



# CHICAGO DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

A community-led plan to achieve digital equity in Chicago, created by the Chicago Digital Equity Council.





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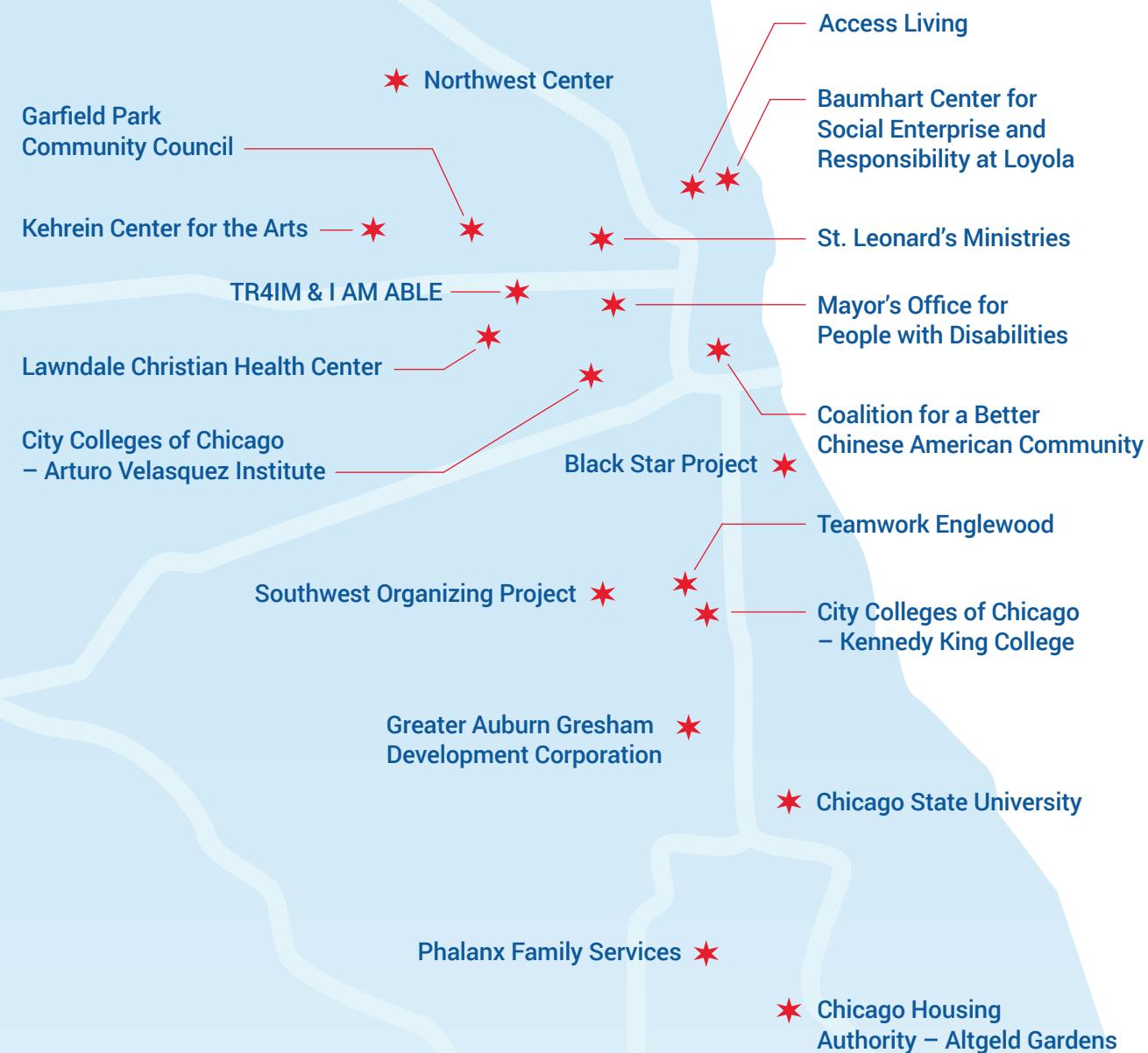
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## THANK YOU

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## Community Workshop Hosts and Partners



## Stakeholder Engagement

**Jill Gottfred-Sohoni**  
Circle Root Collaborative



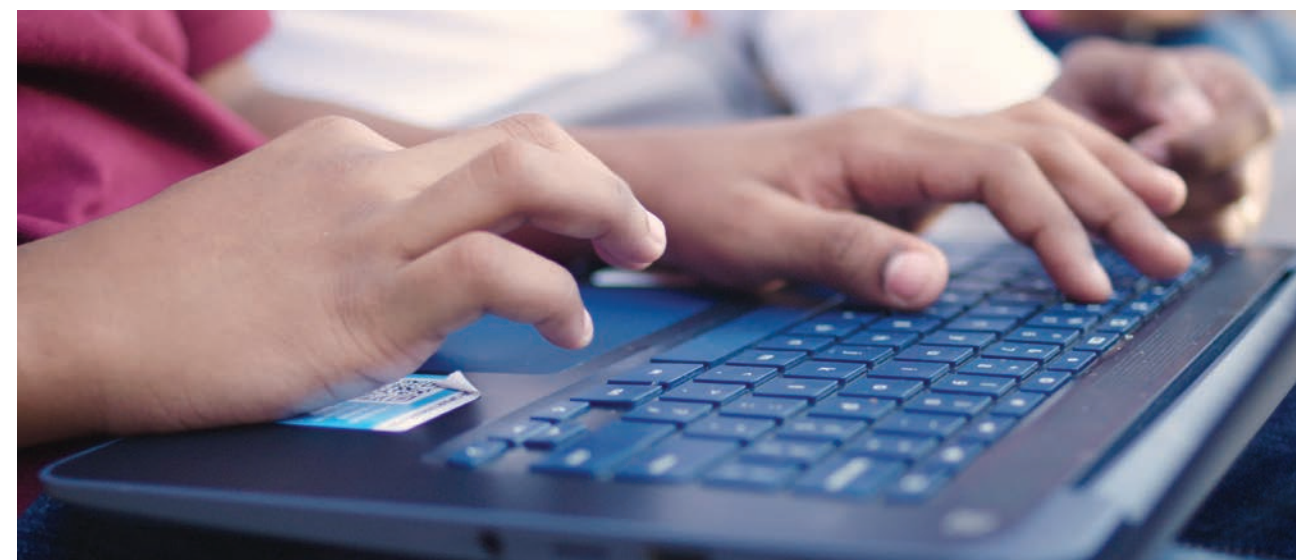
# INTRODUCTION



Reliable, high-speed internet is one of the most powerful equalizers when it comes to accessing information. It allows families to access digital remote learning and stay connected to family near and far, especially during COVID-19. It allows families to build career skills, apply for jobs, register to vote and stay up-to-date on current events.”



