

DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN



Digital Equity Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 24, 2024



DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN



Today's Agenda

- Introductions & Kimley-Horn Team
- Purpose of the Project
- Overall Plan Development Process
- Project Timeline
- Open Discussion of Known Needs and Issues



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Kimley-Horn Team



Bill Scully, P.E., RSP₁



Kodi Berger, P.E.



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What is Digital Equity?

“A condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.”



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Demographics

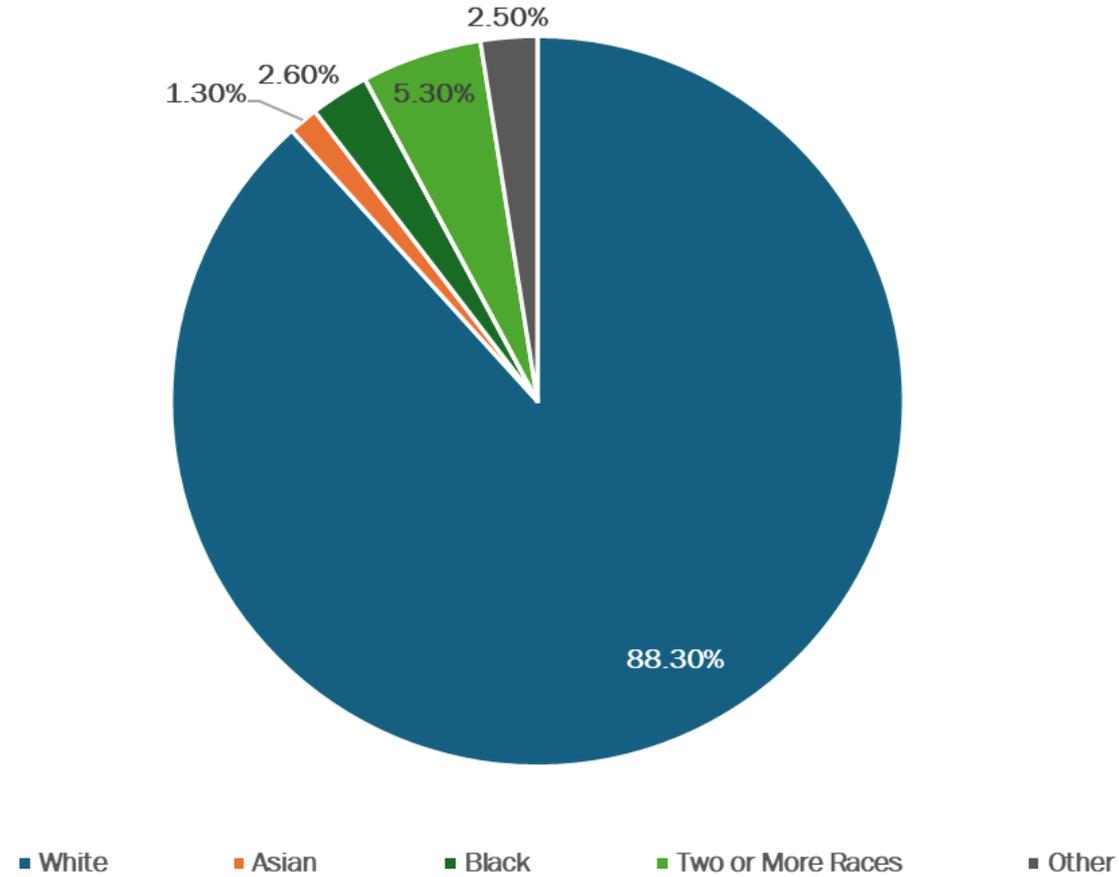
Population	Household Ownerships	Race	Language	Education	Disabilities	Median Household Income	Median Age
16,430	15% occupied units are rental units 85% occupied units are owned	11.7% are non-White	9.6% speak language other than English at home	43.1% has a <u>Bachelor's</u> degree or Higher	12.9% is disabled	\$101,570	43.5

