

# Digital Equity Plan Template

## Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners



All fields are required, unless otherwise specified.

### 1. Enter the name of the Regional or Tribal Partner submitting this plan

Coastal Maine Regional Broadband

### 2. Specify the region this plan covers

Sagadahoc, Lincoln and Knox Counties, excluding the unbridged islands.

### 3. List the Regional Digital Equity Coalition team members and the agency/organization they are affiliated with.

Include any organizations/individuals who attended coalition meetings and/or conducted outreach to inform the plan.

Digital Equity Coalition Team Member	Agency/Organization Affiliation
Andrew Hart	Knox County Administrator
Amber Jones	Sagadahoc County Administrator
Carrie Kipfer	Lincoln County Administrator
Claire Berkowitz	Midcoast Community Action
Gerry Queally	Spectrum Generations
Pam Sperry	Central LC Adult Ed
Carlos Barrionuevo	Georgetown Broadband LLC
Christa Thorpe	Island Institute

#### 4. What is your region's Vision Statement?

*The introduction to the plan is a great place to outline the overarching vision for what you want to achieve in your region. What is unique about your region, especially in terms of assets, barriers, culture, and ways the region can lead? What could connecting everyone in your region mean? If you have also developed a mission statement describing how you will accomplish the vision, include it here. Here is an example from [Franklin County, Ohio regional coalition](#).*

*Enter your content here...*

To make digital access a reality for people in Coastal Maine, by ensuring full broadband connectivity and affordability to homes and businesses, uniting people with the devices needed to connect, and encouraging training to build skills for all ages.

The digital landscape will be sustainable and resilient so residents and visitors can conduct business, unlock educational opportunities, consult with health professionals, and communicate with each other in an equitable and impartial manner.

#### 5. Does the region have any existing goals or vision that could be supported by broadband and digital inclusion programming and investment? (Optional)

*If your digital inclusion plan directly connects to other existing work across your region, insert a brief overview of how the regional or tribal Digital Equity Plan is aligned with or will help support priorities and other existing or planned efforts in the region. For example, are there educational, workforce, economic development, or other goals or plans in the region that can be achieved with broadband and digital inclusion activities?*

*This is an optional section that may not apply to all regional/tribal partners but may be useful for talking with partners or community leaders in your region about why broadband and digital equity are important issues. If you have not discovered any goals in your region that can be aligned with your broadband work, please leave this blank.*

*Enter your content here...*

Lincoln County and the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission adopted a 5-year Strategic Plan in 2021, with Broadband as one of six priorities. Here are the broadband outcomes and action areas. To support this work, the County has allocated approximately \$20,000 for additional capacity.

### Outcomes

1. Be a recognized leader and source of information and support for broadband in Lincoln County.
2. Increased number of residences/businesses with access to broadband internet.
3. Increased number of towns with active broadband committees or initiatives.
4. Increased technology education, and digital equity and literacy, especially for those disenfranchised by internet and technology progression.

### Action Areas:

1. Continue to promote, connect, and leverage digital equity and other broadband education resources.
2. Identify and support key countywide or regional initiatives and organizations and create connections and coalitions.
3. Research and promote alternative sources of public and private funding and inform towns about funding sources.
4. Seek funding for LCRPC work in this sector.

The other 2 counties do not have similar strategic plans or county-wide broadband plans at this time. EDA's CEDS process in this midcoast region is starting up again after a few years of COVID and organizational changes.

## 6. Current State of Digital Equity: General Summary of Barriers and Assets

*In this section, please generally summarize the barriers and assets that exist or that you discovered in your region during the planning process. This is an introduction to more detail in the following sections, so what we're looking for is a general statement of the digital equity challenges in the region.*

**Barriers:** *This is where you could insert data from the regional snapshots created by HR&A Advisors for each county. What elements of the data for your region jump out at you? Do you have higher percentages of particular covered populations? Are some covered populations less likely to have internet service at home or a device at home? Are there income, employment, or educational attainment disparities that could be addressed with digital inclusion strategies?*

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More data about barriers experienced by covered populations will be presented in Section 7. Here is the data from the HR&A Snapshots:

Percentage of Households	Internet No Subscription	No Internet Access	With computer No Internet Access	Dial-Up	Without computer	Cost-burdened Households
Knox County	2%	8%	3%	1%	4%	41%
Lincoln County	4%	13%	10%	1%	5%	30%
Sagadahoc County	2%	7%	4%	1%	4%	44%

**Assets:** *What assets were identified in your region in the asset inventory? What additional assets did you identify with your coalition or during your planning process? Were there significant resources in the region in any of the five elements of digital inclusion? Were there significant gaps in any of the elements of digital inclusion?*

*Enter your content here...*

Major assets include NDEC, many libraries, and adult ed programs. We are in the middle of hearing back from each town’s broadband committee about local and regional assets; several have provided information and expect to follow-up with others.