**Mayor Lori Lightfoot**



**Nearly 172,000 Chicago households (over 15%) don't have internet at home, and nearly 92,000 (roughly 8%) don't have any device, including a computer, laptop, tablet, or smart mobile device. These disparities became more evident than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools, workplaces, and many parts of life shifted from in-person to remote, creating an unprecedented reliance on technology and connectivity.**

The pandemic highlighted what was already becoming true in a rapidly evolving tech-centered world: Families need reliable, affordable high-speed home internet access – plus related support and skills – to fully participate in Chicago's modern economy and civic life.

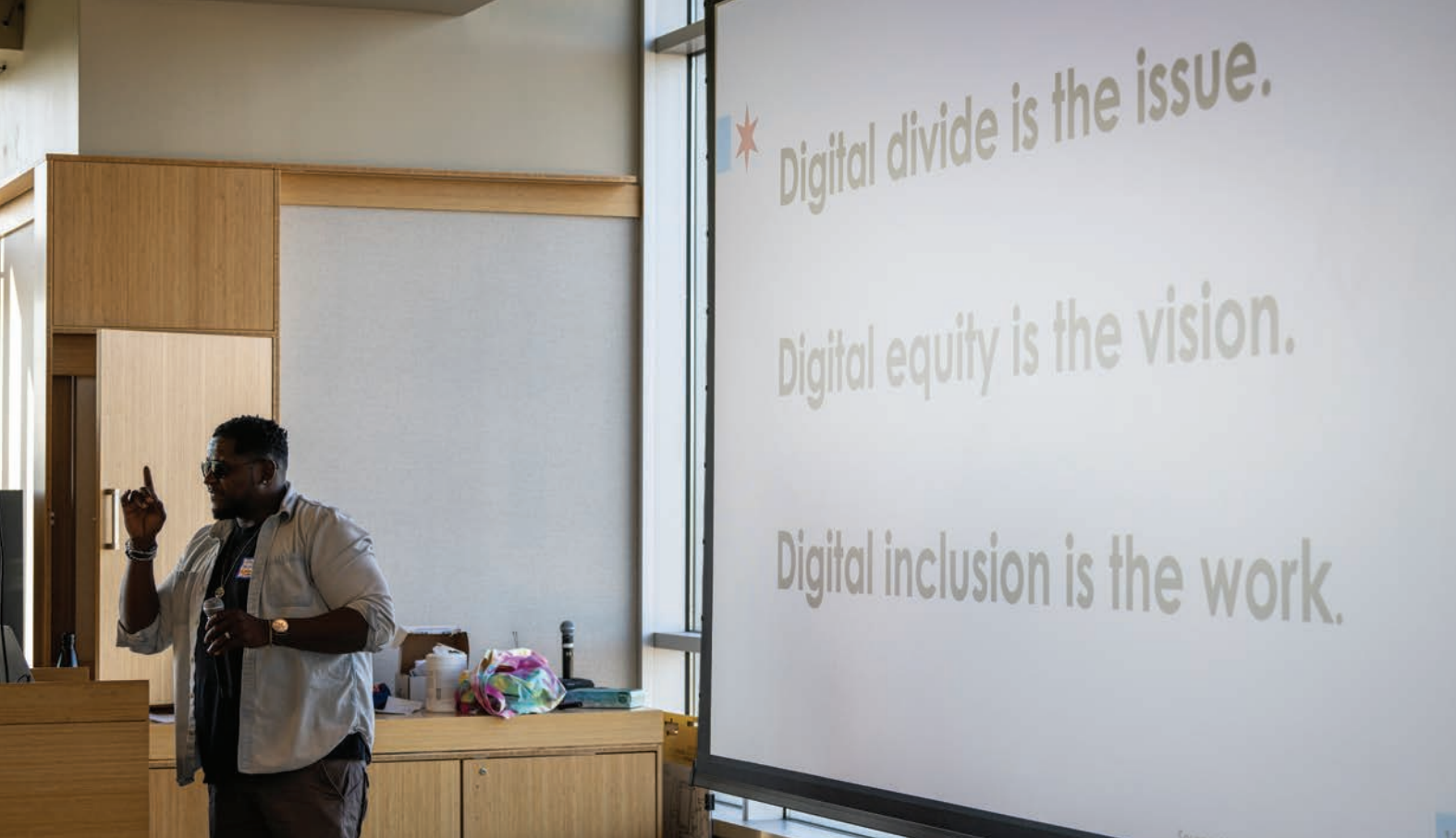
Over the past two years, Chicago has made historic progress in tackling digital disparities. [Chicago Connected](#), launched in June 2020, is a first-of-its-kind broadband program which provides no-cost Internet to qualifying Chicago Public Schools (CPS) families for four years. It is a partnership between the City, CPS, Kids First Chicago, 10 philanthropic donors, and more than 20 community partners. In its first two years, the program has connected more than 60,000 households – equivalent to roughly 100,000 students – to at-home broadband. In 2021, the program expanded to City Colleges of Chicago. Chicago Connected has also made digital learning lessons and resources available to families for free, through partnerships with more than 20 community-based organizations.

This work is aligned with Chicago Digital, Mayor Lightfoot's initiative to deliver more accessible city digital services for residents.

Despite this progress, there is still work to be done to address the racial and economic disparities behind the digital divide. The makeup of the 10 least connected communities is 72% Black and 25% Latinx with the average median household income just under \$35,000. Two of the 10 least connected communities are majority Latinx. Digital disparities also make life more challenging for people with disabilities, public housing residents, immigrant communities, and more.

In May 2022, Mayor Lightfoot launched the Chicago Digital Equity Council (DEC), a cross-sector, community-driven effort to understand and overcome the nuanced barriers to digital equity by engaging those most burdened by digital inequities. Supported by a team of community partners and government agencies, the DEC facilitated community conversations in Chicago's least connected neighborhoods, ultimately developing the community-driven, cross-sector recommendations outlined in this plan.

Thanks to President Biden's historic broadband investments, paired with Mayor Lightfoot's \$36 million allocation from the Chicago Recovery Plan for neighborhood broadband initiatives, now is an opportune time for Chicago to take big, bold action to close the digital divide once and for all.



## KEY TERMS

### Digital Divide:

The gap between those who have affordable and quality access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not.

### Digital Equity:

A condition where all individuals and communities have the technology, skills, and resources needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy.

### Digital Inclusion:

Refers to the activities necessary to reach digital equity, and includes the following elements:

1. Affordable, quality, and reliable broadband internet service
2. Computers, laptops, & tablets that meet community needs
3. Access to digital training and support, such as computer classes or tech support.

Definitions informed by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA).

## CHALLENGE

How are Chicagoans impacted by the digital divide?

### Internet Access

**15% (172,000)**

More than 15% (172,000) of households don't have internet at home

### Device Access

**8% (92,000)**

As many as 8% (92,000) of households don't have any connected device at home (laptop, tablet, smart phone)

The digital divide is an equity issue:

Chicago neighborhoods with the lowest rates of home internet connection are all on the City's

**SOUTH & WEST SIDES**

In the 10 least connected neighborhoods (based on percent of households with internet):

**1 IN 4**

Over 1 in 4 residents lack internet

**72%**

Of community members are Black

**25%**

Of community members are Latinx

**~\$35,000**

Average median annual income is about \$35,000

Source: American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-year Estimates via University of Chicago Internet Equity Initiative and Kids First Chicago Data Science and Research Department analysis



# FINDINGS FROM A CITYWIDE SURVEY

Of more than 3,000 residents provide a more detailed picture of digital access disparities in Chicago.