US 2020 Census



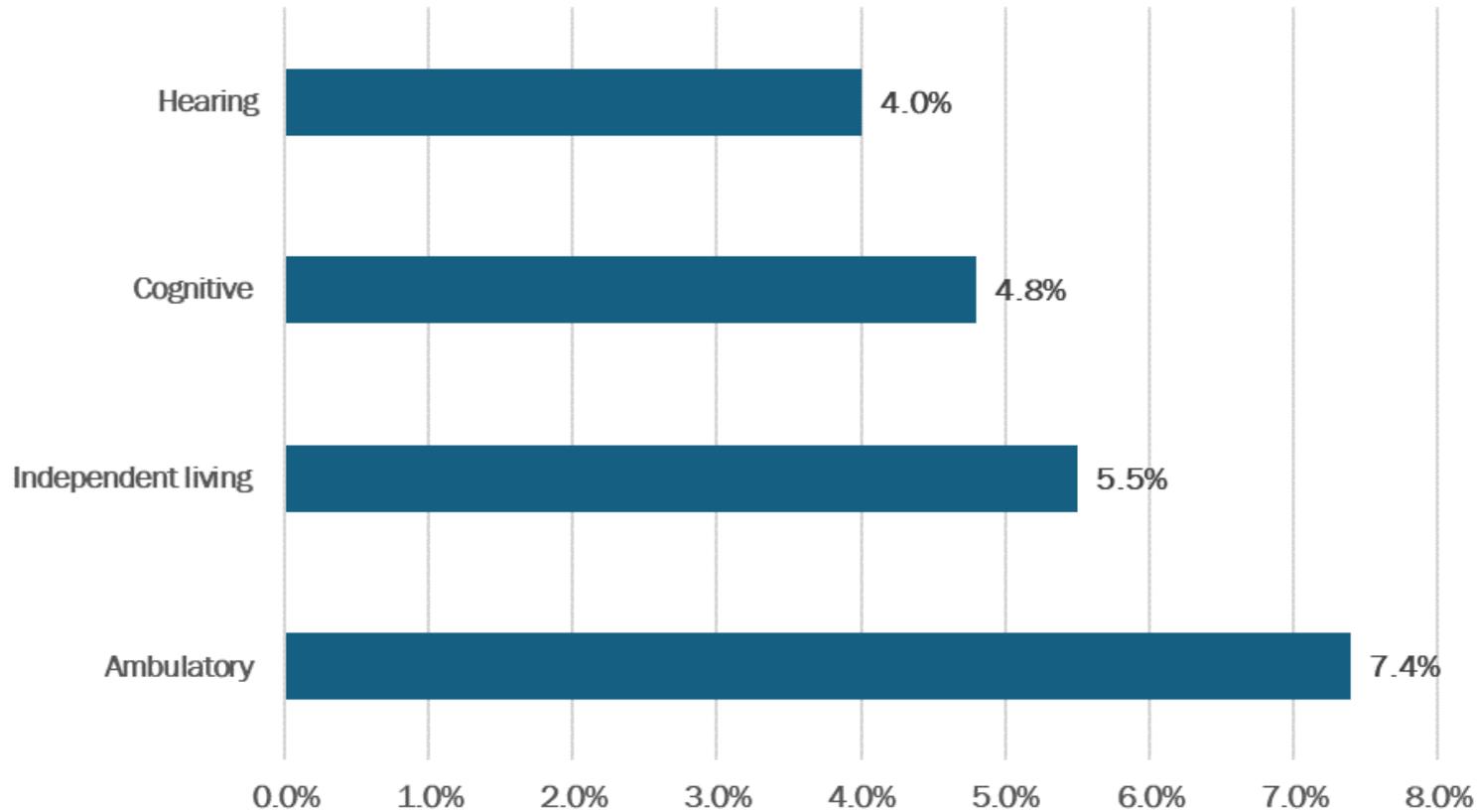


Demographics – race





Demographics – common disabilities



Hearing: Serious difficult hearing

Cognitive: Serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions

Independent Living: Helping individuals move out of nursing homes and into the community

Ambulatory: An impairment that prevents or impedes walking.





Components of Digital Equity

Adequate Computing Device

ensure residents can acquire and maintain a dedicated personal computing device that meets their needs.

Affordable, Reliable Broadband Connection

good experience on the internet when they can connect to online resources and transfer data fast enough to facilitate video conferencing and accomplish other tasks with minimal loading time.

