. And then also
14 shifting the conversation to allow and invite
15 other organizations into their spaces to be able
16 to serve as these kind of centralized hubs where
17 you can actually really tackle a lot of the needs
18 and priorities that these communities are really
19 trying to get at, especially on the kind of
20 socioeconomic side. So we've got churches in
21 South Carolina that through addressing food
22 insecurity are also creating economic investments

1 in the community.

2 Our founder donated land. We have 15
3 churches now operating, working that land, being
4 paid to operate that land. I think they just put
5 up a nice greenhouse on the land. And now that
6 entire city and, actually Dr. Gant's point, we've
7 got university partners who are coming alongside
8 now to say, well, we will support this community
9 project, supporting the churches with identifying
10 funding as well as providing that kind of skill
11 and capacity building set.

12 And it's been extremely not only
13 empowering for these small rural churches and
14 communities. But for these families that are
15 connected to it, it shifted their mindsets to
16 what's possible and what's available to them. So
17 I think, yeah, looking at how we scale and
18 looking at how do we create these infrastructures
19 that can be sustainable because again it really
20 does take a village and we all can't be
21 everything to everyone.

22 MR. BAUER: Yeah.

1 MS. PRICE: But it's the partnerships
2 and the relationships that really, really are
3 crucial to scaling any of this work.

4 MR. BAUER: That's amazing. Thank
5 you. Thank you, Pamela. I'm going to shift to
6 Jeff. You're the last word here. And if you
7 can, I know we're running a little bit over. But
8 in a minute or two just talking about seeding and
9 scaling. From what you talked about earlier with
10 Disability:IN, you have this huge corporate
11 network, breaking down those silos, cross sector
12 partnerships, bringing in small businesses as
13 well. Just if you could tell us how that came
14 into being and how you were able to accomplish
15 that kind of environment as quickly as you have,
16 if I still have you. Is Jeff still here?

17 MS. JOHNSON: Jeff? Jeff Wissel? He
18 had to step away for a moment.

19 MR. BAUER: He had to step away?
20 Okay. Well, we'll just highlight that and put a
21 pin on it. And Leticia, I'll go back to you for
22 the next segment.

1 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Okay.
2 Thank you, Matt. Well, we -- and a lot of the
3 conversation has revolved about strategic
4 outreach initiatives. But for me, I'm a silo
5 breaker. And I personally dislike when we say
6 it's always been done that way.

7 We are curious to learn about how have
8 you been able to successfully spread the word and
9 get these outreach initiatives working. What
10 would you like others to know that has worked for
11 you? Or maybe that hasn't worked for you. So I
12 invite you again to just turn on the camera or
13 put your hand up if you want to share anything
14 with the group in terms of strategic outreach
15 initiatives.

16 DR. GANT: I'll throw in one. So
17 Angela Siefer who you all know and I worked on a
18 project a long time ago with Dodge City, Kansas.
19 And initially I was coming to do a stakeholder
20 analysis and figure out where the contours were
21 for support for doing broadband and digital
22 equity type of work.

1 And initially when we asked the name
2 of stakeholders to bring in, you got the usual
3 suspects. I love your point, Leticia. But how
4 do we break the silo?

5 Just thinking very carefully about
6 who's -- and somebody else will mention about
7 who's invited to the table is super important
8 because if you have the usual -- it's such a
9 simple thing. But the usual suspects, you get
10 the same answers. You got the same contours of
11 agreements, same contours of disagreement.

12 Be very intentional to broaden that
13 circle. And then be very intention even to
14 broaden the agenda that's being presented and
15 really allow and foster fertile ground for
16 deliberation from the ground up about this. Be
17 inclusive.

18 Remember folks who are going to be at
19 the table may have not ever been there. Help
20 folks have a voice in these conversations. Help
21 folks have an ear to listen and make a safe space
22 to change in that process.

1 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: That's
2 powerful advice for this conversation and for
3 anything in life. So I thank you very much,
4 John. And I hope that you feel that that's what
5 we attempted to do here.