Respondents living in extreme poverty are less likely to have a device and internet at home.

## RESPONDENTS WITHOUT A DEVICE AT HOME:



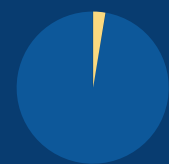
Nearly half of respondents without a device at home are living in extreme poverty, with annual incomes **below \$20,000**.

## RESPONDENTS WITHOUT HOME INTERNET:



Nearly 20% of households with incomes **below \$20,000** reported not having home internet

### COMPARED TO:



3% of households with incomes **between \$74,000 and \$99,000**



In general, as income rises, so does the likelihood that a respondent has internet.

Black communities and seniors have low broadband adoption rates compared to other race and age demographics.

**95%**

Of Asian and white respondents reported having home internet

### COMPARED TO:

**81%**

Of Black respondents

**90%**

Of respondents ages 18-24 reported having internet at home

### COMPARED TO:

**70%**

Of respondents 75 and older

**25-34 YEARS OLD**

The age group with the highest rate of home internet subscription is 25-34 years old at 95% reporting having home internet

Top three ways that respondents without internet report getting online:

1. Through their smartphone
2. At the library
3. At a computer lab

Top three reasons that respondents don't have home internet:

1. They use their smartphone instead
2. They don't have a device to access the internet
3. An internet subscription is too expensive

We also learned that the Chicago Public Library is a commonly used resource for technology needs.

The most reported technology use of the library is for Wi-Fi / internet, followed by printing and using the computer lab.



**More than 78% of respondents** said they were satisfied (45%) or very satisfied (34%) with their experience with technology assistance at the library.

While 21% of respondents with incomes under \$20,000 aim to get a job and 21% are interested in starting a business, nearly

**20%**

**DO NOT HAVE INTERNET AT HOME TO PURSUE THESE PROFESSIONAL GOALS.**

Source: Citywide survey administered by the Chicago Digital Equity Council between September 21 and October 25, 2022. The survey was available online and in paper. The Broadband Equity Partnership crafted the survey and conducted the data analysis.





## PROGRESS SINCE 2020

June 2020



### Launch of Chicago Connected

A \$50M 4-year public-private partnership to expand K-12 broadband access. In its first two years, the program connected 60,000 households, or approximately 100,000 students, to at-home broadband. Chicago Connected is a partnership between Mayor Lightfoot, Chicago Public Schools, Kids First Chicago, 10 philanthropic donors, 20+ community partners, and internet service providers (Comcast, Astound Broadband, and T Mobile).

June 2021



### Expansion of Chicago Connected to City Colleges of Chicago (CCC)

Starting with an initial pilot of CPS students matriculating to City Colleges (2021), and expanding more broadly to offer no-cost broadband to up to 3,000 students over the next two years (2022).

January 2022



### Commitment of \$36 million in the Chicago Recovery Plan to digital equity

Including \$28 million for neighborhood broadband and digital equity programming, and \$6 million to install free Wi-Fi in a series of Chicago Park District field houses and parks.

### Launch of the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

Which offers a \$30 monthly broadband subsidy to qualifying households. Roughly 300,000 Chicago households are eligible.

May 2022



### Launch of the Chicago Digital Equity Council

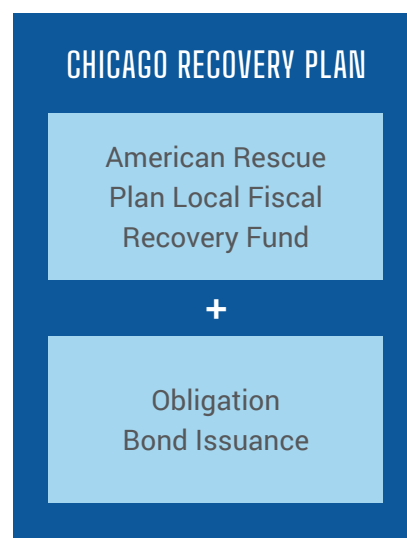
Which engaged nearly 400 Chicago residents, plus 3,000+ survey respondents, to understand barriers to digital equity and craft the long-term recommendations in this plan.



# FUNDING SOURCE BREAKDOWN

## Chicago Recovery Plan

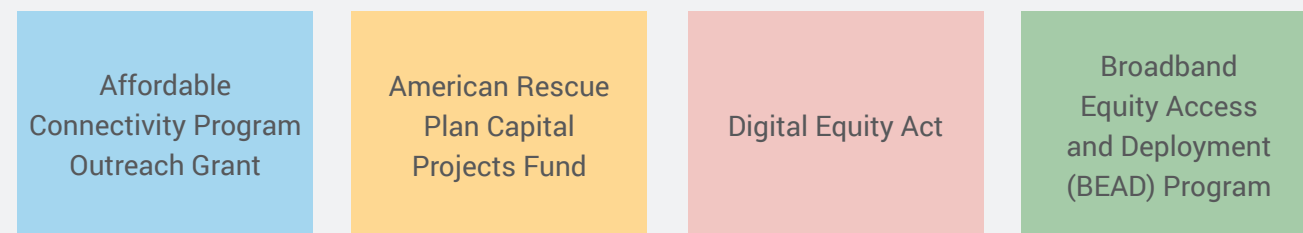
In response to the negative impacts of COVID-19, Congress appropriated \$350 billion to the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP). The City of Chicago was allocated \$1.887 billion from the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (LFRF). The Chicago Recovery Plan outlines investments that lay the foundation for long-term growth and investment while meeting key needs of the City, which includes broadband and digital equity. The ARP LFRF funding is amplified by the issuance of a general obligation bond. In total, across ARP and bond issuance, the City allocated \$36 million toward broadband and digital equity.



## Additional State and Federal Grant Opportunities

There are additional grant opportunities which will be open for application throughout 2023, 2024, and beyond, many of which align with the City's digital equity goals outlined in this plan. While such funding is not guaranteed, the City and other stakeholders in the digital equity ecosystem in Chicago will pursue grant opportunities as applicable to our mission and goals.

### Future funding opportunities include:



The City of Chicago has been working closely with the Illinois State Broadband Office to incorporate learnings from the Chicago Digital Equity Council into the statewide planning process. Inclusion in the statewide plan is crucial to ensure Chicago can access BEAD and Digital Equity Act funds through the state's process.