In addition to **NDEC’s online classes and programs**, here are several **Partner Onsite Class** locations in the 3 counties:

- Bridge Academy Public Library, Dresden, Lincoln County
- Central Lincoln County Adult Ed, LC
- Lincoln County Commissioners, LC
- Two Bridges Regional Jail, Wiscasset, LC and SC
- Gibbs Public Library, Washington, KC
- Mid-Coast School of Technology/Adult Ed, Rockland, KC
- Rockland Public Library, KC
- Bath Housing, SC
- Bowdoinham Public Library, SC
- Elmhurst, Inc. Bath, SC

**Selected Libraries:**

Skidompha, Damariscotta area: public access computers, lending laptops and hotspots, outside 24/7 guest access; Tech Wednesdays (20 min 1-on-1).

Patten Free Library, Bath area: lending chrome books, public access computers, partnering with NDEC; also offers “Bendable” through Digital Maine. Another key partner is Maine State Library; PFL staff available for internet safety guidance.

Vose Library, Union: public access inside, free access outside, lending hotspots, monthly Tech Night and regular library staff support

Topsham Public Library: public access inside, free access outside, public access computers, Tech Hours (T/Th) 2 hours each

Camden Public Library: public access inside, free access outside, public access computers, iPads & Kindles available to check out, print & scan service, Tech Thursdays (1-on-1 appts.)

Rockland Public Library: public access wifi & computers, NDEC tech classes (zoom), 1-on-1 Tech appt., “Bendable Maine” online learning, “Hoopla” digital delivery app

Most other town libraries provide public access, but have limited hours. Few towns provide dedicated computer/space for public access; most of the small towns have quite limited hours.

### **Selected Adult Ed Programs:**

#### Boothbay Region Adult & Community Education

Provides device access (desktops, laptops, peripherals, and other office devices). Digital skills training offered includes computer and hardware basics, video calls, internet browsing, operating system basics, social media, and technical certifications. Curricula includes Northstar and BoomerTech Adventures.

#### Midcoast Adult and Community Education

Provides device access (desktops, laptops, peripherals, tablets, and other office devices). Digital skills training offered include connecting virtually (video calls, chat, etc.), internet browsing, and social media. The Northstar digital literacy curriculum is offered. Technical support is available to device users through volunteer and paid staff.

### **Selected Towns:**

Georgetown stands out as a community with assets:

Georgetown Historical Society has for 15 years provided free 24-hour exterior access 1 gbps/1gbps to the public. The Georgetown Community Center has 100/100, with limited hours. Uses Get IT, Give IT via Georgetown BB, LLC. Age-Friendly Georgetown assists residents with ACP enrollment, and currently provides training for computer/smartphone use.

Boothbay Harbor has several public access locations (town office, library, comm center, school, YMCA); Adult Ed; Community Center - high school students assist older residents with computers & phones. The BB Region’s Community Navigator and Library staff also help people access govt resources and info online. BB Comm Center helps with internet safety.

## **7. List the specific barriers for the Covered Populations that were discovered during the teamwork done by your Coalition.**

*In the summary above, you have identified barriers to digital equity faced generally by the region’s population, and in this section, you should specifically address barriers you’ve discovered for each covered population in the region. This will serve as the baseline to understand where the region stands, so it can plan what is needed to achieve the vision. Some of these*

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barriers may be gleaned from the data, and some may come from conversations with your coalition partners, survey results within the region, interviews with other organizations or individuals, community meetings, or focus groups. If there were covered populations for which you were not able to identify specific barriers or insight, simply note that in each section below.