6 We try. We put all our brains
7 together and bring in as many people as we
8 thought could contribute. So I thank you for
9 that. We'll finish this section with Juliet that
10 I know has her hand up.

11 MS. YATES: Yeah. So I think this
12 question around outreach, what's working, what
13 hasn't worked is really interesting. I think
14 we're always trying new things every day. One of
15 the things that we have worked on with our
16 PHLConnected program which is our program to
17 connect our Pre-K through 12 households with
18 internet access really was a wide blanket of
19 things.

20 So we were working with
21 community-based organizations to get out the
22 word. We are working with training

1 community-based organizations to then use their
2 networks to spread the word. But when it came
3 down to it, ultimately what we heard time and
4 time again was that families get their
5 information from their teachers and their
6 principals, from their schools, right?

7 And so the more that we could embed
8 the information within those -- when we say
9 trusted partners, like, very specific partners,
10 those school partners. Our library is too.
11 That's another institution where folks
12 continually said over and over, I get my
13 information from the library and rec centers
14 where people are going.

15 They were during the pandemic. That
16 was the system that was open. So they were
17 getting their information at the rec centers.
18 Those networks became really critical.

19 And then the other thing that we found
20 when we were doing outreach and communication is
21 that don't ignore -- I mean, maybe this is really
22 obvious. But don't ignore those traditional

1 media methods. We always talked about a TV bump.

2 Every time somebody got on TV, there
3 was a bump in interest or reaching out or hearing
4 more, your local community papers, your subway
5 signs, like, your print materials too. So I
6 think that when we talk about outreach and all of
7 that is -- there's multiple methods. And then
8 finally what we are moving toward particularly
9 around increasing access to the internet and
10 increasing awareness of the programs that are
11 being offered is that we're doing more direct
12 phone banking and door-to-door knocking because
13 that level of work really fosters conversations.

14 And you learn more one-on-one about
15 what are the needs, what were the problems, what
16 were the challenges. And you have people --
17 community-based organizations doing that work
18 with us who can really say to someone, I've got
19 you. Let me come back. I'm going to share more
20 information with you. I'm going to call. I'm
21 going to call right now, someone to help you
22 while I'm in front of you at the doorway. So

1 those methods, we can't ignore that really ground
2 work that has to happen around outreach. You
3 can't just send out an email obviously.

4 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Well,
5 thanks for that. Now I know why the city of
6 Philadelphia is always showcased with that
7 leadership is no surprise. And so I know I said
8 last one, but I have the Chair for Committee
9 Heather was the handout. So I have to give the
10 word to you, of course.

11 MS. GATE: Oh, dear. I just wanted to
12 share something exciting. What we're doing is
13 we're working on a program to tap in and tap
14 resource which are our youth. We are working on
15 a program which is sort of like a mentorship
16 program and really deputizing the youth to become
17 digital skills and digital inclusion ambassadors
18 in their own community because who knows
19 technology better than us.

20 It's the kids. And so what we did a
21 few months ago, we had a kids digital inclusion
22 summit where kids shared very exciting ideas

1 about how they were motivating other kids. And
2 so we realized that these very same kids were
3 very skilled and very talented and had these
4 leadership skills.

5 So we're putting together a program
6 that will provide them the resources and the
7 incentives and startup money for them to start
8 their own community-based digital skills training
9 program where they're tasked with training their
10 own parents, their grandparents, and community
11 members. We will be launching it during digital
12 inclusion week. So we're really excited to
13 partner with schools, after school programs, and
14 local community organizations to actually
15 co-mentor those students so they can become
16 leaders in their own communities. And so that is
17 a pipeline that's untapped.

18 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: I love
19 that. I love that. What better to advocate for
20 leader digital skills and the kids. That, I
21 think, sounds like very successful. Thanks for
22 sharing that, Heather. And now I'm happy to pass

1 the word to Dianne to help us close the session.

2 DR. LYNCH: Greetings, hi. There I
3 am. Yes? Hello, can you hear me?

4 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Yes, we
5 can. Yes, at least I can.

6 (Simultaneous speaking.)

