

MBI

MASSACHUSETTS
BROADBAND INSTITUTE



at the MassTech
Collaborative

Southeast Massachusetts Broadband and Digital Equity Listening Session

September 2023

Agenda

Welcome!

Introducing MBI

Statewide Planning Process

Digital Equity and Broadband in Southeastern MA

Breakout Sessions

Thank You & Closing

Meeting Ground Rules



Be **fully present** by not checking your phone or computer

Know when to lead versus **creating space for others to speak**

Be open and listen to others. Even when you disagree, suspend judgment, and look for common ground.

Recognize that **we are all approaching this process with different levels of understanding and lived experiences** surrounding equity and digital equity.



01

Introducing MBI

About the Massachusetts Broadband Institute



***MBI's mission** is to make affordable high-speed Internet available to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices, and other public places across the Commonwealth. MBI works closely with key stakeholders to bridge the digital divide in Massachusetts.*

Investments: Tech Goes Home

Expanding the TGH program to reach learners in **Brockton, New Bedford and Quincy** that will receive **digital literacy instruction, a new device**, and registration support for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) – a \$30 federal subsidy for broadband service.

How to get involved?

Refer learners to partner sites via TGH Staff and [program website!](#)

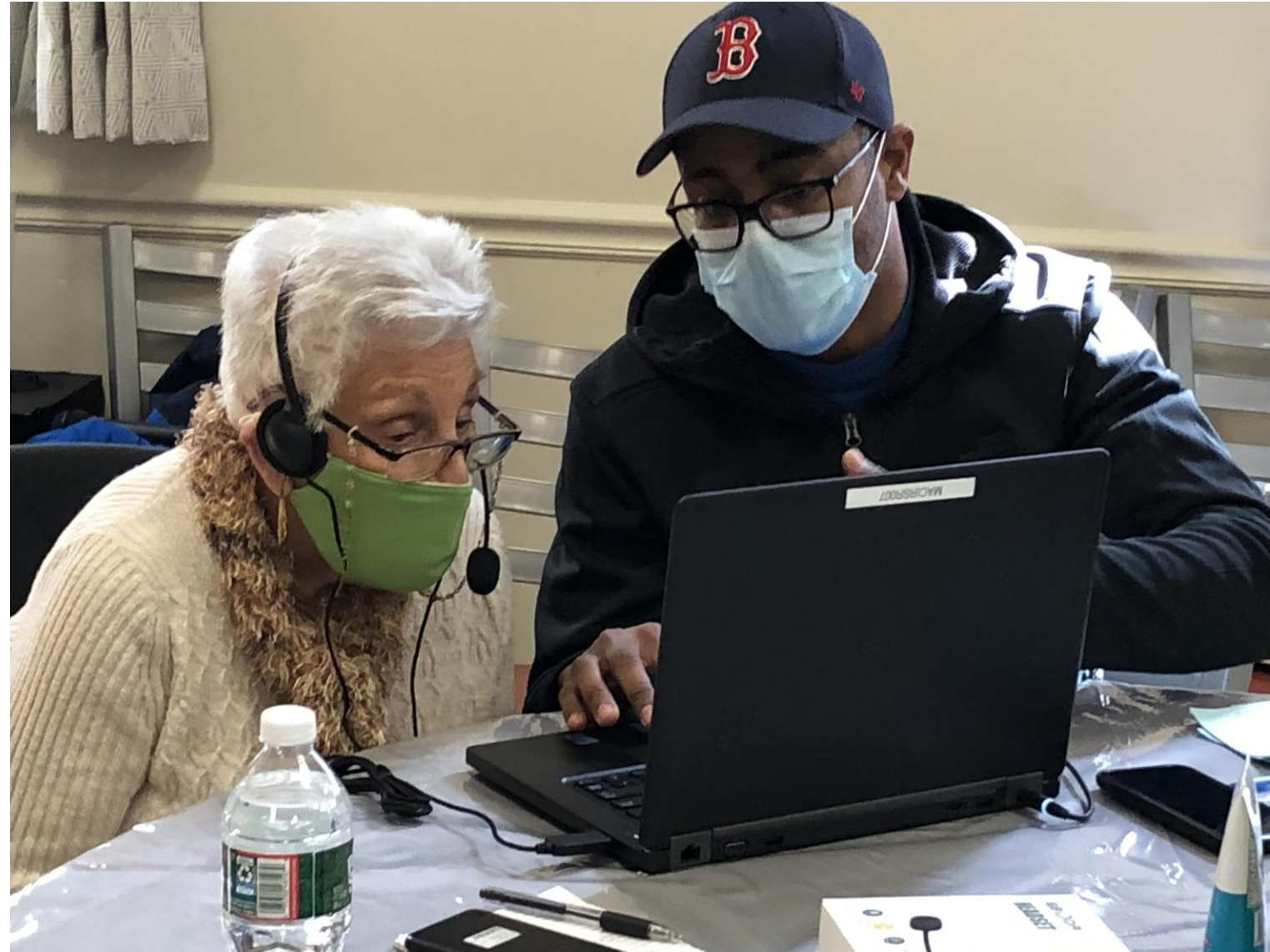


Investments: Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative

Through a regional network of Aging Service Assistance Providers **including Coastline Elderly Services and Old Colony Elder Services** the collaborative will support technology use, fraud prevention, and cost savings for older adults through the Affordable Connectivity Program.

How to get involved?