### Analysis based on about 300 responses to our CMRB Digital Equity Interview (online and print)

#### Low-income households

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	Based on our interview/survey data: about ½ of low-income families do not have access; and all cannot afford it.
Access to devices and technical support	About ¼ have access to devices, most do not. About ¾ have no technical support or do not know of any available.
Digital skills	Slightly more than ½ have digital training needs
Comments:	Prefer in-home tech support, 1-on-1 training; long driveway makes installation too expensive; internet unstable;

**WE DID NOT INTERVIEW FOR THIS QUESTION with all 3 counties being rural**

#### Rural inhabitants

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	
Access to devices and technical support	
Digital skills	
Other	

#### Veterans

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	Over 60% do not have access; about 37% cannot afford

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	high-speed bb
Access to devices and technical support	Most vets have devices (11% do not); about 70% have no tech support or don't know of any.
Digital skills	55% have no training needs
Comments:	Favor group classes (could use help w new computer); bb service is inconsistent; physical barriers prohibit computer use; long driveway expense definitely a barrier.

### Racial/ethnic minorities

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	Access not available to half; access affordable to half, not affordable to the other half
Access to devices and technical support	All have access to devices; most do not have tech support or don't know of availability
Digital skills	¾ do not need training
Comments:	Major concerns are access and affordability. There is a physical barrier in one situation.

### People with disabilities

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	Over 60% have no access; about 26% cannot afford it
Access to devices and technical support	Most all have devices; over 70% do not have tech support or don't know what's available
Digital skills	74% have no need for training; 26% do.
Comments:	Like free and local training on computer/tablet; need consistent speed to work from home; help those who need it; physical barrier; would like equipment such as webcam

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### Formerly Incarcerated People

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	None had access to hi-speed; but all could afford it
Access to devices and technical support	Almost all had devices; none had tech support
Digital skills	Almost all need digital training
Other	

### Older adults

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	Two-thirds do not have access (about 6% don't know); little less than one-third cannot afford it.
Access to devices and technical support	Almost all have devices; about 70% don't have tech support or don't know what's available
Digital skills	About one-third need training
Other	Need stable internet; aging devices; need more resources to connect, to provide assistance (volunteers?); need basic computer training, online class facilitation; physical barriers; long driveways very costly; a few do not want the internet

### Did not have enough responses to draw conclusions People with Language barriers

Category	Barrier
Available/affordable broadband access	
Access to devices and technical support	
Digital skills	
Other	



### **7a. Inclusive/Accessible government resources: did you discover any specific government resources, processes, forms, etc., that are not accessible to the covered populations?**

*This could be municipal, county, or state government processes or information. We'd like to better understand whether the covered populations are finding any specific digital resources difficult to access. For example, you may have discovered that residents find it difficult to access the town meeting online, face barriers in filling out certain forms such as benefit applications online, or things like filing taxes or trying to renew a license or permit from a government entity are difficult. If any of this feedback emerged in your organizational interviews or interviews with lived experts who are members of the covered populations, we encourage you to share them here.*

There are several issues regarding access to resources that stem mainly from internet accessibility. Emergency response organizations use internet/cell phone based notification systems, in particular Code Red & I Am Responding. Locations with both lack of cell coverage and unreliable internet have caused delayed or even failed alerts of emergency events.

Volunteer response units and municipalities have had an increasing amount of online participation, but active participation is hampered by slow or unresponsive streaming abilities.

Online courses and webinars presented by schools, adult ed, or municipal services have been limited in scope and ability by internet accessibility and reliability. As the services are delivered more frequently through online platforms, they become less accessible to those without Broadband.

Many town and state services have moved traditional services online (permits, licenses, unemployment, etc.) People with no or poor internet at home have to rely on in-person assistance from town staff, which can be limited as many small towns in the region have limited office hours. In many communities as we've noted, there is no or limited public access to the internet associated with town offices. Westport Island is a rare exception for a small town – it has a dedicated computer for public access in the town office, though it's only open 2 days a week.

### **7b. Internet Safety: did you learn anything about internet safety concerns from your organizational partners or lived experts? Did they share any concerns they have about protecting themselves online, including online privacy, being able to protect themselves and their data, or not falling for internet scams/phishing attempts?**

*Use this space to record any concerns you may have heard from partners or individuals about internet safety.*

*Enter your content here...*

The vast majority of the region's residents are concerned about internet safety. This includes worries about scams and frauds, malware, phishing, loss of personal information, loss of proprietary data, and damage to devices. There is a long learning curve – as soon as people learn to avoid one scam, others turn up! Providing up-to-date, easily-understandable guidance, best practices, and useful tips should be an essential part of any local, regional or state broadband programs.