7 DR. LYNCH: Well, I can't imagine a
8 better segue into our final question than the
9 comments -- the last three speakers' comments,
10 John and Juliet and, of course, Heather about --
11 because the question really has to do with how do
12 we take the steps necessary. How do we reach out
13 to communities effectively that aren't currently
14 in our universe and in our networks to make sure
15 that they have the information and that they have
16 the opportunity to be a part of this incredible
17 opportunity and movement? And I know it sounds
18 like -- I mean, I love it, kids.

19 And I love television. And I love the
20 TV bump and all of the things that have been
21 mentioned because, of course, that's about public
22 communication and what that means to get the word

1 out. But there are programs depending upon where
2 you are, meeting people where they are that are
3 particularly relevant and particularly important
4 that spark that interest and that motivation to
5 follow up and to get involved and to find out how
6 to actually participate.

7 And one of the things that obviously
8 this is an initiative and a commitment and a
9 vision of the FCC. And the FCC has established
10 programs to promote digital equity and equal
11 access, the emergency broadband benefit, and the
12 ACP program. And we heard this morning from
13 Rashann about how important it is that we all in
14 our networks are getting the word out about those
15 programs and understanding the opportunities that
16 they can provide again to individuals,
17 communities, rural and urban, to just plain get
18 connected.

19 And so final question and happy to
20 entertain anybody who has any ideas about it.
21 And I actually was going to call on Juliet, but
22 she just shared with us. So Juliet, if you have

1 more ideas about this particular focus, I'd be
2 delighted to hear them. But if you have ideas
3 about that, please raise your hand and share.
4 Andrew, thank you.

5 MR. TEIN: Thanks, Dianne. I just
6 wanted to mention -- well, I was tempted to say
7 all of the above. We need to be on a road show
8 in communities because nothing can substitute for
9 the reach of community groups and local
10 employers, libraries, everybody that's assembled
11 on this call.

12 I think it's really important, though,
13 so we don't burn ourselves out and we really are
14 making the most of our time and energy not to
15 reinvent the wheel when it comes to training
16 resources. So I'm looking at in front of me and
17 we'll share after this call a national landscape
18 scan on adult literacy instruction. There are so
19 many great resources that are there with employer
20 endorsement that when in the hands of some of the
21 digital navigators on this call that's what they
22 can focus on, really connecting the learners to

1 the right training and on to their next
2 opportunity. I think the other thing I would add
3 is in terms of employers, Kermit raised the
4 importance of getting regional and industry
5 validation, definitely true.

6 Coursera and Digital US, there's a
7 coalition of employers focused on digital equity.
8 And I think trying to redefine in a joined up way
9 what digital literacy means and to create badging
10 skill standards and a badge that then could be
11 used in communities. So that's a lot to digest.
12 But I think the common creation of these
13 resources and getting them out both digitally and
14 also through these in-person meetings is really
15 important.

16 DR. LYNCH: And so perhaps, Andrew, do
17 you have ideas about what would be an effective
18 efficient way to do that? We're talking about
19 putting together a toolkit and bringing together
20 those resources in a way. But posting them is
21 one thing and then actually bringing them into
22 communities is another. Ideas about that?

1 MR. TEIN: Yeah, I guess we do need
2 common repositories in the playbooks. The FCC
3 has a unique --

4 (Simultaneous speaking.)

5 MR. TEIN: So I think let's use that.
6 I think, again, not -- you've got, I think,
7 ambassadors on this call who are ready to go and
8 especially given the intersection with the
9 Digital Equity Act and funding people's attention
10 are aligned in a way they never have been before.
11 So I guess both.

12 (Simultaneous speaking.)

13 DR. LYNCH: Great. Thank you very
14 much. We heard that about the FCC. So Heather,
15 have you got your hand up again?

16 MS. GATE: I do not. I'm failing to
17 put my hand down.

18 DR. LYNCH: That's okay. I just
19 thought I would check. Okay. Juliet, thank you.

20 MS. YATES: Yeah, happy to talk more
21 about this. I just want to acknowledge that I
22 think that the ACP is an absolutely essential

1 program. We're seeing thousands and thousands of
2 people sign up for it to the point where if we
3 continue to be successful in doing that reach
4 around and I am starting to be worried about our
5 ability to continue the program and when the
6 money will run out.