# APPROACH

## Introduction

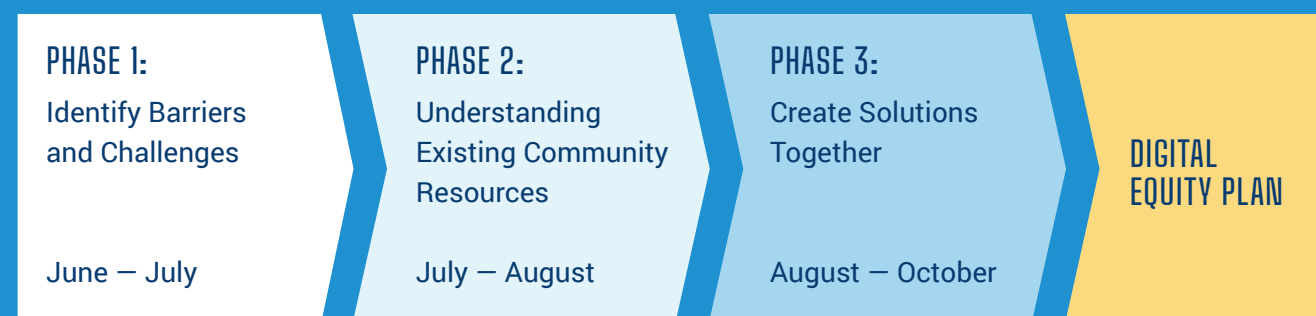
The Chicago Digital Equity Council (DEC) employed a stakeholder engagement approach that ensured people impacted by the digital divide were centered and empowered from the beginning. We know the digital divide in Chicago most deeply burdens communities of color and communities historically deprived of economic resources. Engaging members of these communities to understand barriers, existing strengths,

and ultimately partner to co-create solutions is central to the Digital Equity Council.

The DEC also deeply engaged representatives from different parts of the digital equity system, including government entities, non-profits, the private sector, and philanthropic organizations, to understand the full picture of resources and networks that already exist to tackle this issue. The DEC brought the “system in the

room” to address this citywide challenge and set us up for a cohesive and comprehensive plan that breaks down barriers, and builds upon the existing strengths of communities.

Starting in June 2022, we embarked on three phases of community engagement: Identifying Barriers, Understanding Existing Resources, and Creating Solutions Together.



## The Guiding Team

The DEC began by convening a Digital Equity Council Guiding Team – a cross-sector group of people who are committed to closing the digital divide in Chicago. The Guiding Team was composed of community members impacted by this issue, community-based organizations, and government institutions such as Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Public Library, Chicago Housing Authority, and City Colleges of Chicago. This group supported the design and implementation of the stakeholder engagement process, serving as advisors, facilitators, and outreach partners. More information on the Guiding Team members can be found [here](#).

The Guiding Team built trust with each other through sharing stories of how this issue has impacted each individual personally, co-creating agreements on how the group would engage as a community, and developing a guiding question to focus our work together.

### GUIDING QUESTION:

How can we work together to achieve digital equity in Chicago, so people in communities with the greatest barriers can utilize quality Internet, devices and digital learning tools to advance their goals?





### PHASE 1 AND 2: Understanding Digital Equity Barriers and Community Assets

We opened various multilingual avenues to seek community input to better understand the existing barriers and strengths related to digital equity, including in-person community conversations, a Digital Equity Council community survey, a Digital Equity Asset Inventory Survey, and one-on-one conversations.

We partnered with local community-based organizations to host 13 Digital Equity Community Conversations in Chicago’s least digitally connected communities, with 11 in-person and two virtual. We asked questions such as: “What are the biggest barriers you are facing when it comes to accessing Internet, devices and digital learning tools?” And “What ideas do you have to break down those barriers?”

We also engaged more than 3,000 community members in a digital equity citywide survey to better understand the problem.


Finally, we launched a Digital Equity Asset Inventory Survey to catalog all of the existing assets related to digital equity. Our vision is to build upon these assets as we move into implementation.

Through these initial phases of engagement, we better understood the complexities of the digital divide through the lens of community members and partner organizations. We also built a network of trusting relationships across sectors, and created a strong foundation to start implementing solutions.