Digital Literacy Skills

ability to use a computing device, to navigate the internet, to be a smart consumer of information, and to avoid danger online





Purpose of the Plan

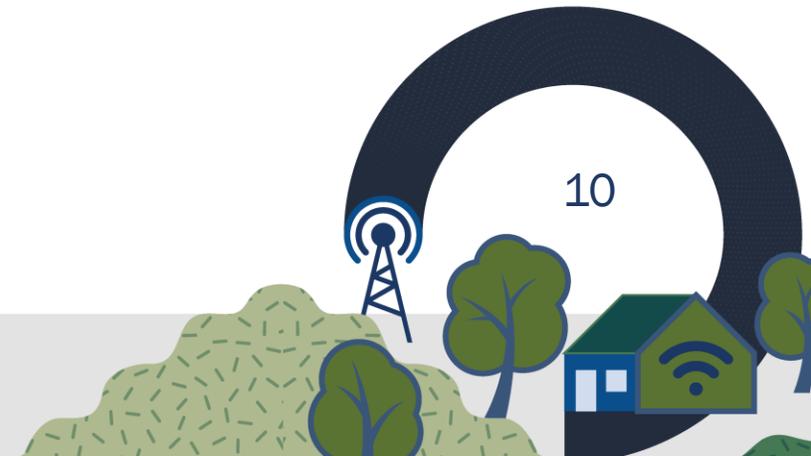
- Prepare a Digital Equity Plan for the Town of East Longmeadow to serve residents who may be at a disadvantage regarding lack of **reliable digital service (i.e. broadband)**, lack of **digital equity skills** and inadequate access to **reliable devices** to keep up with the everchanging technological atmosphere post-COVID.





Expectations from the Committee

- Provide **insight** into the community
- Serve as a **conduit** between the community and Consultant
- Identify additional **stakeholders** for interviewing
- How best to **engage** with the community
- **Prioritize** actions and recommended implementation strategies



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MBI Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program

- State grant program to help communities identify gaps and needs
- Assist communities and guide municipal decision-making and investments that will increase and improve digital access and use of the internet
- Prepare municipalities for submitting subsequent grant applications that support implementing improvements and addressing digital issues





Importance of Digital Connectivity

- Local Notices and Engagement
- Social Interaction
- Workforce Recruitment
- Online Learning and Certifications
- Telehealth
- Community's Economic Viability

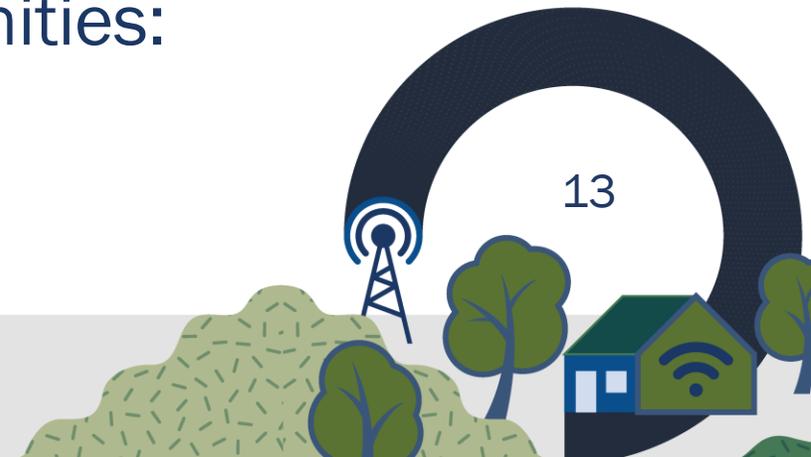




What is Broadband?

- Broadband is high-speed internet access that is always on and is independent of network hardware and technologies used.
- It can be fixed or mobile service
- Broadband speeds according to the FCC:
 - Download speeds of at least 25 Mbps
 - Upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps
- According to many new federal funding opportunities:
 - Download speeds of at least 100 Mbps
 - Upload speeds of 20 or 100 Mbps

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)