Employers are worried about protecting their business assets that are vulnerable through cyber-terrorism, but don't have the resources to train their employees to have the skills needed.

### **8. What assets have this coalition discovered that would be helpful for digital inclusion efforts, and should be included in the regional plan?**

*Please review the first draft of the asset inventory created by the University of Maine. Refer to the assets identified in your region as a starting place. Use your coalition partners and other meetings, interviews, and research to identify additional assets in your region.*

*Describe any assets you've identified that support specific covered populations or the general public. Are there existing digital skills training offered in the region? Are there programs or institutions to support affordable device access or public access to devices? Are there partners doing outreach and enrollment support for the Affordable Connectivity Program? Are there other affordability funds to support people within the region? Can people get technical support? Are there any organizations providing internet safety awareness or support?*

*One way to organize is using each of these categories: detail assets that you have identified in your reach that address each of the digital inclusion elements below. If you didn't discover any assets related to a particular element below, simply note that.*

- *Availability of broadband: Where can people access the internet in the community if they don't have it at home?*
- *Affordability of broadband: What programs and supports are helping people with the expense of broadband service?*
- *Affordable devices & technical support: Are there any device lending programs or free devices available through programs and organizations in your region?*
- *Digital skills training: Are there any organizations and programs offering digital skills training of any kind?*
- *Online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services: Are there any partners or programs in your region helping people access government resources or information online?*
- *Internet Safety: Are there any resources or supports in your region helping people stay safe online?*

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### Low-Income households

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	Limited access to high-speed broadband infrastructure across the region. Limited access to public broadband services, except for many libraries and a few town offices. Two towns and two libraries in the region assist with ACP enrollment. There is generally little awareness of ACP or ISP low-cost subscriptions.
Access to devices and technical support	Limited lending via a few libraries; one town using GetIT, GiveIT; growing but still limited tech support via libraries. Overall, tech support is a big need.
Digital skills	NDEC, Adult Ed programs are good resources, though there is a call for 1-on-1 support, in addition to classes. Adult Ed programs also vary in their offerings, not consistently featuring computer/digital training class or courses.
Other	<u>Online accessibility and inclusivity</u> varies widely from town to town. There is no major entity helping people access govt resources or info online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance. <u>Internet safety</u> courses are available via NDEC; local and County law enforcement agencies provide tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues. UMaine and Maine Comm College System could be good resources in internet/cyber security.

### Did not interview for this CP Rural inhabitants

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	
Access to devices and technical support	
Digital skills	
Other	

### Veterans

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	Limited access to high-speed broadband infrastructure across the region. Limited access to public broadband services, except for many libraries and a few town offices. Two towns and two libraries in the region assist with ACP enrollment. There is generally little awareness of ACP or ISP low-cost subscriptions.
Access to devices and technical support	Limited lending via a few libraries; one town using GetIT, GiveIT; growing but still limited tech support via libraries. Overall, tech support is a big need.
Digital skills	NDEC, Adult Ed programs are good resources, though there is a call for 1-on-1 support, in addition to classes. Adult Ed programs also vary in their offerings, not consistently featuring computer/digital training class or courses.
Other	<u>Online accessibility and inclusivity</u> varies widely from town to town. There is no major entity helping people access govt resources or info online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance. <u>Internet safety</u> courses are available via NDEC; local and County law enforcement agencies provide tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues. UMaine and Maine Comm College System could be good resources in internet/cyber security.

### Racial/ethnic minorities

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	Limited access to high-speed broadband infrastructure across the region. Limited access to publicly available broadband services, except for many libraries and a few town offices. Two towns and two libraries in the region assist with ACP enrollment. There is generally little awareness of ACP or ISP low-cost subscriptions.