Connect with the [Collaborative!](#)



Investments: O'Brian Towers Wi-Fi Program

MBI will provide **241 households** at the Quincy Public Housing O'Brian Towers with no barrier, no subscription internet. **All public and affordable housing** in the Southeast and across the state are now eligible to participate in this program!

How to get involved?

Building owners can enroll through an online form [here!](#)

Contact MAPC Team:

Will Pfeffer, Civic Technologist,
wpfeffer@mapc.org

Stephen Larrick, Digital Services Manager,
slarrick@mapc.org

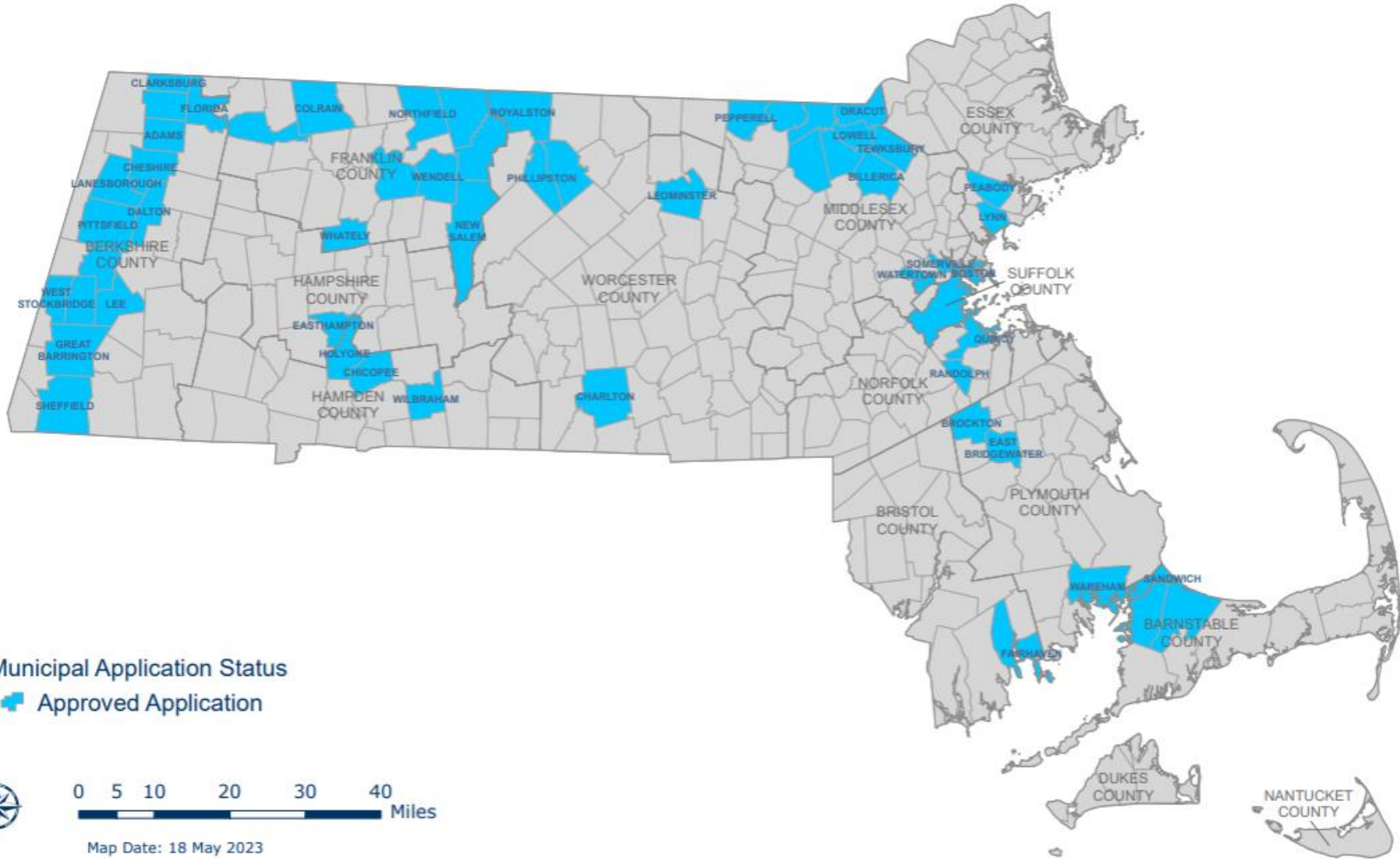
Brian Luther, Municipal Services
Specialist, bluther@mapc.org



MBI's Digital Equity Programs and Partnerships

Southeast Participants

- Brockton
- East Bridgewater
- Fairhaven
- Wareham
- Randolph
- Quincy
- New Bedford



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Massachusetts Broadband & Digital Equity Funding

\$75M - State ARPA Digital Equity
Fund

\$175M - US Treasury Capital Projects
Fund

\$1M - NTIA Digital Equity Act
Planning Grant

\$147M - NTIA Broadband Equity,
Access,
and Deployment Grant (including
\$5M Planning Grant)





Mayor Robert
Sullivan



02

Statewide Planning Process

State Broadband and Digital Equity Planning

The State Digital Equity Plan will include...

- Vision and input gathered from communities across the state in the planning process
- Community-identified barriers to digital equity
- An assessment of what's working to advance digital equity
- Strategies to build on existing data, reports, and plans



How you can further shape the plan!



Contribute to Asset Mapping Database

Fill out Asset Mapping form with relevant assets including programs, organizations, reports, engagement activities



Take our Public Survey

Send to your friends and family!



