



MEMORANDUM

Digital Equity Charrette

Town of East Bridgewater, Massachusetts



Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
Digital Equity Steering Committee.....	1
2 What is Digital Equity?.....	2
The Issue – The Digital Divide	2
The Work – Digital Inclusion.....	3
The Goal – Digital Equity.....	3
Appropriate Devices.....	3
3 Community Profile	4
Demographic Profile	4
Age Distribution	4
Race Distribution.....	5
4 Our Process	6
Digital Equity Steering Committee.....	6
Digital Equity Charrette.....	6
Digital Equity Survey	7
5 Community Needs.....	8
Broadband Access.....	8
Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment	9
Housing Authority	9
Device Access.....	10
Digital Equity Hubs.....	10
Digital Literacy.....	11
Digital Literacy Resources.....	11
Municipal Outreach.....	12
Local and Regional Partnerships.....	12
6 Future Funding	13
7 Goals.....	1
8 Recommendations.....	1

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1

Introduction

Understanding the impacts of technology on how people learn, work, socialize, and manage personal affairs is critical in planning for digital equity. As technology becomes increasingly integrated as an essential part of life, it is important for communities to articulate roadmaps for closing the digital divide.

Digital Equity Steering Committee

The East Bridgewater Digital Equity Steering Committee, led by Town Administrator Charles Seelig, undertook an approximately four-month-long planning process to conduct a Digital Equity Charrette and prepare a memorandum of findings in collaboration with community members and local stakeholders. Under the facilitation of MBI and consultation of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), the Town developed a profile of local baseline conditions and goals and action items supporting the adoption and usage of the Internet throughout the East Bridgewater community. This initiative positions the Town to apply for funding from existing and forthcoming state and federal programs.

The Steering Committee included the following members:

- › Charles Seelig, Town Administrator
- › Nancy Hill, Council on Aging Director
- › Jennifer Horton, Secretary, Community Coalition for Change
- › Gina Williams, Assistant Superintendent for Schools
- › Jessica Henderson, Director of Library Services

2

What is Digital Equity?

Full connectivity - allowing an individual to have equitable participation in their society, democracy, and economy - requires not only broadband access but also device access, and the knowledge to use devices safely and effectively. Accessing the internet is an increasingly critical need, especially for historically underserved populations, in relation to education, community engagement, health, financial well-being, and employment.

The Issue – The Digital Divide

Digital equity planning addresses inequities regarding access to broadband internet and technology, also known as the digital divide. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) defines the digital divide as “the gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not.”¹ The digital divide disproportionately impacts marginalized groups, including households with low incomes, older adults, minority households, people with disabilities, and people in rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the vital role of broadband technologies in accessing essential resources and services and highlighted the detrimental impacts on communities without consistent, reliable access to these resources. The digital divide includes barriers to broadband access, device access, and digital skills development.

Unreliable service provision by internet service providers (ISPs), lack of affordability, and digital redlining can restrict broadband access. Even with reliable broadband access, connectivity requires access to appropriate devices and digital literacy. Barriers to device access can include lack of affordability, outdated hardware or software, or access to devices that do not match the user's needs. Lack of access to training opportunities,

¹ National Digital Inclusion Alliance. (n.d.). The Words Behind Our Work: The Source for Definitions of Digital Inclusion Terms. NDIA. [Definitions - National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#)

fear and shame associated with learning new skills, and privacy concerns can restrict digital literacy development.

The Work – Digital Inclusion

Municipalities can implement digital inclusion initiatives to bridge their digital divide. Digital inclusion refers to the “activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communities Technologies (ICTs).”² NDIA highlights the following five elements as crucial in digital inclusion work.

- Affordable, robust broadband internet service;
- Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
- Access to digital literacy training;
- Quality technical support; and
- Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

Municipalities should evaluate digital inclusion investments and initiatives over time regarding their appropriateness and effectiveness in addressing modern technology challenges. As technology advances and demographic trends evolve, the barriers communities face may change.