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Access to devices and technical support	Limited lending via a few libraries; one town using GetIT, GiveIT; growing but still limited tech support via libraries. Overall, tech support is a big need.
Digital skills	NDEC, Adult Ed programs are good resources, though there is a call for 1-on-1 support, in addition to classes. Adult Ed programs also vary in their offerings, not consistently featuring computer/digital training class or courses.
Other	<p><u>Online accessibility and inclusivity</u> varies widely from town to town. There is no major entity helping people access govt resources or info online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance.</p> <p><u>Internet safety</u> courses are available via NDEC; local and County law enforcement agencies provide tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues. UMaine and Maine Comm College System could be good resources in internet/cyber security.</p>

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### People with disabilities

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	Limited access to high-speed broadband infrastructure across the region. Limited access to publicly available broadband services, except for many libraries and a few town offices. Two towns and two libraries in the region assist with ACP enrollment. There is generally little awareness of ACP or ISP low-cost subscriptions.
Access to devices and technical support	Limited lending via a few libraries; one town using GetIT, GiveIT; growing but still limited tech support via libraries. Overall, tech support is a big need. Little feedback, but feel more specifics on technology needs for this population are needed.
Digital skills	NDEC, Adult Ed programs are good resources, though there is a call for 1-on-1 support, in addition to classes. Adult Ed programs also vary in their offerings, not consistently featuring computer/digital training class or courses.
Other	<u>Online accessibility and inclusivity</u> varies widely from town to town. There is no major entity helping people access govt resources or info online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance. <u>Internet safety</u> courses are available via NDEC; local and County law enforcement agencies provide tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues. UMaine and Maine Comm College System could be good resources in internet/cyber security.

### Formerly Incarcerated People

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	Limited access to high-speed broadband infrastructure across the region. Limited access to publicly available broadband services, except for many libraries and a few town offices. Two towns and two libraries in the region assist with ACP enrollment.
Access to devices and technical support	Limited lending via a few libraries; one town using GetIT, GiveIT;

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	growing but still limited tech support via libraries. Overall, tech support is a big need.
Digital skills	NDEC, Adult Ed programs are good resources, though there is a call for 1-on-1 support, in addition to classes. Adult Ed programs also vary in their offerings, not consistently featuring computer/digital training class or courses.
Other	<u>Online accessibility and inclusivity</u> varies widely from town to town. There is no major entity helping people access govt resources or info online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance. <u>Internet safety</u> courses are available via NDEC; local and County law enforcement agencies provide tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues. UMaine and Maine Comm College System could be good resources in internet/cyber security.

### Older adults

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	Limited access to high-speed broadband infrastructure across the region. Limited access to publicly available broadband services, except for many libraries and a few town offices. Two towns and two libraries in the region assist with ACP enrollment.
Access to devices and technical support	Limited lending via a few libraries; one town using GetIT, GiveIT; growing but still limited tech support via libraries. Overall, tech support is a big need.
Digital skills	NDEC, Adult Ed programs are good resources, though there is a call for 1-on-1 support, in addition to classes. Adult Ed programs also vary in their offerings, not consistently featuring computer/digital training class or courses.
Other	<u>Online accessibility and inclusivity</u> varies widely from town to town. There is no major entity helping people access govt

resources or info online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance. Internet safety courses are available via NDEC; local and County law enforcement agencies provide tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues. UMaine and Maine Comm College System could be good resources in internet/cyber security.

### None identified so far People with Language Barriers

Category	Assets
Available/affordable broadband access	
Access to devices and technical support	
Digital skills	
Other	

### 8a. Accessibility/inclusivity of government resources: Did you learn anything about specific government resources, processes, or forms that partners or members of the covered populations find accessible and easy to navigate?

*Use this section to share anything you've discovered about accessible/inclusive government resources or processes that might be considered assets for serving the region or covered populations. For example, the City of Presque Isle created an online form for permit applications, has tablets onsite to help people access the form when they come to city hall, and staff are on hand to help assist people in navigating the application.*



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*Enter your content here...*

The overall experience with our covered populations is that a very small percent have decent access, devices and the skills to go online for government and online resources. Online accessibility and inclusivity varies widely from town office to town office, library to library. There is no major entity helping people access government resources or information online. Library staff in several larger towns are able to help; some town office staff try to help, but their time is quite limited and most cannot provide 1-on-1 assistance.