Promote a Listening Session

Tell your networks about the regional listening sessions!

Pittsfield 9/13

Holyoke 9/14

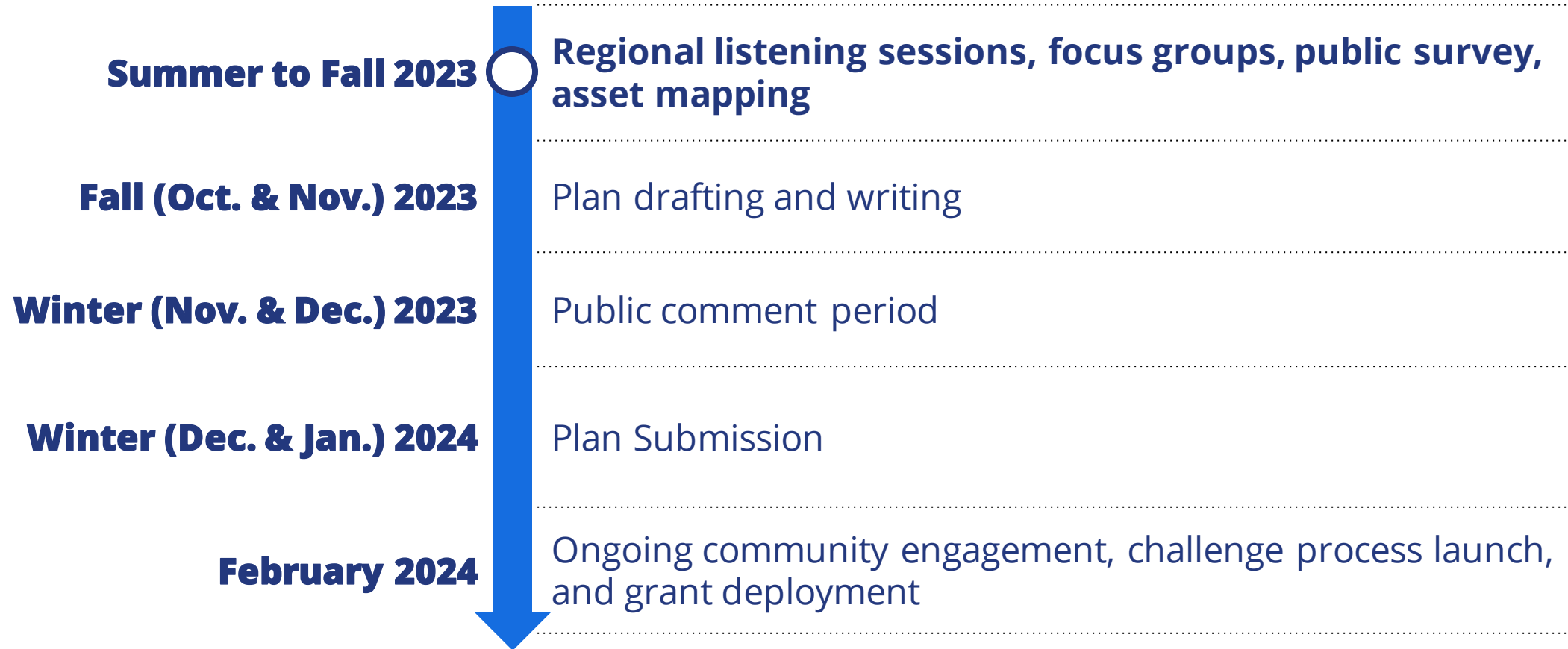
Lowell 9/20

Hyannis 9/28

Boston 9/30

Greenfield 10/3

Timeline



→ ***Visit broadband.masstech.org for upcoming events and ways to get involved.***

A background network diagram consisting of numerous blue nodes connected by thin lines, forming a complex web-like structure. The nodes are of varying sizes and are distributed across the entire frame. A dark blue horizontal bar is positioned in the upper middle section of the slide.