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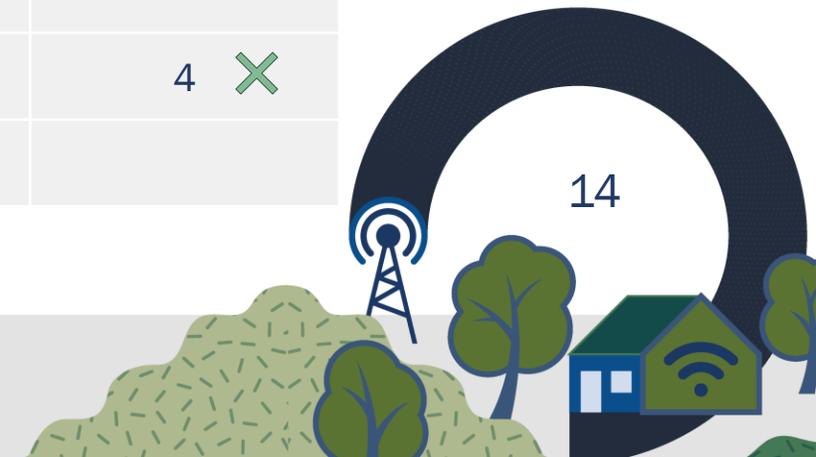


East Longmeadow's Broadband Access

Most survey respondents



	Residential				Commercial			
Provider	Upload (Mbps)		Download (Mbps)		Upload (Mbps)		Download (Mbps)	
Spectrum	1,000	✓	35	✓	-	-	-	-
T-Mobile	100	✓	20	✓	25	✗	3	✗
Verizon	300	✓	20	✓	-	-	-	-
Starlink	220	✓	25	✓	-	-	-	-
Viasat	50	✗	3	✗	50	✗	4	✗
HughesNet	100	✓	5	✗				

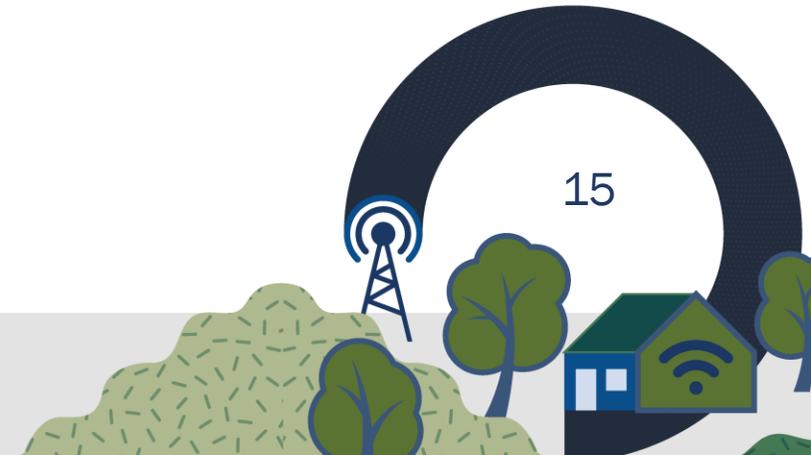


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- Public safety
- Health care
- Education
- Economic development
- Energy
- Transportation

Speed Matters





Overall Plan Development Process

- Current State of Digital Equity
- Obtain Public Input
- Discuss with Key Stakeholders
- Define the Needs
- Identify Potential Actions
- Prioritize Actions