7 So I just want to name that because I
8 think it's a real -- I think it's a very
9 important program to ensure particularly in
10 places where in urban settings but will be true
11 everywhere that folks can afford their internet
12 connectivity. So I do want to acknowledge it. I
13 also think that there's ways that we can -- what
14 we see on the ground is it is really challenging
15 for folks to do the multi-steps around both
16 signing up for ACP and then calling their
17 providers.

18 And so I just want to acknowledge that
19 because that's the work that our digital
20 navigators do and our healthcare organizations do
21 and a lot of community-based organizations do.
22 Our churches do all of that is that hand holding

1 work with folks. Sometimes it can take them just
2 a few minutes to get through the ACP form.

3 But then it can take an hour on a call
4 with a provider to actually turn on that service.
5 Sometimes it can take a while for them to get all
6 the documents that they need to just complete
7 their ACP application and sort of be approved for
8 that. So I'm very interested in thinking through
9 with everybody here and the FCC ways that we can
10 continue to improve that program, ways we can
11 streamline benefit access so that folks don't
12 have to reapply for things, and then ways in
13 which we can hold some of our friends in our ISP
14 community accountable to really making sure that
15 it's as simple as possible for folks.

16 So I do want to acknowledge that. And
17 then the last thing I will say it's not ACP. But
18 the ECF program, the Emergency Connectivity Fund,
19 was a really valuable program for libraries and
20 schools. It's one of the few ways that we can
21 get bulk purchasing of devices out to the
22 community.

1 And libraries and schools are
2 positioned in such ways to do that purchasing and
3 then to provide those digital skills. So I don't
4 want to overlook that program. I know it was not
5 in the grand package. But I want to mention it
6 because I think that it is a tool that we
7 shouldn't overlook down the road if we can find a
8 way to continue it.

9 DR. LYNCH: I'm so glad you responded.
10 So helpful, very practical, and so well informed
11 by experience. Thank you very much. Appreciate
12 it. Okay. Pamela?

13 MS. PRICE: I really want to just
14 ditto everything that Juliet just said because,
15 yeah, so we've been -- as a part of our work with
16 the Black churches for digital health equity,
17 we've been actually hosting enrollment events for
18 ACP as well as the EPP as well. And that was one
19 of the things that came up. Is there a way to
20 better streamline the application?

21 I'm bringing you the same
22 documentation that I did for the program I'm

1 qualified for. So I ditto everything Juliet just
2 said. And one of the things that we -- now that
3 we've got enrollment, again, we have people's
4 attention, I think for us is also now advocating
5 for a better trickle down, if you will, of the
6 funding that is going to the actual building up
7 of our digital and technical advances in these
8 spaces.

9 And so just like our schools and our
10 libraries had access to certain funding, it would
11 be nice now to extend that to other
12 community-based organizations, our churches
13 during COVID. They shifted their entire Sunday,
14 Wednesday, their entire operations into digital
15 spaces. And they had to do that unfortunately
16 without funding. And so I think really looking
17 at how do we maximize not only the attention that
18 is being placed on this digital equity
19 conversation right now but also how do we make
20 sure that these state broadband offices are
21 really connected down to the grassroots, down to
22 the community levels so that we can, again, start

1 to see more of the scaling and the infrastructure
2 building.

3 DR. LYNCH: Okay. So as in you mean
4 it, ditto, and then some. All right. Okay.
5 Anything else? Does anybody else have anything
6 to add to that? Again, I think the FCC has
7 expressed and demonstrated its deep commitment to
8 these issues and these initiatives and welcomes,
9 I know, your feedback about what works and what
10 doesn't, just as we all do.

11 So I'm going to take a few minutes and
12 ask whether or not -- that's our last question.
13 And I'm just going to take the license and
14 liberty to ask if there's anything that we didn't
15 ask that you think is absolutely essential to
16 address here this afternoon. This won't be our
17 last conversation. The work continues.