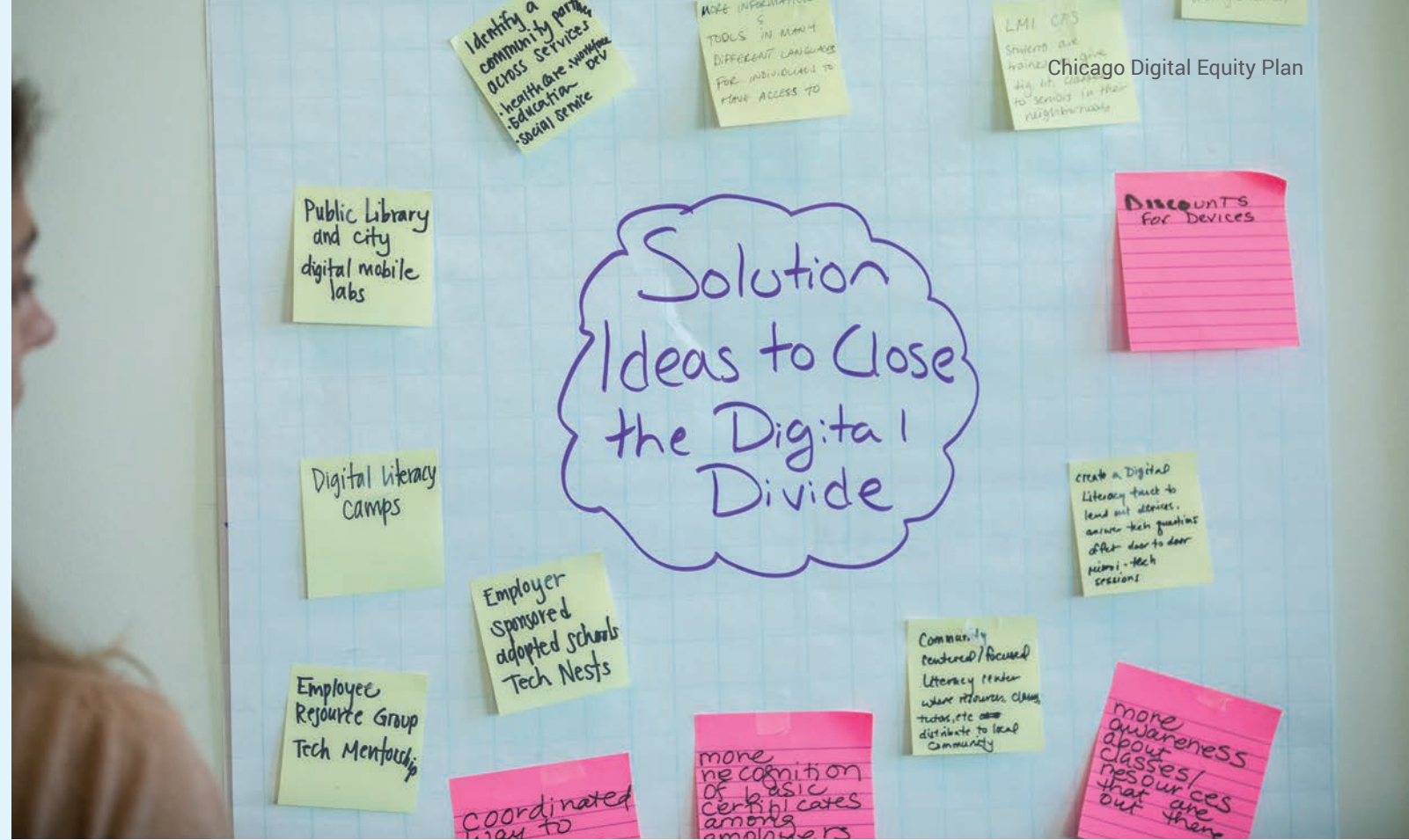
**386**  
people engaged



**17**  
events  
(15 in-person, 2 virtual)



**3,000+**  
survey responses

### PHASE 3: Creating Solutions Together

Once the DEC had a better understanding of the digital divide challenge and existing resources, we invited community members and digital equity stakeholders to attend Solution Design workshops to share their blue skies ideas on how we can solve this issue together as a city. The recommendations in this report are a reflection of what we heard.

- we are responsive to what we heard from people in least connected areas
- our impact is measurable and sustainable
- our offerings are free or very low-cost and high quality

The DEC is committed to implementing recommendations that live up to the following Guiding Principles.

A first draft of these digital equity recommendations were circulated back to Digital Equity Council participants and the Guiding Team to ensure they accurately captured what we heard during community engagement sessions. Moving forward, we are committed to an implementation approach that continues to engage communities most impacted by the digital divide.

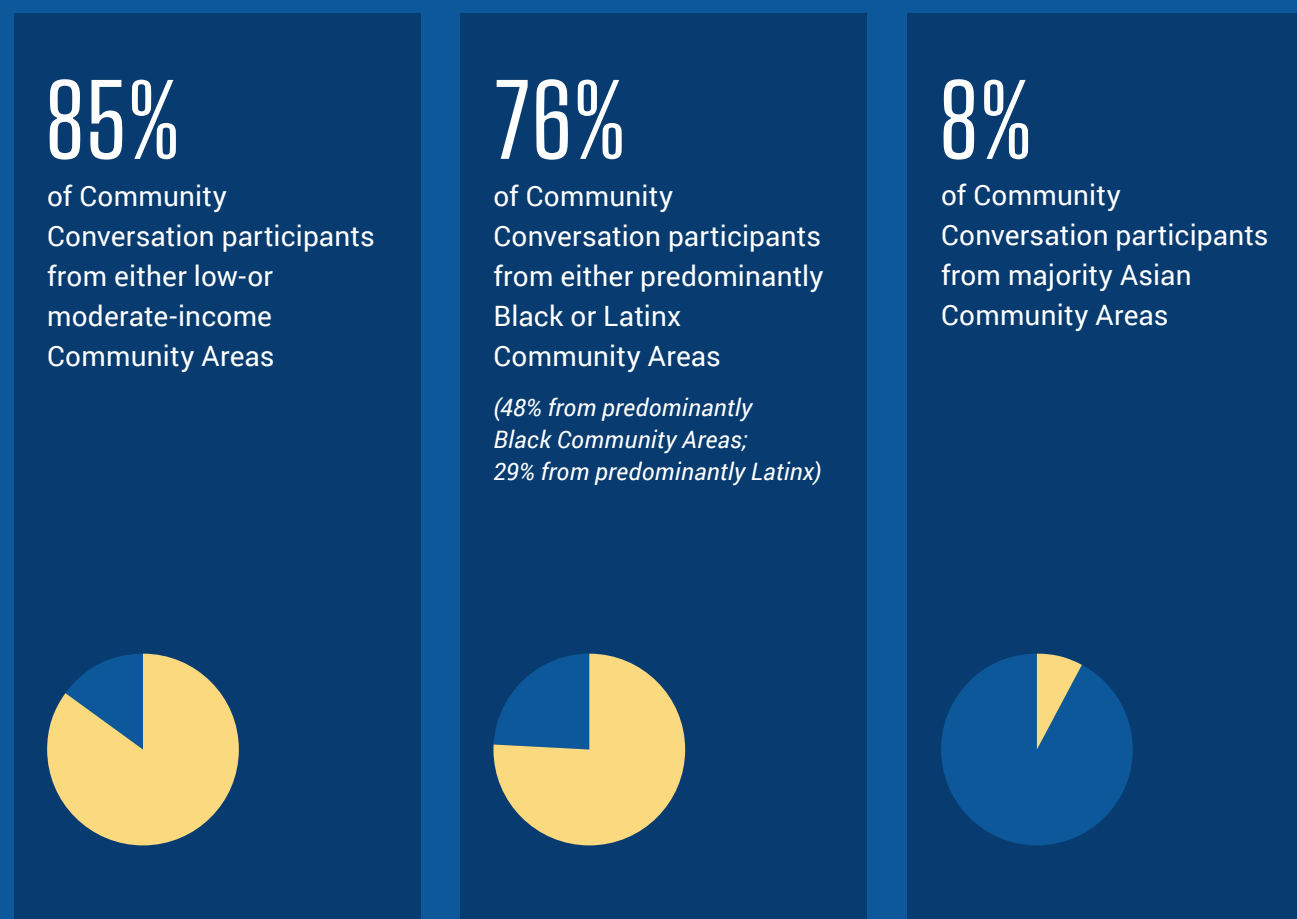
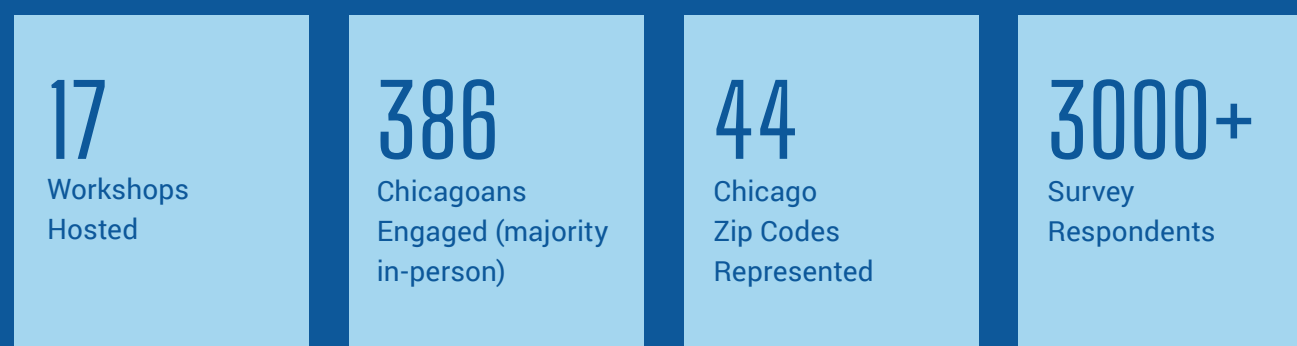
- As a Digital Equity Council, we will ensure:
- resources are driven to the least connected communities and populations
  - resources will be multilingual, accessible, and effective
  - we are building upon existing community strengths
  - hiring and training for related programs will prioritize people from communities in least connected areas