### **8b. Internet Safety: Did you discover any trusted sources of information or training in your region that are helping people and organizations better protect themselves online?**

*Use this space to identify assets that may be helping provide tools for internet safety. For example, the Bath Police Department regularly visits the Housing Authority to provide information and training to residents about online scams and how to protect themselves from scammers.*

The 3 Counties' Sheriff's Offices and municipal police departments try to regularly post updates about scams and cyber attacks both locally and across cyberspace. There are some libraries and other public venues that do this as well, but there is not a consistent application across the region. The NDEC also offers internet safety courses though there will need to be a more concerted public awareness campaign for equal awareness across the region. A few libraries also provide internet safety guidance to their patrons.

Maine State Police also provide internet safety tips and warnings. Spectrum Generations also provides limited education on scams and related issues to older residents. UMaine and Maine Community College System could be good resources on internet/cyber security.

## **9. Recommendations and Goals**

*Now that you've identified the barriers to digital equity and the assets available to your community members in your region, it's time to design recommendations to address the barriers and build on existing assets. Some examples might be: digital skills for people of all ages, access to devices and technical support for anyone who needs them, and embedding connectivity, digital skills, and devices into other plans and systems within the region. There may be multiple areas of focus and smaller recommendations within each, but try to identify big ideas or areas of focus that are the essential components of how you propose to address digital equity in your regions, given your unique characteristics and opportunities.*

*Outline recommendations that make sense to be implemented in your region, and feel free to identify, and in the next section, you can make recommendations that you and your coalition partners think should be implemented at the state scale. This is where you want to reflect recommendations from your organizational and lived expert interviews, including how the recommendations will help meet the region's vision. Please be sure that your recommendations address the five elements of digital inclusion. We haven't broken this section into tables for recommendations for specific covered populations, and general recommendations. Please specify general recommendations and recommendations for specific covered populations as needed.*

The Coastal Maine Regional Broadband project covers 3 very rural counties with challenging coastlines and sprawling farms and forests in the north. Our analysis and planning is partly based on the close to 300 responses to our CMRB Interview form (online and paper).

To address our region's many barriers, we propose a multi-faceted 5-year plan with connectivity hubs, affordable equipment, digital navigators, affordable broadband, public awareness, digital skills training, plan management, and expanded broadband infrastructure.

To meet a portion of the total need for affordable equipment, our plan includes purchasing tablets

and laptops (with wi-fi, microsoft 365 and other software) for about 2500 individuals. The devices will be accompanied by set-up and first-year technical support. To provide skilled and friendly direct support to the region's residents (e.g., tech help, assistance with access to government information, liaison for infrastructure issues and skill needs), the plan includes three part-time Digital Navigators (one per county).

To address the huge affordability gap, the plan proposes a significant investment to supplement the subscription discount provided by ACP. Getting information out to the public continuously and consistently over the next few years requires a variety of public communication tools: flyers, mailers, radio/tv ads, website and social media, leading to a substantial "public awareness campaign."

The plan also includes 2 Digital Skills Instructors (part-time) for each county. Courses will vary in scope and topic based on information from coalition members and community residents (and will be done in coordination with NDEC and Adult Ed programs).

Addressing our rural and underserved nature, the plan prioritizes the purchase and outfitting of mobile vans to meet "un-connected" people where they are. These "mobile connectivity hubs" will have computers, desk space, wi-fi connections and tech support staff (Digital Navigators and/or volunteers) to assist with technical issues, connecting with needed resources, ACP enrollment, and internet safety.

Across all covered populations and the public as a whole, it's imperative that federal and state funding for infrastructure continue to increase. At this time, the pace and rate of fiber expansion will leave people and businesses behind. Therefore, improving bandwidth and broadband quality are high priorities for all 3 counties. This is reflected in the budget – increasing CMRB's capacity for broadband infrastructure support for town and regional installation projects (as part of the Plan Management budget).

Based on our interview responses, these well-defined activities are needed across all the covered populations. Access and affordability will be challenges for years to come. Hands-on technical support was cited by every group. More planning is needed to better support disabled individuals. Still need to connect with people with language barriers. Resourcefulness and creativity are natural parts of moving forward!

### 10. Identify any strategies that you recommend as state-level strategies, rather than being implemented region by region.

Implement a public awareness campaign for ACP across schools and medical institutions. Advertise for ACP state-wide using a mix of radio and tv.