03

Existing Conditions



***Digital equity** is 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.*

– National Digital Inclusion Alliance

Determining Factors of Digital Access



Connection

**Fast
Affordable**



Adequate Device

**Router
Personal Computer /Laptop**

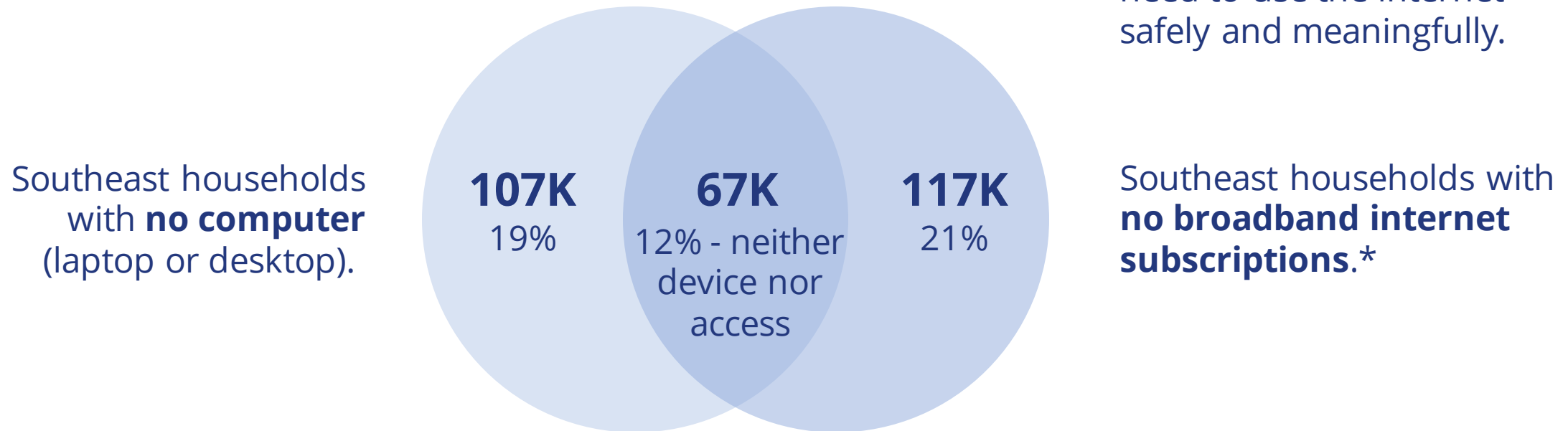


Literacy

**Use of Technology
Ensuring functioning equipment
Evaluating quality of information and privacy risks**

Digital Gaps in the Southeast

Of **550,000 households** in the Southeast...



Many more face challenges with finding the support they need to use the internet safely and meaningfully.

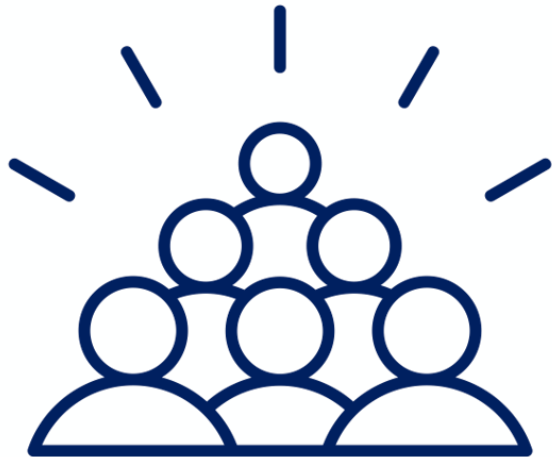
These challenges have **disproportionate impact for specific population groups** depending on a range of socioeconomic, historical, and geographic factors.

* Residents with no broadband access (cable, fiber optic, or DSL) in their household. **Source:** U.S. Census Bureau

Statewide Survey - Preliminary Findings

Covered Population Responses Southeast

Total Responses x Region



Total Responses x Region			Covered Population Responses Southeast		
Region	Responses	Target	Covered Population	Responses	Target
Pioneer Valley Region	803	307	Aging Individuals	291	149
Greater Boston Region	1,077	1,085	Veterans	57	29
Cape Cod & Islands Region	823	112	People of Color	613	136
Southeast Region	1,158	608	Households with Limited English**	64	12
Northeast Region	529	455	Individuals with Disabilities	137	72
Central Mass Region	179	378	Low-Income Households	237	85
Berkshire Region	981	55	Residents in Rural Areas	42	31
Unknown	61	-			
Total	5,611	3,000			

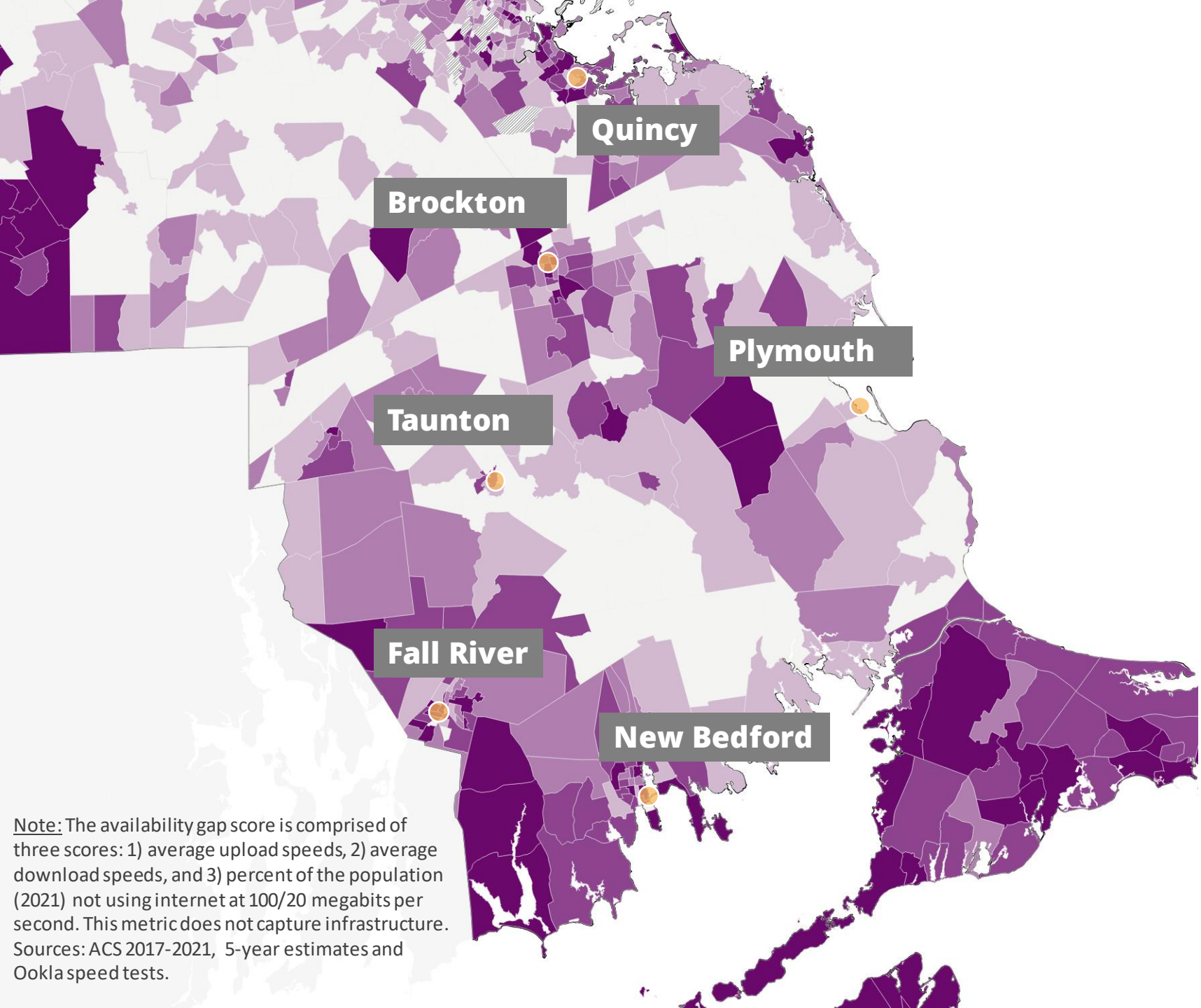
*Response numbers are updated as of Wednesday, 8/30, 12pm.