# FINDINGS

## Engagement by the Numbers



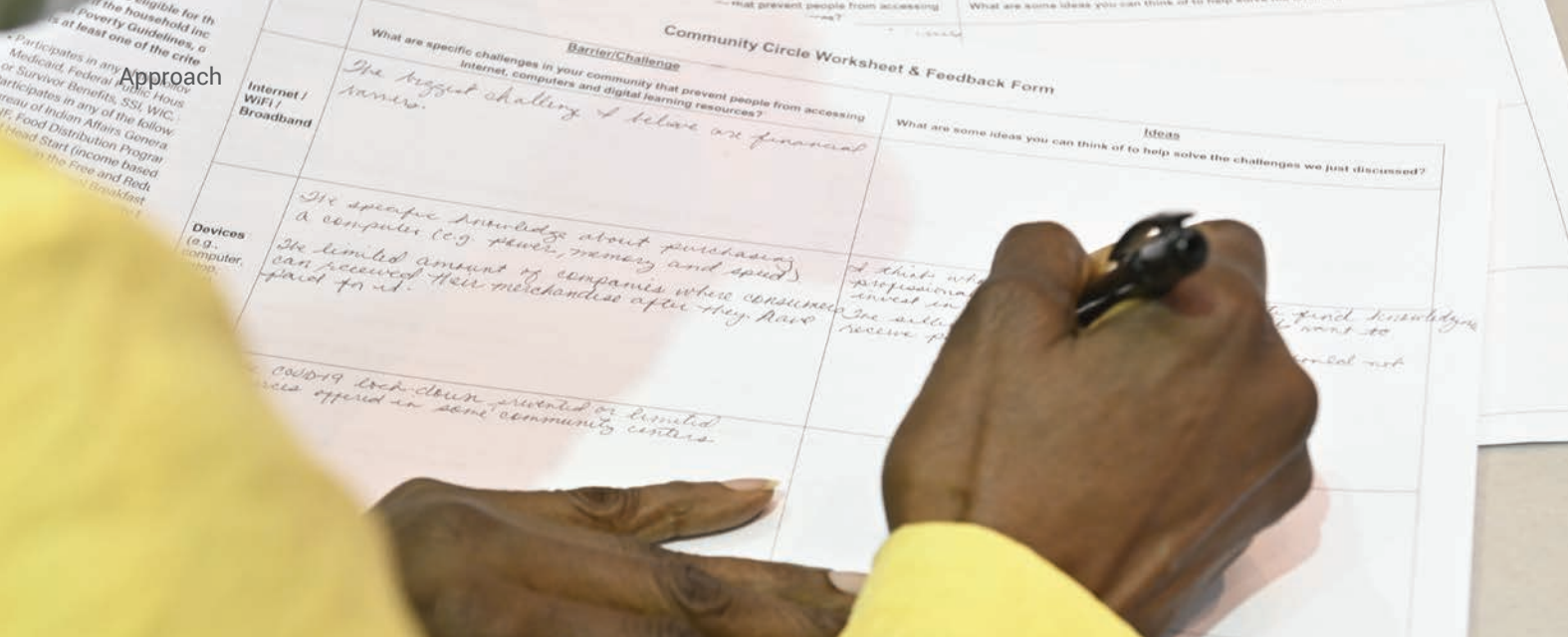
## Barriers to Digital Equity

Barriers were surfaced among 344 participants during Community Conversations. These discussions were held in areas with the lowest rates of home internet connection, and with communities most burdened by digital disparities, such as returning residents, people with disabilities, immigrant communities, English language learners, students, seniors, and people living in public housing. Barriers unearthed during these facilitated small group discussions can be categorized into four themes, with ideas and examples within each theme:

Theme	Idea	Example
1. Affordability	Cost of Internet	<i>My internet bill is close to \$200, which is hard to afford.</i>
	Cost of Devices	<i>I can't afford a laptop.</i>
	General Affordability Challenges	<i>People can barely eat. They have no money for internet.</i>
2. Technical	Need for Device	<i>I don't have a computer at home, I rely on my smart phone.</i>
	Unreliable Internet	<i>My Wi-Fi is unpredictable.</i>
	Inadequate Device	<i>I can't use certain software on my device.</i>
	Need for Tech Support	<i>I have a question about how to fix my laptop and no one to ask.</i>
3. Digital Literacy	Limited Opportunity to Build Skills	<i>I need computer classes to better understand how to use my computer.</i>
	Security / Trust Concerns	<i>I don't like paying bills online because I'm worried it's a scam.</i>
	Lack of Perceived Need	<i>I don't have internet and don't see why I need it.</i>
4. Consumer Experience	Access Needs	<i>Customer support not available in my language; Instructions are not accessible to people with my disability.</i>
	Restrictive provider policies	<i>I live in an attic unit which doesn't have an official U.S. Post Office address, so the local internet provider won't serve my unit.</i>
	Lack of Internet Options	<i>I only have the choice of one provider in my building.</i>
	Confusing Internet Consumer Options	<i>I'm not sure if it makes sense to purchase a bundle or separate services.</i>

When this report discusses barriers and recommendations, device refers to a computer, laptop or tablet.





“

The Internet is too expensive for our community so therefore a lot of families do not have the Internet in their homes...They have to make the decision to pay bills or the internet.”

– North Lawndale Conversation Participant

“

Most people with disabilities live on SSI less than \$1000 a month. Any cost is too much.”

– People with Disabilities Conversation Participant

“

For decent connectivity it costs too much to provide internet to all devices in the home.

– Auburn Gresham Conversation Participant

## AFFORDABILITY BARRIERS

- 61% of participants discussed affordability as a barrier to digital equity
- Specifically, 42% of people said internet was too expensive, 29% discussed devices being too costly, and 23% expressed concern with general affordability challenges related to structural inequities, inflation, and overall financial security.

“

I had a delicate surgery, and during the time, I had very specific needs. I needed the internet and my connection was disconnected. I was on a video call with my doctor and the internet company technician came and disconnected my service while servicing a neighbor. Apparently, they disconnected my internet because I was living in an attic. Thankfully, I was able to reconnect my internet through a program through my daughter’s school.”