18 But I want to make sure as we close
19 that everybody has had the opportunity to share
20 that idea or that point that you came in here to
21 make. And we want to make sure you leave here
22 having made it. You can turn on your camera.

1 Okay. It sounds like not. Okay.
2 Well, I'm going to ask you to all turn on your
3 cameras so we can all look at each other and sort
4 of at least make a little tiny digital eye
5 contact as we conclude this incredibly important
6 and valuable day. Just very quickly (inaudible)
7 and then we do have a few more comments at the
8 end.

9 I'm not saying goodbye. Do not hang
10 up. This is just the end of the moderator's part
11 of this. So I just want to express -- Matt and
12 Leticia, I'm speaking for you. But our deep,
13 incredible appreciation and thanks for what has
14 truly exceeded -- I don't know about anybody
15 else. But this has just -- I had high
16 expectations knowing who was going to be here.

17 And you guys off the charts just moon
18 shot. It was incredible. This is not my space.
19 I'm higher ed. And it's just I learn something
20 every single day from this group.

21 But today was just extraordinary. And
22 I want to thank you and I know so too does Matt

1 and Leticia for being here. The work continues
2 as I said, and this group now is going to turn
3 our attention to that toolkit.

4 And we hope at some point some draft
5 of a national upscaling policy. And we look
6 forward to having all of you actively engaged and
7 contributing to that toolkit because clearly the
8 wisdom, the energy, the passion, and the vision
9 that we all need in this country is right here in
10 this virtual space. So I want to thank you.

11 Matt, do you want to join in?

12 MR. BAUER: Yes, thank you, Dianne.
13 You know it's really great when this could've
14 literally gone on for twice as much time. And we
15 would've been rolling still.

16 So it was tough to pack in. But thank
17 you all for your amazing experience. The work
18 you're doing, the perspectives you're bringing
19 and echoing what Dianne said, this is a starting
20 point for the next year of the work we're going
21 to be doing.

22 And you're all now part of the army.

1 So we're going to be reaching back out and
2 sharing more of the stories, the toolkit,
3 upscaling plan. And thank you all for everything
4 you're doing and being here today.

5 DR. LYNCH: Okay. And I think
6 Leticia, anything?

7 MS. LATINO-VAN SPLUTEREN: Nothing
8 (inaudible) other than I'm very inspired by the
9 work you all are doing. So thank you very much.

10 DR. LYNCH: Thank you so much. And
11 now I think I turn this back to Jamila, correct?

12 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you so
13 much, Dianne. And before I give my final thanks,
14 I wanted to turn it over to two of our colleagues
15 on the Innovation and Access Working Group,
16 Sherman Kizart, whom some of you may have met
17 this morning when he had a question and Eve
18 Lewis. And they're going to try to give us a
19 little recap of the high points of what we heard
20 in this town hall.

21 Hard to pack it all in. But we asked
22 them to stand by and listen carefully and give us

1 some of the big takeaways. So Eve and Sherman,
2 if you all would turn on your cameras. Thank
3 you.

4 MS. LEWIS: Thank you so much, Jamila.
5 And this was an amazing program. Thank you all
6 so much. I just want to echo what everyone
7 before me has stated.

8 My name is Eve Lewis. I'm in house
9 counsel to a city here in Florida. It's the city
10 of Coconut Creek. So saying that, I obviously
11 view these issues through a local government
12 lens.

13 And just to be brief, I wanted to
14 highlight some of the tangible takeaways that I
15 saw through my vantage point. And there were
16 three, obviously many, many more, but just three
17 that I wanted to highlight. One was the trusted
18 advisors. Two was meeting people where they are.
19 And three is a commitment and a plan for
20 continuous engagement.

21 First, the trusted advisors and
22 voices, I loved that idea to pull in the isolated

1 populations that we don't get to reach every day.
2 So I loved the idea that there was, I think, city
3 of Philadelphia had the seed money for grants for
4 community-based projects that not only reduced
5 language barriers but also reduced the digital
6 skills gap. So meeting both of those needs at
7 the same time, it's mind blowing and wonderful.