** This is an estimate based on the number of non-English surveys submitted.

Access and Quality of Service

26% of statewide survey respondents reported that their internet service is not good enough to meet their household's needs.

55% of municipalities in the Southeast have little or no competition in the broadband market.



Legend

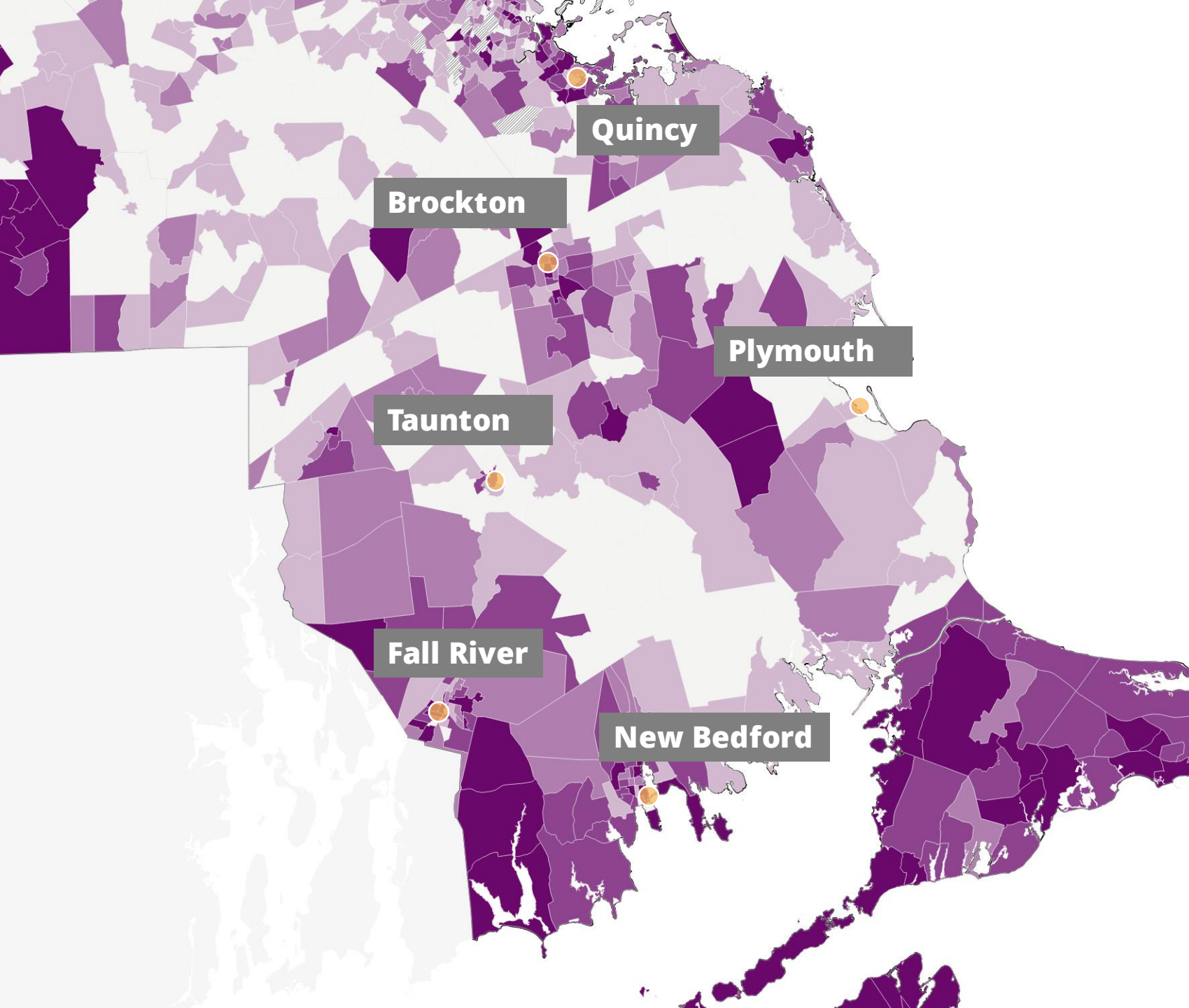
The availability gap score ranges in value from 0 to 100, where 100 indicates the highest gap in availability.