– Southwest Side Conversation Participant

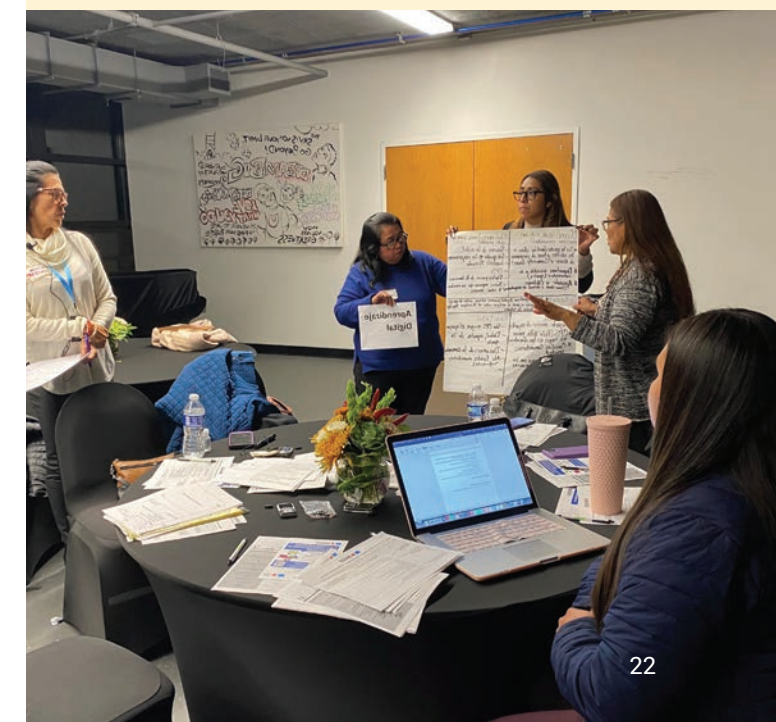
“

The network is poor when there is rain or bad weather. The network is too slow. If you apply for faster internet connection, then they will ask many questions which [presents] a language problem.”

– Greater Chinatown Conversation Participant

## TECHNICAL BARRIERS

- 61% of participants discussed barriers related to technology or infrastructure
- Specifically, 29% discussed the need for devices, nearly a third found internet connection to be unreliable or not meeting their needs, and 14% discussed their device not meeting their needs. 14% also expressed a need for technical support







Sometimes, it's difficult learning how to operate a computer. Most people learn by hands on, but most people become afraid to use computers if no one teaches them."

– Englewood Conversation Participant



Some people were never taught how to use the new technology. Like smart devices and touch screen laptops. The transition from regular TV to having basically everything on the internet is difficult to adjust to."

– Returning Residents Conversation Participant

## DIGITAL LITERACY BARRIERS

- Nearly 60% of all participants discussed barriers related to limited opportunities to build knowledge, skills or confidence with using computers and/or Internet
- Specifically, 55% expressed a desire to build knowledge and skills through programs like accessible classes
- A small portion of participants discussed concerns over security or a lack of trust in technology and the internet (8%). Others had a limited perceived value or usefulness of computers and/or internet (7%).



You call a place that isn't prepared to help a person with a disability. They send you equipment to set up yourself. Hard if you have a mobility, sight, or other kind of disability."

– People with Disabilities Conversation Participant



Some renter buildings already have an understanding with the [Internet Service Providers] and only allow renters to have access through those companies – no competition."

– Auburn Gresham Conversation Participant

## CONSUMER EXPERIENCE BARRIERS

- 24% of all participants spoke to barriers related to consumer experience
- Specifically, 17% of participants discussed accessibility challenges, such as language spoken and inaccessibility for a person with a disability.
- Following accessibility barriers, participants also discussed a lack of internet options and restrictive provider policies
- Participants from low- or moderate-income community areas were more likely to say that they experienced consumer experience-related barriers than those from other areas





# EXISTING ASSETS

Over the past several years, Chicago has developed a robust digital equity ecosystem, with many non-profit, public, and private sector organizations offering internet, device, and digital literacy services and support. In developing recommendations to close the digital divide, the Digital Equity Council took a strengths-based approach, which included creating an inventory of existing resources through an asset mapping survey available in August 2022. Input from organizations who completed this survey can be found on the [Digital Equity Council website](#), and organizations are listed to the right.

While this list captures just a portion of the great work happening around Chicago, it serves as a representation of Chicago's strong network of digital equity providers, and a foundation to build off of as we implement the recommendations in this report.



## Public Sector

Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership  
 Chicago Housing Authority  
 Chicago Public Library  
 Chicago State University  
 City Colleges of Chicago  
 Chicago Public Schools  
 Discovery Partners Institute  
 Illinois Broadband Lab  
 University of Chicago - Internet Equity Initiative  
 University of Illinois System

## Private Sector

AR Designs  
 Astound Broadband  
 AT&T  
 Comcast  
 Metro Edge Work  
 NODE Networks  
 T Mobile  
 Verizon

## Community / Non-Profit Sector

Access Living  
 Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council  
 Benton Institute for Broadband and Society  
 Center for Changing Lives  
 Chi Hack Night  
 ChiCommons LWCA  
 Claretian Associates  
 Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community  
 Community as a Campus  
 Community Builders Oakwood Shores  
 Comp-u-dopt  
 Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation  
 Hope Technology and Education Center  
 Hughes Who Technologies  
 I AM ABLE  
 Latinx Digital Leaders Now  
 Lawndale Christian Health Center  
 North Lawndale Employment Network  
 Northstar Digital Literacy  
 Northwest Center  
 PCs for People  
 Phalanx Family Services  
 South Shore Works Planning and Preservation Coalition  
 Southwest Organizing Project  
 Teamwork Englewood  
 The QUILT Corporation  
 Thresholds  
 Westside Community Services  
 Women's Business Development Center  
 YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout Community Conversations, participants brainstormed solutions to address the barriers discussed. These ideas were then consolidated and presented to participants of the Solution Workshops, who, in small groups, reviewed community ideas, added to the list, and then selected one idea to build out further. The recommendations in this plan are created based on such solutions, as well as existing resources and available funding.

Recommendations are categorized into three categories:

1. **GOVERNANCE & COALITION BUILDING**
2. **INTERNET**
3. **DEVICES & DIGITAL LEARNING**

Recommendations are further categorized as:



**POLICY**



**PROGRAM**



**TOOL**

## Section 1: Governance & Coalition Building

Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>On-Going Digital Equity Coalition</b> 	A coalition of organizations and individuals who are impacted by the digital divide and/or are committed to closing it. This coalition will serve as a digital equity advocacy body and hold digital equity stakeholders accountable to plan implementation. The coalition will surface challenges, provide feedback on programs, and advocate for consumer-friendly, equitable policies from both the government and private sector. The coalition will include support for and engagement of community leaders.	An expansion of the Chicago Digital Equity Council, adjusting to serve as an on-going coalition of committed organizations and individuals.  Inspired by the many digital equity coalitions around the country.	City & Chicago's Digital Equity Ecosystem	Chicago Connected  Digital Equity Act (Plan to apply)
<b>Public Digital Equity Portal</b> 	A community-facing interactive, easy-to-use website that houses digital equity resources, including community assets and opportunities for digital learning and finding low-cost internet and devices. The portal should be accessible for people with disabilities.	Expansion of CPS digital learning resource center on the Chicago Connected website, which compiles free digital learning resources across the city.	City & Chicago's Digital Equity Ecosystem	N/A










“If it’s not by us, it’s not for us. Whatever it takes to start equity has to start here and has to be represented in this room.”