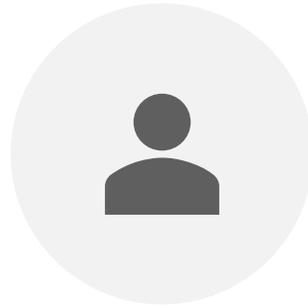




Common Themes Experienced in the Commonwealth



SLOW WI-FI



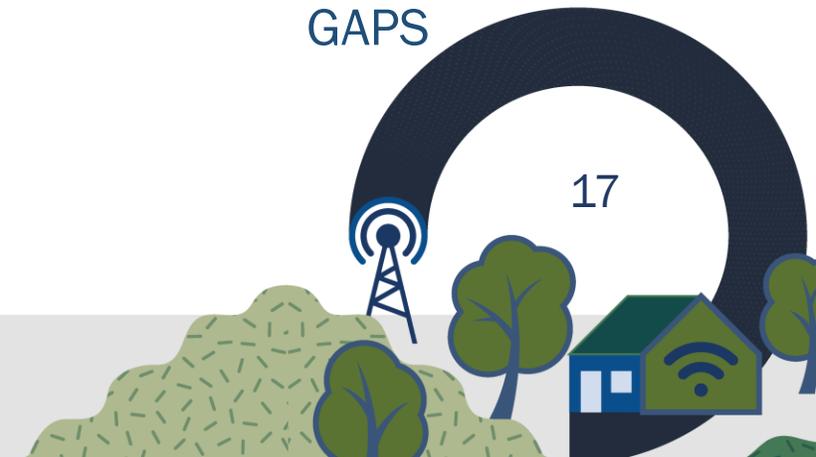
ONE SERVICE PROVIDER



HIGH COSTS TO CONSUMER



DIGITAL LITERACY GAPS



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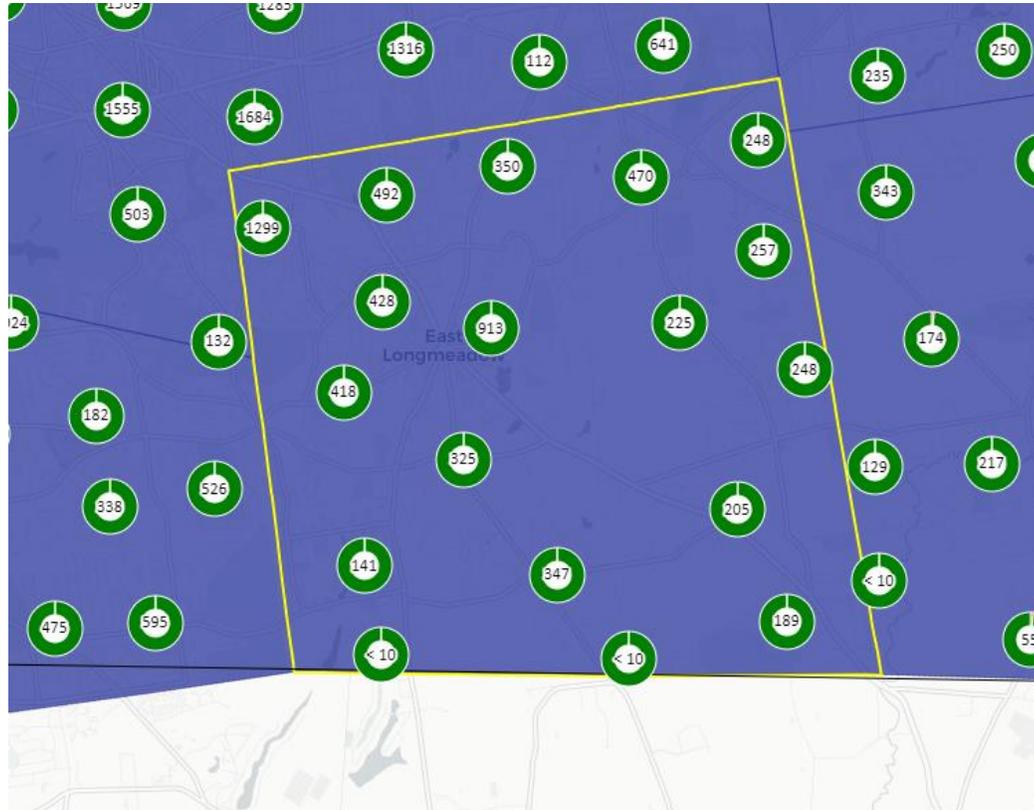


Some Early Information

Coverage
99.98% | 6,148 Served
0.02% Unserved (1)
0.00% Underserved

Speed
97.19% | 5,976 100/20 Mbps
2.80% 1000/100 Mbps (172)
0.00% 25/3 Mbps
0.00% 1000/1000 Mbps

Subscription
87.07% Broadband
12.47% None
0.47% Dial Up



ACP Enrollment:

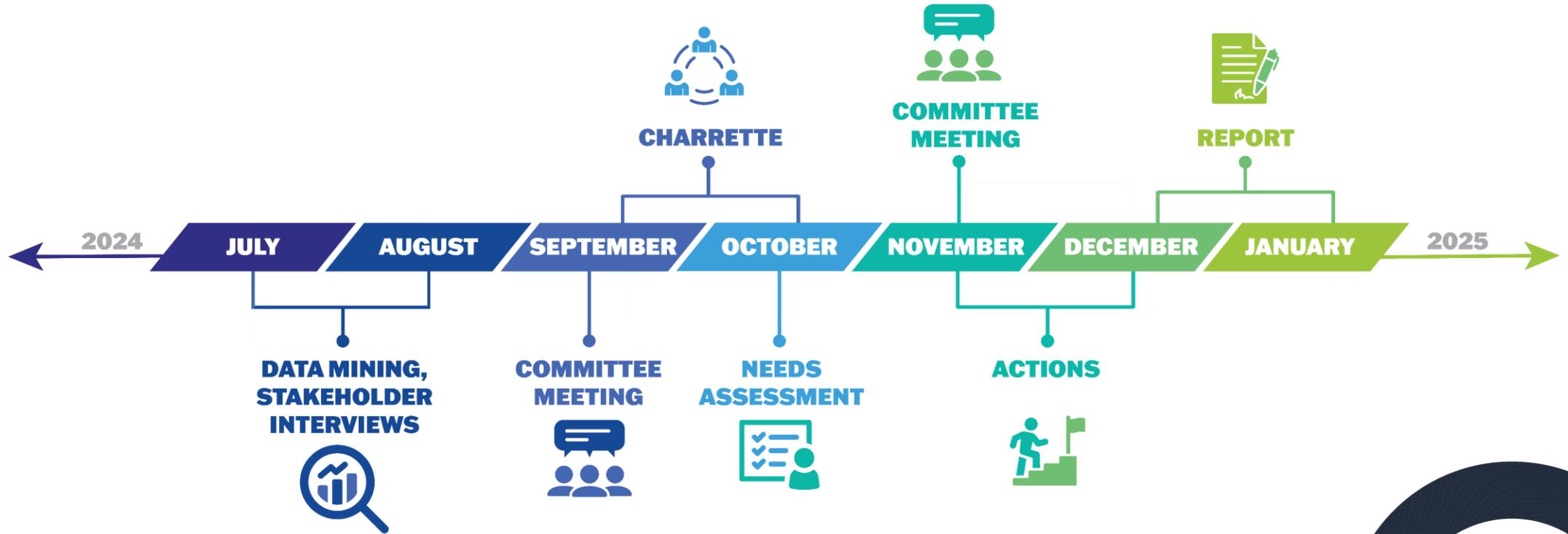
- 613 enrolled



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Project Timeline



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Steering Committee Action Items

- Identify stakeholders for October interviews
- Help advertise the public Digital Equity Survey
- Identify potential locations and dates for November/December charrettes



Massachusetts Statewide Digital Equity Survey

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) wants to hear from you about your experiences with getting and using internet service! This survey is completely anonymous and should be completed by one individual per household. **Your feedback is vital to understand barriers to internet access, affordability, and adoption to help close the digital divide.** Thank you for your time and participation.

Section 1: Please answer the following questions.

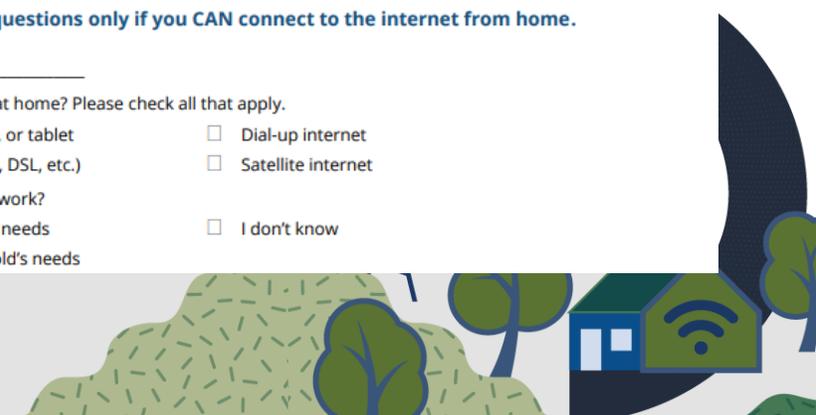
1. What is your zip code? _____
2. Which Massachusetts municipality do you live in? _____

Do you have internet service in your home?

- YES - Please proceed to Section 2 below
- NO - Please skip to Section 3 (flip this page over)

Section 2: Please answer the following questions only if you CAN connect to the internet from home.

3. Who is your internet service provider? _____
4. What kind of internet service do you have at home? Please check all that apply.
 - A data plan for a smartphone, hotspot, or tablet
 - Home wireline connection (cable, fiber, DSL, etc.)
 - Dial-up internet
 - Satellite internet
5. How well does your home internet service work?
 - Good enough to meet my household's needs
 - Not good enough to meet my household's needs
 - I don't know



Open Discussion

Thank you!

MBI
MASSACHUSETTS
BROADBAND INSTITUTE



at the MassTech
Collaborative

Kimley»»Horn