Note: The availability gap score is comprised of three scores: 1) average upload speeds, 2) average download speeds, and 3) percent of the population (2021) not using internet at 100/20 megabits per second. This metric does not capture infrastructure. Sources: ACS 2017-2021, 5-year estimates and Ookla speed tests.

Access and Quality of Service

In the Southeast Region, there are **~2,000 Unserved or Underserved** locations.



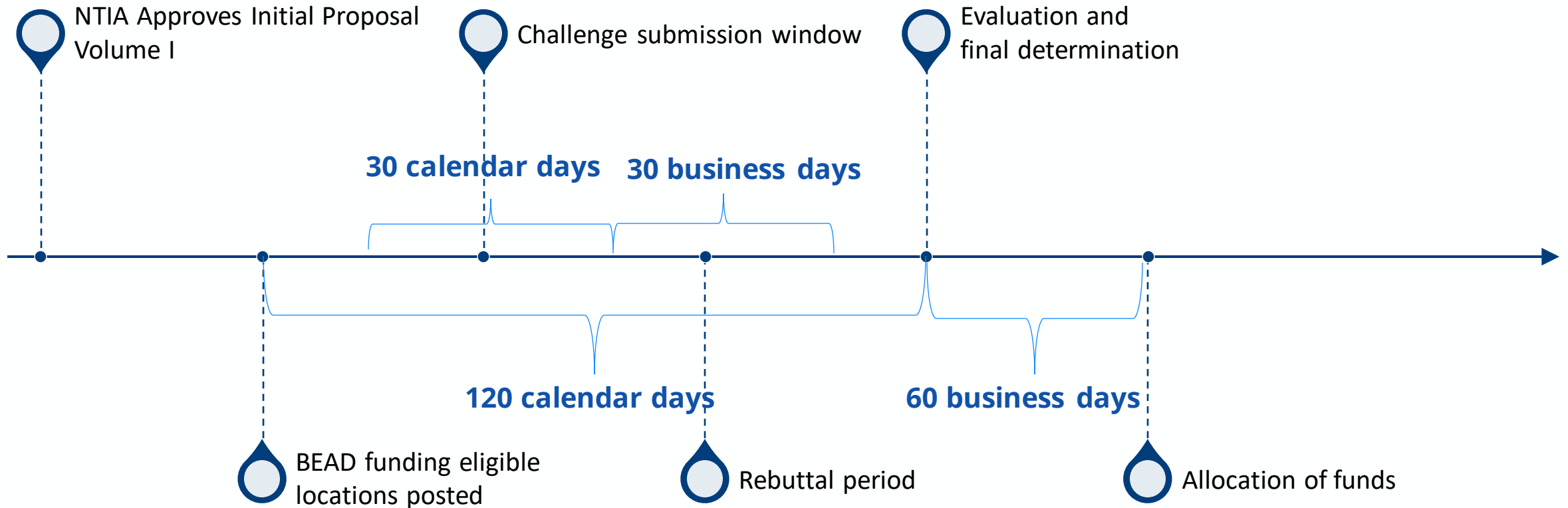
Top 5 Municipalities – Unserved Locations