The Goal – Digital Equity

The goal of addressing the digital divide through inclusion strategies is supporting digital equity. 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.”³ Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, education, employment, business development, and access to essential services.

Appropriate Devices

Several standard device types can suit a user’s needs. Cellular phones are the most portable devices, offering multiple connection options and a long battery life. Cellular phones, however, are not a substitute for the uses provided by a laptop. Tablets also offer a long battery life and are great for accessibility, but they are not a substitute for a cellular phone, as they cannot make calls without a cellular data plan.

Laptop and desktop computers are mandatory for many jobs and educational activities, offering ample storage and access to various software platforms. However, computers have the shortest battery life and are the least affordable of these three device types.

² See footnote 1

³ See footnote 1

3

Community Profile

East Bridgewater is a vibrant community with local groups and institutions working to close the digital divide in the Town and support broadband connectivity for residents, employees, students, and businesses.

Demographic Profile

Understanding demographic trends within a community is critical in identifying and prioritizing digital equity issues, goals, and strategies. East Bridgewater's total population has grown by 6% over the past decade. The Town currently has a population of 14,393.⁴

Age Distribution

According to information from the 2020 Federal census, the population of adults aged 60 and older residing in East Bridgewater has increased to 3,630. This growth includes an increase of 979 older adults since the last Federal census in 2010 and represents over 26% of the town's overall population. This number will continue to grow steadily over the next several years as residents move into our community or reach their 60th birthday.

The older adult population in Massachusetts continues to grow rapidly. While the overall population is projected to grow 11.8% over the next 15-20 years, the age 60+ population will grow at a rate of 64.8%.

In addition, projections indicate that the 85+ population will also see a marked increase as residents live longer. The UMass Donahue Institute has projected that this segment of the nation's population will not begin to plateau until 2030.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). DP05 ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles. U.S. Department of Commerce. [DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND ... - Census Bureau Table](#)

Town of East Bridgewater Digital Equity Charrette Memorandum

The East Bridgewater Council on Aging (EBCOA) serves older persons, disabled persons of all ages and their caregivers, and others needing services and referrals. It provides programs that enhance dignity, support, and independence and encourage general wellness, operating out of the Center at Sachem Rock Senior Center and Community Center. The EBCOA provides the following resources and essential services, as well as many others.

- Assistance with applications (e.g., fuel assistance, food stamps);
- S.H.I.N.E. (Serving the Health Information Needs of Everyone) Counseling;
- Numerous social programs;
- Distribution of a monthly newsletter (emailed or mailed);
- Educational presentations;
- Daily Meals on Wheels delivery, weekly community meals, and other nutrition opportunities;
- Exercise classes;
- Transportation;
- 18 Chromebooks for public use; and
- Indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi at the Senior Center (recently updated during the COVID-19 pandemic allowing for indoor and outdoor programming)

The EBCOA has previously provided a computer lab, which was underutilized. The EBCOA has a town employee on call for technical support.

Race Distribution

The racial composition of East Bridgewater is mainly homogenous, with 91% of the population identifying as white—9% more than that of the County and 14% more than the State. Over 90% of East Bridgewater’s population speaks English only. The Town has a growing immigrant population. East Bridgewater Public Schools (EBPS) has an increasing multilingual student population, with Portuguese, Spanish, and Haitian Creole among the most prominent language groups. EBPS currently has 11 languages other than English that require translation. The district-wide parent communication portal translates all electronic messages sent to families. District-wide, for hard copy documents and forms that parents must complete and return to school (e.g., handbooks, enrollment packets, permission slips, Individual Education Plans, classroom contracts, etc.), the district contracts an outside agency to translate as needed.

4

Our Process

The Digital Equity Steering Committee served as liaisons and representatives of the community of East Bridgewater, conducting outreach regarding digital equity planning at the state and local levels and providing critical perspectives as stakeholders of technology resources and services in the Town. The Town and consultant team built an understanding of baseline conditions and community needs through research and public engagement, including facilitating a Digital Equity Charrette and a public survey. This Digital Equity Charrette Memorandum summarizes the findings and proposes goals and action items for addressing the digital divide in East Bridgewater.