Coordinate press releases and social media concerning cyber security and scams among all law enforcement, NDEC, internet providers, all schools, municipalities, and community organizations.

Work with Maine Municipal Association and other statewide organizations to develop consistent internet safety online resources for towns to incorporate into their websites. South Portland has a helpful webpage with links for more resources on the topic.

<https://www.southportland.org/departments/police-department/personal-safety-tips/internet-safety/>

One of our region's biggest challenges is the lack of Broadband accessibility and some of the struggle is the ability of ISPs to connect to incumbent provider poles. Action is needed at the state level to address these barriers so projects that have funding in place can move forward to allow the connections to occur.

### 11. List the individuals and organizations that your team interviewed during the teamwork done by your Coalition. Summarize your engagement efforts. [Click here to access your outreach tracker Google Sheet.](#)

*This is the section where you should summarize your outreach strategy: including the number of coalition partners you have and how you engaged with them, how many and which other organizations and individuals you conducted outreach to, and strategies you used to gather input into the regional plan. For example: we conducted monthly meetings with our 15-member regional digital inclusion coalition between January - April, conducted 10 interviews with community organizations/anchor institutions/employers, talked to a lived expert within each covered population, held a community meeting to gather feedback from the public, and distributed and collected 100 hard copy surveys within the region.*

*Enter your content here...*

See linked sheet. The sheet documents coalition meetings, CMRB team meetings with communities, email communications with the 41 towns in the region, and broadband infrastructure support activities with towns planning to submit CTR applications.

### **12. What other Anchor Institutions/industries/organizations have you not reached out to, but could be important assets or partners for digital inclusion activities?**

*Describe any partners who were not engaged but might be helpful in this work moving forward. Were there partners serving particular covered populations that were not at the table that could be engaged moving forward? Are there anchor institutions that could be engaged as assets and part of the solutions?*

Schools are central to all communities. A closer alliance with the school systems in the region would lead to more connections with young parents. It would also allow better outreach to the students who increasingly use internet-based learning.

CMRB will also be partnering with the 3 counties EMA offices (Emergency Management Agencies) in order to better include public safety concerns and long range emergency planning in Broadband inclusion planning.

The region's hospitals – Midcoast Hospital, Lincoln Health, PenBay Medical Center – and our federally-qualified health center in Whitefield are already vital resources for our residents. Expanding telehealth capacity through these institutions and numerous medical practices requires improved broadband infrastructure.

There are about 70 subsidized housing developments in the 3 counties. Some residents may have responded to our online interview form, but we did not have the time to reach out directly to these residences. To learn more and to implement our recommendations, we want to follow up with residents and management.

**12a. Did you identify any vulnerable populations in your region that are not technically "covered populations" as defined but should be prioritized in your plan or the state's plan?**

No other populations have been found so far.

### 13. Timeline

Please include a timeline for plan implementation. The timeline could begin with year two activities in December 2023, and anticipate additional implementation funds from the Digital Equity Act starting in 2025. We recommend a five-year timeline through 2029 to reflect the state's five-year Broadband Action Plan. These specific activities you recommend can be bulleted lists within each year. These do not need to be activities conducted specifically by your organization, but can and should include activities that you think will address digital equity needs in the region and might be implemented by other coalition partners.

Year / Stage	Activities
<p><b>2024</b> Year Two of Regional &amp; Tribal Broadband Partners Program</p>	<p>Work with "sub-regional" broadband leaders (towns such as Bath, Georgetown, Rockland/Rockport, for example) to identify DE needs and capacity in multi-town areas. Work with NDEC and Adult Ed to coordinate/build education and training curriculum, including identifying all possible vendors/volunteers; Coordinate this and other education outreach with libraries and other anchor institutions; Continue ACP enrollment campaign. Develop job descriptions for Plan Management Staff and Digital Navigators and for each county. Expand broadband infrastructure capacity to ensure coverage of all 3 counties.</p>
<p><b>2025</b> Year One of Digital Equity Implementation</p>	<p>Hire Plan Management Staff, and hire and train Digital Navigators for each county. Develop process for providing tablets, laptops and other</p>