Plymouth	402
Wareham	84
Dartmouth	79
Fall River	74
Attleboro	74

Top 5 Municipalities – Underserved Locations

Fall River	22
Marshfield	21
Bridgewater	19
Attleboro	17
Plymouth	16

Challenge Process



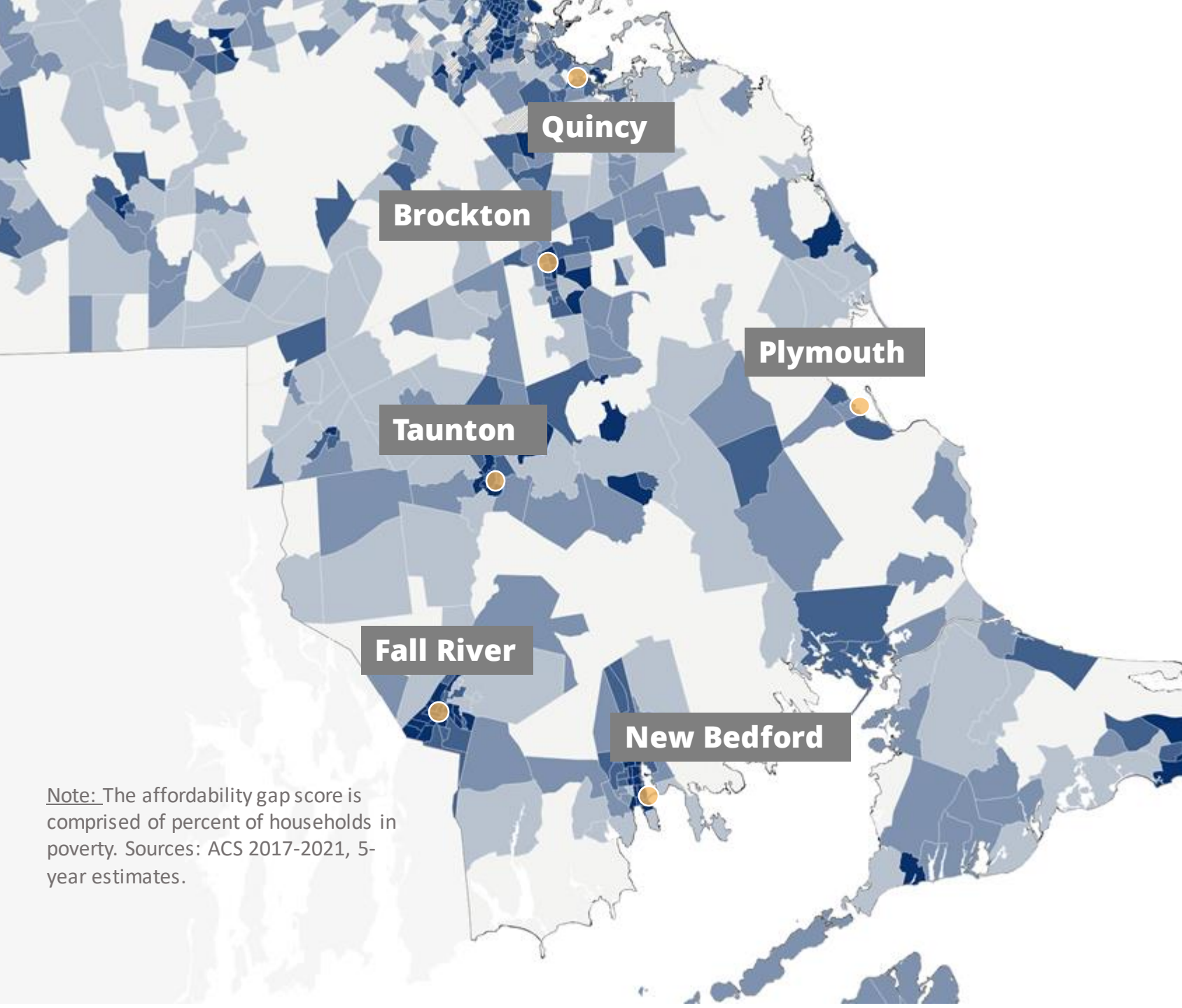
Affordability Gap

Over **1 in 3** survey respondents statewide reported having at least some difficulty paying for their internet.

The lowest average broadband price regionwide is **\$57.99**.

Legend

The affordability gap score ranges in value from 0 to 100, where 100 indicates the highest gap in affordability.



Note: The affordability gap score is comprised of percent of households in poverty. Sources: ACS 2017-2021, 5-year estimates.