8 I'd love to piggyback off of that idea
9 here in my locality as well I loved the idea that
10 was born from that discussion where you start
11 using the mobile device, the phones. And then
12 you build with more and more complex devices to
13 foster the deeper competencies that each of us
14 will need. And obviously what we're trying to do
15 is bridge the digital divide.

16 So I loved the idea of that progress
17 and the measurable metrics over time. The second
18 big bullet point issue I think was meeting people
19 where they are. And I loved how we talked about
20 in Portland, Oregon the mobile computer lab.

21 That is genius. I want to see how
22 that's rolled out. Obviously, I love the idea of

1 the device loan program. I think that's
2 wonderful.

3 I think a real key that was talked
4 about there is the demand that now there's so
5 much demand for this that we can't even meet that
6 demand. So that parlays to the third observation
7 or takeaway that I had is our commitment and our
8 plan to continuously engage and collaborate in
9 this space. If we are going to build digital
10 bridges and be future ready, then we have to
11 expand who's at the table like Dr. Gant
12 mentioned, being intentional about broadening our
13 discussion and including the youth ambassadors.

14 Being ambassadors ourselves but also
15 tapping into other resources that we haven't
16 thought of. So thank you, Heather Gate, for that
17 amazing idea. And also I think what was
18 wonderful and a tangible takeaway was giving our
19 direct contact information.

20 It's so easy to get lost in a big
21 corporate world out there. But having your fact
22 and your name and your direct contact information

1 up on your website or anywhere that it can be
2 reached is how we will really make that
3 continuous collaboration with one another. So
4 thank you so much. I'm in awe of each of you.
5 And I'll turn it over to Sherman. Thank you.

6 MR. KIZART: Thank you, Eve. I
7 appreciate it. And your observations are
8 absolutely spot on. Good afternoon, everyone.

9 Superlatives have been thrown around
10 for the entire day and rightfully so. From our
11 keynote all the way to our town hall, today has
12 been truly exceptional in terms of the journey
13 that we're on with respect to the work of the
14 CEDC and working across both federal agencies,
15 state agencies, and local entities. And I
16 thought it was for me, but I will share with you
17 is that to start with, FCC Chair -- former FCC
18 Chairwoman Mignon Clyburn was absolutely
19 exceptional and I'll tell you why.

20 I happened to be with Chairwoman
21 Clyburn in Mississippi about exactly a month ago.
22 And she continues to be very, very passionate

1 about the FCC overall but certainly in this whole
2 area of addressing the opportunities around
3 broadband and digital equity. And she had -- I
4 think Jamila will say that we need to hashtag, I
5 should say, Chairwoman Clyburn's very, very
6 important quote when she said analog islands
7 aren't resort paradises.

8 Analog islands aren't resort
9 paradises. And that is just so very, very, very
10 true. And it set a terrific foundation for -- to
11 go from Chairwoman Clyburn's very, very
12 passionate, very, very poignant address to the
13 session that Heather hosted.

14 And while the people -- what I would
15 share with everyone on the call is that I'm a
16 native Mississippian. And to see that the state
17 of Mississippi that oftentimes is just when you
18 look at the challenges that the state has had
19 including everyone saw what happened with the
20 whole situation with the water crisis and its
21 impact on all of its citizens down in Jackson.
22 But in this whole area around broadband and for

1 me as a native Mississippian to hear Sally Doty,
2 the Executive Director of BEAM which is
3 Mississippi's broadband expansion and
4 accessibility authority.

5 How Mississippi is taking a very, very
6 aggressive and very, very intentional approach
7 around this whole area of digital equity was
8 phenomenal that to hear that Ms. Doty has created
9 a digital -- what I would call a state version of
10 the CEDC. And she's hired a director who's a
11 councilperson of the city of Jackson who is
12 focused on what will be -- how that state is
13 going to address digital inequities. So to hear
14 that from my home state and a state that is not
15 seen as -- the state that is really committed and
16 effective in those kind of areas was just
17 something that I absolutely had to take note of.