# Digital Equity Plan Template

## Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners



	<p>technology to the public, prioritizing covered populations (including acquiring these resources). Begin to distribute devices and supporting recipients. Identify potential Digital Skills Trainers from coalition partners and communities, hire, and coordinate with NDEC, Adult Ed, libraries, and others to expand course offerings. Design, purchase and equip mobile connectivity hubs; Continue ACP enrollment campaign and subsidy program; With expanded infrastructure support capacity, continue to support municipalities and coalition members with MCA and other grant opportunities, including grant writing and applications.</p>
<p><b>2026</b> Year Two</p>	<p>Purchase, equip and deploy any remaining mobile connectivity hubs; With Digital Navigators and Plan Management Staff for each county, use feedback to revise activities and develop best practices for both regional and county DE services; Continue distributing devices and supporting recipients. Continue to refine/expand digital training offerings; advance ACP enrollment and subsidy program and work with all ISPs and other providers on low- or no-cost subscriptions for eligible residents; With expanded infrastructure support capacity, continue to support municipalities and coalition members with MCA and other grant opportunities, including grant writing and applications.</p>
<p><b>2027</b> Year Three</p>	<p>With mobile units deployed, learn from usage and feedback about future needs; With Digital Navigators and Plan Management Staff for each county, adapt education/training and mobile hub services as needed and develop best practices for both regional and county DE services; Update/expand digital training course offerings; Distribute and support affordable devices; Continue ACP enrollment campaign and subsidy program; With expanded infrastructure support capacity, support municipalities and coalition members with MCA and other grant opportunities, including grant writing and applications. With Plan Management staff, coalition partners, and MCA, begin overall project assessment and planning for sustainable, continuous DE services beyond the grant period.</p>
<p><b>2028</b> Year Four</p>	<p>With mobile units deployed, learn from usage and feedback about future needs; With Digital Navigators and Plan Management Staff for each county, adapt education/training and mobile hub services as needed and develop best practices for regional and county DE services; Update/expand digital training course offerings; Distribute and support affordable devices; Continue ACP enrollment campaign and subsidy</p>

	<p>program; With expanded infrastructure support capacity, support municipalities and coalition members with MCA and other grant opportunities, including grant writing and applications. Continue 2030 planning, including needs assessment, partnerships, and local, regional, and state funding resources.</p>
<p><b>2029</b> Final Year of Digital Equity Implementation</p>	<p>With mobile units deployed, learn from usage and feedback about future needs; With Digital Navigators and Plan Management Staff, adapt education/training and mobile hub services as needed and develop best practices for both regional and county DE services; Update/expand as needed digital training offerings; Distribute and support affordable devices; Continue ACP enrollment campaign and subsidy program; Support municipalities and coalition members with MCA and other grant opportunities, including grant writing and applications. With sufficient funding and strong partnerships, develop an implementation plan for future DE work.</p>

## 14. Budget

Please include a budget estimate for activities and strategies on the timeline. This is for estimating purposes only and may change as we collaborate to identify statewide versus regional strategies. [Click here to complete your budget in the external spreadsheet.](#)

Enter your content here...  
See linked sheet.

## 15. Executive Summary

Please include a brief summary of the Regional or Tribal Digital Equity Plan, restating the purpose and key points of the plan. 1-2 paragraphs are fine. Please complete this section last, after you have completed all of the other sections. Think of this section as what you might present to the other stakeholders or regional partners as a brief description at the May 3 Workshop!



# Digital Equity Plan Template

## Regional & Tribal Broadband Partners



Coastal Maine Regional Broadband, on behalf of Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties, seeks to ensure full broadband connectivity and affordability to homes and businesses, and unlock personal and career opportunities through technology and digital learning. This will be accomplished through:

- 1) hiring Plan Management staff, Digital Navigators, and Skill Trainers;
- 2) distributing tablets, laptops, and support services to eligible residents;
- 3) coordinating with NDEC, Adult Ed and others, updated digital education and training curriculum;
- 4) utilizing mobile connectivity hubs to expand one-on-one/small group tech support and problem-solving on broadband connectivity issues and public information accessibility needs in the rural reaches of our region;
- 5) improving affordability through continuing ACP enrollment efforts and an expanded subsidy program;
- 6) working with every town (or multiple towns) in the region, especially un- and under-served locations, to address and find funding for necessary infrastructure.

The long-term goal is a region that is socially and economically sustainable, integrating digital inclusion as an every-day practice, as part of a better way of life.