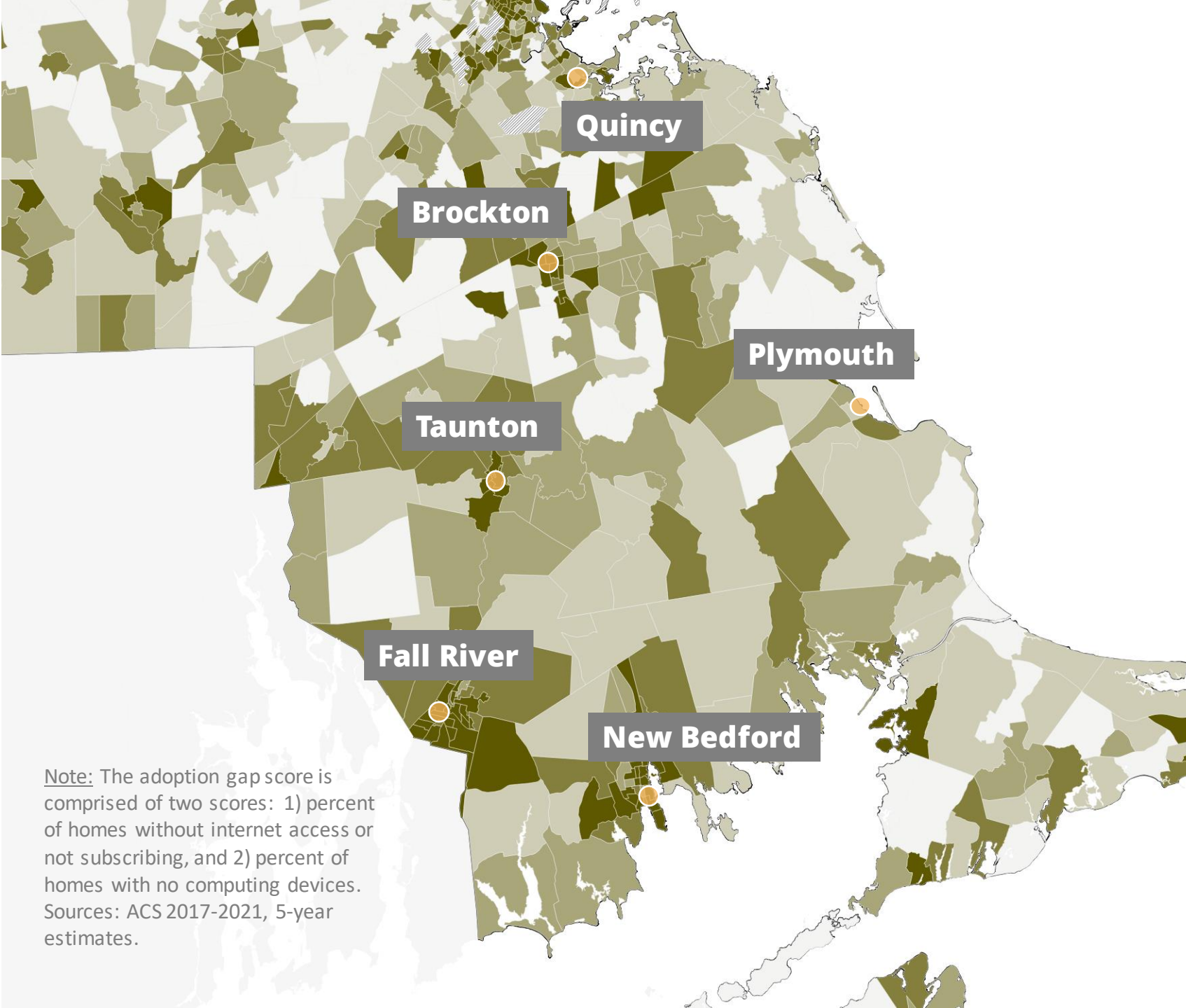
Adoption Gap

In the Southeast, adoption gaps are highest in urban areas, including Brockton, Fall River, and New Bedford.

Statewide, **nearly half** of survey respondents without internet at home cite cost as a prohibiting factor.

Legend

The adoption gap score ranges in value from 0 to 100, where 100 indicates the highest gap in adoption.



Note: The adoption gap score is comprised of two scores: 1) percent of homes without internet access or not subscribing, and 2) percent of homes with no computing devices. Sources: ACS 2017-2021, 5-year estimates.

Community Anchor Institutions



Education Institutions



Community Centers



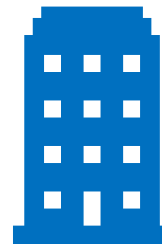
Libraries



**Museums and Cultural
and Religious Centers**



**Healthcare
Infrastructure**



Public Housing

Assets in the Southeast

MBI is collecting unique assets that contribute to digital equity in each region.

16

Digital equity assets submitted to date for the Southeast region

Example Assets:



The Open Door -

Providing free Wi-Fi access in the food pantry setting space serving patrons and allowing for sign-up to wrap-around services.



Computer Classes for Seniors in the Southeast -

Coastline Elderly Services is providing free computer classes for seniors in collaboration with the Council on Aging.

DIGITAL POWER

PEOPLE ORGANIZING & WORKING
FOR EQUITABLE RECOVERY

A collaborative partnership with



Health Resources in Action®
Advancing Public Health and Medical Research

MassINC



About Us

Health Resources in Action (HRiA) has joined forces with MassINC and the Collins Center at UMass Boston to launch **Digital POWER – People Organizing & Working for Equitable Recovery**.

Digital POWER partners with municipalities to design, administer, and execute the digital equity planning process as a certified vendor for the recently launched Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program (MDEPP). Administered by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), MDEPP will provide support and funding for municipalities across the Commonwealth to engage in planning activities to bridge the digital divide.

DIGITAL
POWER

Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program (MDEPP)

The City of Brockton applied and selected our consulting team to support their outcomes to implement robust solutions to existing digital access and equity gaps.

The City of Brockton has completed a Digital Access Plan, to assess the feasibility building municipally owned fiber to every home and business in the City.

The current Digital Equity Plan looks on how Digital Equity Pillars can be implemented in Brockton: Digital Access, Devices and Literacy, the intended outcomes of the City of Brockton.

Digital Equity Plan Components Part 1

- **Existing conditions analysis.**
 - Our team has researched, analyzed and interviewed municipal and school staff of existing conditions in the City of Brockton around digital access, devices and literacy.
- **Robust community engagement process.** Our team created a community engagement plan to reach the voices of residents who have been historically left out of planning process. This includes:
 - Working with the City's Advisory Committee for the Digital Equity Plan
 - Created 5 focus groups in multiple languages: Haitian Creole, CV Creole, Spanish, Seniors and General Population with community partners, inviting over 40 residents of Brockton to share their story
 - Currently surveyed 575 residents of Brockton to learn about their digital access, devices and literacy

Digital Equity Plan Components Part 2

- **Data synthesis & recommendation development.**
 - Currently working on analyzing all of the data gathered from existing conditions analysis and our community engagement efforts.
- **Report.**
 - Will submit a draft report to the City and Advisory Committee. Once finalized, will schedule a public presentation to share the findings and recommendations
- **Continued partnership and funding opportunities.**
 - Our team is looking to continue the partnership with the City by following up and sharing funding opportunities to implement recommendations

Thank you to our
Brockton Partners!



THANK YOU!



Digital POWER



617-302-8718



cespinosamarrero@hria.org



<https://hria.org/digitalpower>



03

Breakout Discussions

Remember the Ground Rules



Be **fully present** by not checking your phone or computer

Know when to lead versus **creating space for others to speak**

Be open and listen to others. Even when you disagree, suspend judgment, and look for common ground.

Recognize that **we are all approaching this process with different levels of understanding** surrounding equity and digital equity.

Respect confidentiality. What is discussed in this room stays in this room.

Breakout Rooms

We look forward to hearing from you!

Virtual Breakout Rooms:

Please follow this jam board link:

<https://bit.ly/44EPtie>

In Person:

Staff will assign breakout group participation



04

Closing Session

Report back

Thank you for your participation in our facilitated discussion. We want to learn more about what you heard and discussed.

What was
discussed in
your breakout
room?

Timeline



→ Visit broadband.masstech.org for details on events and ways to get involved.

Thank you!

Contact MBI at

broadband@masstech.org