Digital Equity Steering Committee

The Digital Equity Steering Committee includes key municipal staff and digital equity stakeholders in the East Bridgewater community, including Town administration, the East Bridgewater Council on Aging (EBCOA), East Bridgewater Public Schools (EBPS), the East Bridgewater Public Library (EBPL), and Community Coalition for Change. The Steering Committee guided the digital equity planning process, provided insights on digital equity across critical issue areas, assisted with public engagement, and reviewed key findings and recommendations.

Digital Equity Charrette

On August 15, 2023, the Steering Committee and VHB conducted a Digital Equity Charrette at the Center at Sachem Rock Senior Center and Community Center. The EBCOA offered transportation to and from the workshop for residents. Following a presentation regarding baseline conditions, participants engaged in discussion,

Town of East Bridgewater Digital Equity Charrette Memorandum

contextualizing prevalent digital equity challenges and opportunities in the East Bridgewater community, and identifying ideas for future action.

Charrette participants provided input regarding the three pillars of digital equity planning: Broadband Access, Device Access, and Digital Literacy. Regarding these three issue areas, participants shared challenges that they are currently experiencing and observations on how they manifest at the community level. Key outcomes of the Digital Equity Charrette included critical information concerning the existing barriers to digital equity in the Town and what steps municipal entities can take to eliminate these barriers.



Photo 1: Digital Equity Charrette

Several limitations of the Digital Equity Charrette process impacted the breadth of feedback collected. A limited number of attendees participated in the discussion, including two members of the general public and four local stakeholders. This small sample of East Bridgewater residents represented a small sample of the Town's potentially broadband-vulnerable community members (e.g., students, business owners, and immigrants).

Digital Equity Survey

MBI launched a Statewide Digital Equity Survey to understand better Massachusetts residents' needs regarding internet access and digital equity. As of August 9, 2023, East Bridgewater participants comprised a sample group of 93 responses, all Town residents, all aged 18 years and over.

5

Community Needs

There is a high level of internet service subscription and device access in the Town. However, while subscribers may have access to internet service, lack of affordability, service reliability, and digital literacy prevent individuals and households from benefiting fully from internet use. Additionally, while most residents have access to the Internet and computers, some residents face connectivity barriers.

Broadband Access

According to the U.S. Census, 92% of East Bridgewater residents currently have a broadband internet subscription.⁵ MBI Statewide Public Survey data also indicates a high level of access to internet services among respondents, with 99% reporting that they currently have internet service in their homes. However, while access to internet service may be ubiquitous throughout East Bridgewater, the affordability and quality of internet service are more variable. Community members have expressed frustration with the high cost of Comcast's services as the Town's sole ISP. 37% of public survey respondents indicated it is "Somewhat Hard" to pay their internet bill, and 9% indicated it is "Very Hard." This frustration partly results from the confusion associated with bundling and renting equipment. When paying for multiple services (e.g., Internet, cable, phone), residents may pay sunk costs for services or equipment they do not need.

The Town should advocate for greater transparency and higher quality customer service among ISPs to reduce monthly internet costs for residents and ensure they only pay for the services they need. Exploring local public and private ISPs and increasing competition in the Town could also help reduce the cost of internet service for

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). DP02 Selected Social Characteristics in the United State. ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles. U.S. Department of Commerce. [DP02: SELECTED SOCIAL ... - Census Bureau Table](#)

residents. Implementing a municipal broadband network would expand public access to internet service but would also require sufficient planning and State/Federal funding.

