



Resources for narrowing the digital divide

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Want to find affordable broadband programs, digital skills training, or create a coalition? We can help with this and more.

Affordable internet programs: How to find and sign up for them

- **The Affordable Connectivity Program**

The benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute between \$10 and \$50 toward the purchase price. In general, a household is eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program if the household income is at or below 200% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#). Full eligibility criteria and information on how to enroll can be found [here](#).

<https://www.fcc.gov/acp>

- **Broadband Now: What ISPs serve your ZIP code?** BroadbandNow has identified 2,867 internet service providers in the U.S., their coverage and advertised speeds. [Enter your ZIP code](#) and the website tells you which DSL, copper, cable, fiber-optic, fixed wireless and mobile internet providers serve where you live.

The Community Reinvestment Act: How banks can support broadband and digital inclusion

- [*Getting to Know the Community Reinvestment Act—Federal Reserve System*](#). The first video of this four-part series explains in practical, understandable terms the basic elements of the CRA and how regulators evaluate a financial institution's CRA performance. The video is less than eight minutes long and is helpful for those who are interested in collaborating with financial institutions. The three additional videos in the series go more in-depth on specific aspects of the CRA.
- [*Closing the Digital Divide: A Framework for Meeting CRA Obligations*](#), Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, 2016 The report provides financial institutions with an understanding of how broadband meets the "primary purpose" definition of the Community Reinvestment Act, a road map of best practices for closing the digital divide, and a list of tips for preparing their case for digital opportunity investments, among other elements.
- [*Guide to CRA Grantmaking for Digital Equity and Economic Inclusion*](#), National Collaborative for Digital Equity (NCDE), October, 2020

This brief guide to using the Community Reinvestment Act for digital inclusion contains examples of digital investments and tips on how to create effective CRA proposals aimed at narrowing the divide. NCDE updates the guide regularly.

Digital inclusion coalitions: What they are, how to form them and how to measure success.

Community leaders across the country have joined together to tackle the digital divide. Coalitions often include libraries, nonprofit organizations, local governments and internet service providers. They work together to help ensure those in need get connected.

- **The Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook** - NDIA

NDIA developed The Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook to capture and share lessons learned from six existing coalitions. The guidebook offers advice for starting and building a coalition and on the types of things that digital inclusion coalitions typically do.

- **Digital Inclusion: Outcomes Based Evaluation** - Benton Foundation

Outcomes-based evaluation provides a way for programs that promote digital inclusion to understand the impact of the services provided. This report describes the challenges facing community-based groups and others in using outcomes-based evaluation to measure the success of their digital inclusion programs and offers recommendations to address those shared barriers.

Donating devices: Getting low-cost (used) computers to those in need

New computers are often too expensive for lower income households. At the same time, many employers replace their computers in three-to five-year cycles, often selling the old computers for pennies on the dollar. Instead, employers could donate the used computers to nonprofit refurbishers. These organizations are able to securely remove old data, add new software, and redeploy the older computers to lower income households and the nonprofits that serve them.

- **Digitunity**: Digitunity supports a network of nonprofit refurbishers across the country. The Digitunity team matches companies looking to donate computers with qualified refurbishers, who then prepare and distribute computers in their communities.

Digital skills training: Assessment and curriculum

To make the most of a computer and broadband connection, users need the skills to utilize them. Digital skills should be thought of as being on a spectrum. On one end are the basics: how to turn on the computer and connect to a wireless connection, and safely browse the internet, for example. On the other end of the spectrum are skills like database management and computer coding, more advanced skills that provide livable wage job opportunities.

- **Northstar**: Northstar was developed in response to the needs of job seekers who may lack the digital literacy skills needed to seek, obtain, and retain employment, as well as to perform other tasks in daily life. Certificates provide an important

credential for employment, as even entry-level jobs increasingly require basic computer skills. Certificates also certify end user ability to complete computer skills needed in higher education, and demonstrate their ability to use social media and online information thoughtfully.

Broadband expansion data, policy and research

- **Becoming Broadband Ready: A Toolkit for Communities**, Next Century Cities, January 2019

Next Century Cities is a nonprofit membership organization founded to support communities and elected officials in providing broadband. It offers a toolkit that covers topics such as: building a community movement; establishing policies and procedures such as “dig once” and “simplified permitting;” creating a digital inclusion plan; identifying legislative and regulatory barriers; exploring connectivity options such as co-ops or open access networks; exploring financing options; and more. The toolkit includes real-life examples and a helpful glossary and checklist.

- **Can you measure the benefits of broadband?—Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City** In response to frequent questions on this topic, this article from 2021 highlights recent research regarding the economic benefits of broadband, computer access and digital skills training.

- **Community Network Map - Institute for Local Self-Reliance**

The interactive map includes more than 800 communities. It tracks a variety of ways in which local governments have invested in wired telecommunications networks as well as states with laws that discourage such approaches. The map can be configured for a lot of detail, or to focus on just one element, such as dark fiber, gigabit speeds, citywide fiber, etc.

- **Broadband Scorecard Report - R Street**

Companies that want to deploy broadband must deal with regulatory barriers imposed by government. Much of the regulation comes from the Federal Communications Commission, but state and local governments also play a role. This 2020 study evaluates all 50 states and assigns each a score based on how conducive their laws are to broadband deployment.

- **Broadband Access Initiative—The PEW Charitable Trusts**: The initiative works with policymakers, researchers, and other partners and conducts research on laws and policies for expanding high-speed internet.