18 And of course, as we go into that last
19 session, the thing that was really -- that common
20 theme of meeting people where they are. I
21 thought to hear a young lady who works with the
22 churches to say it's not just enough to meet

1 people where they are. But meeting where they
2 are physically, meeting them where they are
3 emotionally, meeting them where they are
4 financially.

5 That is going to be so important in
6 the work that we do over the next -- for years as
7 we address this whole issue of digital inequity.
8 One thing I forgot to mention that the former FCC
9 Chairwoman Clyburn mentioned, it was basically a
10 reference to the Affordable Connectivity Program.
11 And I know that that program is focused on
12 providing low cost to no cost internet broadband
13 -- high speed broadband access.

14 I thought Chairwoman Clyburn to raise
15 the issue that I thought I heard her advocate
16 that (inaudible) no cost. And I think that's
17 going to be something that it'd be interesting to
18 see where that kind of thought and perspective
19 goes. But again, what I want to drive home the
20 point is that the superlatives flew and
21 rightfully so throughout the entire day of our
22 symposium.

1 And it actually -- this is a day to be
2 proud of. And we have an opportunity to build
3 from what we heard today. Those are my
4 observations. And at this point, I'm going to
5 turn it back over to Jamila Bess Johnson.

6 MS. JOHNSON: Well, thank you so much,
7 Sherman and Eve. We appreciate you and we're so
8 glad that we asked you to summarize the high
9 points because you all gave us something to think
10 about as we depart this virtual room today. I
11 want to turn it over briefly to our CEDC Chair
12 Heather Gate. And if our Vice Chair, Susan Au
13 Allen, is still on the line, we'd like to hear
14 their closing remarks. Heather, Susan?

15 MS. GATE: Thank you, Jamila. And
16 thank you so much. I really appreciate Eve and
17 Sherman's summarization of the event. So I don't
18 want to repeat what they said, but they're
19 exactly right about the high points of today.

20 You all town hall participants were
21 selected because not only are you respected in
22 what you do but you represent the diversity of

1 this country. And the Innovation and Access
2 Working Group was very strategic about selecting
3 you for the great work you are doing. And so we
4 selfishly really wanted to learn from the best.

5 And I think we accomplished that in
6 terms of gathering this information that will
7 ultimately help the Innovation and Access Working
8 Group move ahead with their plan. But at the
9 same time, I also hope that this event was as
10 beneficial to you all as it was to us in that new
11 relationships and new work can begin today. I
12 also wanted to highlight the fact again going
13 back to the Digital Equity Act and the planning
14 grants starting to roll out to the states next
15 week.

16 I want to make sure that these
17 wonderful ideas are represented in those plans so
18 that once the money starts coming for
19 implementation, these wonderful projects can
20 continue beyond and are future ready. So again,
21 thank you so much for taking the time to join us
22 today and for sharing with us these great and

1 wonderful ideas. And again, thanks to former
2 Chairwoman Clyburn for joining us and really
3 setting the tone for what turned out to be a
4 wonderful discussion today.

5 And then last but not least, I would
6 be remiss if I did not thank the working group
7 workstream that put this together that have been
8 working for weeks and weeks coming together. And
9 for those that don't know the members that
10 participate in this council do so on a volunteer
11 basis. But I have to commend them for the
12 commitment to the process and showing up week in
13 week out to do this public service.

14 And so I would like to extend my
15 thanks to the Innovation and Access Workstream
16 that really led this process beginning with the
17 working group chair, Robert Brooks. I wanted to
18 thank Matthew Bauer who Matt has been a fearless
19 leader for this specific workstream on digital
20 skills. And his tireless work and emails at
21 10:00 o'clock at night in order to get everything
22 together have been breathtaking and heartwarming.

1 I also want to thank Dr. Dianne Lynch
2 for her fearless leadership as well. Leticia
3 Latino, thank you so much. Sherman Kizart, Eve
4 Lewis, Edgar Class, Monica Desai, Daniel Ball,
5 Alicia Tambert (phonetic), and Dr. John Gant,
6 thank you so much for really doing all the hard
7 work.

