

Delivering on the Promise of Digital Equity



Achieving Digital Equity for All

Digital knowledge and skills are required to fully participate in the society and economy of the United States. But digital skill gaps negatively impact individuals' future job opportunities and earning potential, particularly those who have been historically and systematically excluded.

[Our new publication, "Delivering on the Promise of Digital Equity,"](#) is designed to help state leaders (including governors, legislators, state chief technology officers, state education chiefs, and leaders in state education agencies) as well as local community leaders (including mayors, county executives, school superintendents, nonprofit leaders, and education advocates) find effective ways for investing the historic \$65 billion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in K-12 education to increase digital equity. It provides an overview of what we know about the digital skills and knowledge necessary for success, outlines where the largest gaps exist, and proposes solutions to close those gaps based on Digital Promise's research and policy efforts and our direct work with district and school leaders. The goal of these recommendations is to help learners transition successfully from K-12 to postsecondary and other pathways to achieve greater well-being and economic security.

Digital Equity in Action: State Policy Priorities

States will need to engage underrepresented communities and the organizations that already partner with them to develop and implement solutions that meet existing needs for 24/7 reliable access and build the skills to use technology effectively. As states develop and revise edtech plans and policies, they must prioritize upskilling educators to deploy technology powerfully in the classroom by establishing digital competencies and designing professional learning opportunities.

There are six buckets of funding for the broadband programs of the IIJA, the most substantial of which is the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program at more than \$42 billion. As state and local teams and other possible grant recipients discuss priorities and strategies to build into their digital equity and BEAD plans, we recommend they include nine "big plays" spread across three essential areas to close the digital divide and sustain progress after national grant funds are gone.

The Nine Big Plays

FOCUS AREA 1:

Build and sustain systems and infrastructure to ensure all students have constant, reliable access.

- 1** Remove barriers to affordable broadband.
- 2** Leverage national and state-level broadband programs to close equity gaps in connectivity and device procurement.
- 3** Create or revise long-term edtech plans to provide equitable access and sustainable systems.

FOCUS AREA 2:

Upskill the K-12 teacher and leader workforce.

- 4** Establish digital skill and digital use competencies for K-12 graduates and educators.
- 5** Design professional learning opportunities that increase educators' digital skills and digital use competencies.
- 6** Charge a task force to create a statewide plan to upskill the K-12 educator workforce.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Upskill students, parents, families, and caregivers.

- 7** Utilize local groups to convene underrepresented populations and gather information.
- 8** Scale up community-based efforts to develop the digital skills of students and parents/caregivers.
- 9** Create task forces inclusive of underrepresented communities to influence state and local plans.



Read the full white paper at digitalpromise.org/DigitalEquityReport