– Belmont Cragin Conversation Participant


Section 2: Internet

Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>Citywide Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Outreach and Enrollment Campaign</b> 	A coordinated, citywide campaign to increase ACP sign ups among eligible populations, rooted in both community organizations and government institutions. This may involve one-on-one outreach, social media and marketing campaigns, enrollment support, and more.	New	City, Chicago Public Library,, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Public Schools, & Community-Based Organizations	FCC ACP Community Outreach Grant <i>(Plan to apply)</i>
<b>Free Public Wi-Fi in Parks and Fieldhouses</b> 	The Chicago Park District is installing public Wi-Fi at 60 parks. This includes upgrades to interior Wi-Fi at field houses as well as new exterior public Wi-Fi accessible from outdoor features in the park such as the playgrounds, turf fields and tennis courts. This initiative aims to transform the local parks into Wi-Fi hubs for local communities by providing free, high-speed wireless internet access to the public.	The Chicago Park District will be expanding upon free, public Wi-Fi pilots in Garfield Park and the South Shore Cultural Center.	Chicago Park District	Chicago Recovery Plan
<b>Consumer Toolkit</b> 	A community-informed guide for navigating broadband offerings, geared toward community members. This guide may include information on determining internet speed needs, checking home internet speeds, connecting safely, and interacting with internet providers. Consumer toolkit can be offered as a course on Chicago DigitalLearn, CPL's digital learning platform.	New	City, Chicago Public Library, & Chicago's Digital Equity Ecosystem	N/A

Section 2: Internet, continued




Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>Accessibility Policy Assessment</b> 	Conduct a current state assessment of internet provider policies as it relates to accessibility for people with disabilities. Based on findings, partner with providers and disability advocates to implement changes needed for accessibility.	New	City, including Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, and Disability Advocates	N/A
<b>Neighborhood Broadband Solutions in Least Connected Neighborhoods</b> 	The City is exploring making funding and physical assets available, such as rooftops and light poles, to broadband providers offering affordable, quality service to communities with low rates of broadband connectivity.	New	City	Chicago Recovery Plan

Section 3: Devices & Digital Learning

Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>Refurbish Retired Devices through "Chicago Device Pledge"</b> 	The City of Chicago and large organizations in Chicago establish processes to donate retired devices and equipment (e-waste) to non-profit organizations that securely wipe and then refurbish devices, offering them for free or very low cost to low-income families in Chicago. Encourage participation through citywide "Chicago Device Pledge" donation campaign.	Grow the inventory of organizations like PCs for People and Comp-u-dopt.	City, World Business Chicago, and large organizations in Chicago	Costs associated with donating retired devices (if any)




Section 3: Devices & Digital Learning, continued

Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>"Train to Own" Digital Skills Program &amp; Device Giveaway</b> 	Grants to community organizations to run an educational program that trains community members on computer and digital literacy basics. Community members who complete the program earn a device to take home and use. This can be geared toward seniors, English language learners, people with disabilities, and others who are seeking a baseline comfort level with digital skills. Programs could also leverage youth, taking an intergenerational approach, and should include modules on accessing tele-healthcare.	Build upon community-based organizations' digital literacy programs, offered through Chicago Connected. Incorporate elements of <i>Bike Chicago</i> program into device giveaway component.	City to grant funds to community partners to implement and manage programs, supported by private sector contributions, as feasible.	Chicago Connected Chicago Recovery Plan Digital Equity Act ( <i>Plan to apply</i> ) Private Sector Contributions
<b>Chicago Public Library CyberNavigators</b> 	CyberNavigators are technology tutors available at specific Chicago Public Library locations across the City. They offer patrons one-on-one sessions to help build skills in computer basics, email, Internet basics, completing online forms, and more.	Continuation of CyberNavigator program, a proven program model, and new levels of coordination / alignment with related initiatives.	Chicago Public Library	Donors to the Chicago Public Library Foundation
<b>Community Classes at Chicago Public Schools Parent Universities</b> 	Basic computer skill classes offered for free and in multiple languages at CPS Parent Universities. Classes available to both CPS and non-CPS families. Classes will offer a digital learning curriculum and a certification in using Google software. CPS Parent Mentors will serve as trusted community partners across more than 100 schools, increasing awareness of learning opportunities in their communities.	Through Chicago Connected, Parent Universities and community-based organizations have been offering educational content through Northstar Digital Learning and other curriculums they have developed. This recommendation will expand and institutionalize these initiatives.	Chicago Public Schools	Chicago Public Schools




“Go to where people are at and teach them based on where they are. Go to churches, go to their block club. Go into the senior buildings and meet with them! Show them in person what to do.”  
 – Auburn Gresham Conversation Participant

Section 3: Devices & Digital Learning, continued

Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>Chicago Housing Authority On-Site Digital Support</b> 	CHA's Digital Inclusion team to host device giveaways, digital learning trainings, and Affordable Connectivity Program enrollments for CHA public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants. Efforts will be in coordination with related initiatives through the ACP Outreach Grant, Chicago Connected, and other community-based initiatives.	CHA has a Digital Inclusion team that focuses on direct resident support.	Chicago Housing Authority	Chicago Housing Authority FCC Affordable Connectivity Program Grants, as applicable



Section 3: Devices & Digital Learning, continued

Recommendation	Description	Is the concept new, or an expansion of an existing model?	Owner	Planned or Potential Funding Source
<b>Community Classes at City Colleges of Chicago</b> 	Basic computer skill classes offered for free and in multiple languages through City Colleges of Chicago through the Tech Equity Program, which also includes the Chicago Connected expansion and the Learn-to-Own Laptop program.	City Colleges has offered basic and advanced computer classes through its credit and continuing education programs. This recommendation will expand City Colleges' digital literacy offerings, including bilingual course options, provided to the community for free.	City Colleges of Chicago (Tech Equity Program)	City Colleges of Chicago  Private Sector Contributions

In addition to the actionable recommendations above, the Chicago Digital Equity Council also surfaced the following ideas, for future consideration based on funding and capacity of the City or other potential owners.

**BI-LINGUAL IT HELP DESK:**

An IT Help Desk available to support Chicago residents who need help completing online activities, in multiple languages. The Help Desk will provide both technical support, in addition to digital navigation support. Digital navigation helps community members access existing digital inclusion resources and complete processes online, such as enrolling in benefits or signing up for low-cost internet. This can be an expansion of the current YMCA IT Help Desk through Chicago Connected.

**INTERGENERATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM:**

Train, hire, and compensate youth to build relationships with seniors and older adults and grow their skills and comfort level with technology.

**NEIGHBORHOOD MOBILE POP-UPS:**

Mobile tech hubs that serve as neighborhood pop-ups, and bring devices, resources, and digital learning opportunities to communities. Similar to book mobiles, pop ups will be a fun place to spend time, learn, and access support. The mobile hubs will meet community members where they are.



Are you impacted by the digital divide?  
Are you committed to closing it?

**JOIN US!**

Visit [Chicago.gov/DigitalEquity](https://Chicago.gov/DigitalEquity), click "Get Involved," and share your email address to stay in the know.