8 Now that you've got all this
9 information, we'll look forward to the next step
10 which is the writeup and putting together the
11 materials and the toolkits to continue this work.

12 I also want to thank my vice chair who happens to
13 lead the workstream. We tried to divide and
14 conquer our working groups, and that is Susan
15 Allen.

16 Thank you so much, Susan. Your
17 guidance of this working group is so much
18 appreciated. And your passion again, it warms my
19 heart.

20 And then, of course, Jamila Bess
21 Johnson, our DFO, Jamila, I am amazed by your and
22 the amount of work that you put up with us with

1 such a big counsel and keeping us working and
2 keeping us on schedule and keeping us going.
3 Thank you so much. And we appreciate your
4 passion for the work as well.

5 It's very heartwarming. So thank you,
6 everybody. And now I would like to invite my
7 vice chair, Susan, to provide your closing
8 comments.

9 MS. ALLEN: Well, Heather --

10 MS. GATE: Yes.

11 MS. ALLEN: -- our chair, you had the
12 last word. You said it all. All I can say is
13 ditto, ditto, ditto. From the FCC entire time
14 and of course Jamila, without you and your
15 guiding light and your team, we would not have
16 been able to keep the train running on time and
17 arrive at the train station and get into this
18 destination early.

19 I want to thank you all for all this
20 work you've done. And of course, the working
21 group, workstream chair, Matt, and all of you, I
22 don't want to repeat the name again. I do want

1 to return the last few minutes back to you.

2 Well done. We have come a long way.
3 There's a lot longer way to go. But our
4 destination is digital equity, more education,
5 more trained workforce so that American could
6 truly lead the world with this new generation of
7 folks who will be so connected that people will
8 fear us more. Thank you again. You get your
9 last minute back. Bye-bye.

10 MS. GATE: Thank you. Jamila, the
11 floor is yours.

12 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you so much. No,
13 we're fine. I'm just going to take just a minute
14 to do thank yous. We have had just a marvelous
15 series of conversations today about digital
16 equity.

17 And on behalf of the Federal
18 Communications Commission, we hope that you have
19 learned something useful in terms of
20 opportunities to engage in the impactful work of
21 digital equity. Please stay connected to the
22 CEDC as we continue these efforts to encourage

1 diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our website is
2 [www.fcc.gov/communications-equity-and-diversity-](http://www.fcc.gov/communications-equity-and-diversity-council)
3 [council](http://www.fcc.gov/communications-equity-and-diversity-council).

4 We want to thank everyone who
5 supported this event. I begin with my CEDC
6 colleagues at the FCC, Rashann Duvall, Co-Deputy
7 Designated Federal Officer, Keyla
8 Hernandez-Ulloa, Co-Deputy Designated Federal
9 Officer, and Aurelie Mathieu, Attorney Advisor in
10 the Wireline Competition Bureau. Our FCC tech
11 team, Jeff Riordan, Steve Balderson, and Greg
12 Huff, thank you so much for your steady hand in
13 hosting today's meeting and for all of your time
14 for our dry run sessions.

15 Thank you also to FCC Chairwoman
16 Rosenworcel and to her team. Our thanks also to
17 our Media Bureau Chief Holly Saurer and her team
18 for co-hosting this event today. Huge thank you
19 to former Acting FCC Chairwoman Mignon Clyburn
20 for her encouraging remarks. It was great to
21 have you here.

22 And thank you so much to each of our

1 fabulous symposium panelists who gave us so much
2 to consider. Thank you to our town hall
3 participants for a stimulating conversation on
4 how they would recommend collaboration between
5 unlikely stakeholders in the charge for digital
6 equity. This would not have happened without the
7 dedication and passion of our Innovation and
8 Access Working Group members. Thank you so, so
9 much for your public service.

10 And lastly, we are very, very grateful
11 to have dedicated leaders of the CEDC,
12 unparalleled dedication, Chair Heather Gate,
13 Susan Au Allen, Vice Chair, and Nicol Turner Lee,
14 Vice Chair. So thank you to everyone for joining
15 the collaboration and conversation today. We
16 hope to see you again. Be well.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
18 went off the record.)

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