Public facilities in East Bridgewater offer residents, students, and employees spaces to access public Wi-Fi networks, devices, and informational resources for improving digital literacy. The EBPL is an essential digital equity hub in communities for Wi-Fi and device access, digital literacy training, and informational resources. The Library provides the community with critical internet and device access, including free public internet access for people with wireless-enabled portable computers, tablets, or smartphones. The Library also has a limited supply of hotspots for lending, with five available for check-out and one in-house for student use. Library administrators have noted that two hotspots are frequently unavailable and consistently rented by library patrons. Additionally, while these hotspots are highly utilized, Library administrators have indicated that this is a “band-aid strategy” for addressing Townwide barriers to internet access.

Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment

There is potential to expand community awareness of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and other existing affordability programs. The ACP is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) benefit program, providing a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households. 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 more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price. The ACP is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

As of May 1, 2023, 6% of households in East Bridgewater (292 households) were enrolled in the ACP, compared to 9% at the County level.⁶ Nearly 50% of survey respondents reported they were not aware of the ACP Program. 18% of respondents who indicated it is “Somewhat hard” or “Very hard” to pay their internet bill also indicated they were not previously aware of ACP.

Housing Authority

While 78% of survey respondents indicated their current household internet service works “Good enough to meet [their] household needs,” the quality and reliability of service may vary depending on several factors, including the number of devices being used simultaneously in a household, the age of buildings, and the geographic region of the Town. For example, residents of East Bridgewater Housing facilities have reported poor internet connection indoors due to the age and structure of the building, having to go outdoors to access a reliable connection.

The East Bridgewater Housing Authority’s mission is to “provide decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing to the citizens of East Bridgewater by working with state and

⁶ Universal Service Administrative Company. (2023). ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker. Usac.org. <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/#ebbp&acp-funding-summary>

local agencies.”⁷ The East Bridgewater Public Housing Authority manages three properties, one located on Riddell Road (elderly/handicapped one-bedroom units) and two located on Prospect Street (elderly/handicapped one-bedroom units and three-bedroom family duplex units). Individual East Bridgewater Housing Authority residents are responsible for household cable subscriptions for internet and television.

Device Access

Connectivity requires access to consistent and reliable broadband internet, as well as access to modern web-enabled devices that are appropriate for the user's needs and the knowledge to use these devices effectively and safely. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 98% of households in East Bridgewater currently have a computer.⁸ MBI Statewide Public Survey data also reflects a high level of access, with 87% of respondents reporting that everyone in their household has access to computer devices supporting their everyday needs.

While computer access appears to be widespread across the Town's households, there is potential to expand access to other device types, including tablets and different kinds of technology (e.g., TVs, landline phones). Community members have noted a need for expanded resources and information in the Town regarding out-of-date technology, including how to update devices, what modern devices are available, and where new devices can be accessed in the community. Personalized device assistance, provided by digital equity champions, digital navigators, or other technology stakeholders in the Town, could help ensure residents have the hardware needed to access the internet, fulfill their everyday needs, and fully benefit from modern devices.

Digital Equity Hubs

Digital equity hubs serve as critical community resources that allow residents, students, employees, and businesses to access public Wi-Fi, devices, and information. The EBPL serves as a digital equity hub, offering computers for public use that host a wide range of services to support basic word processing and research needs. These devices help fill gaps in device access in the Town for residents, students, employees, and businesses. Patrons can use computers for up to one hour if other patrons are waiting, and with no time restriction if there is no wait. The Library also offers in-person and wireless printing, faxing, photocopying, and scanning.

EBPS, including Central Elementary School, East Bridgewater Jr/Sr High School, and Gordon W. Mitchell School, is another significant source of technology resources in the Town, focusing on students, faculty, staff, and families. The District provides students with Chromebooks for in-school and at-home use. The District implements a contract system regarding devices and coverage for damages, agreed upon by parents at the beginning of the school year, and there is no device fee. EBPS' supply of Chromebooks

⁷ East Bridgewater Housing Authority. (n.d.). Properties. Eastbridgewaterhousingauthority.com. <http://www.eastbridgewaterhousingauthority.com/Properties.aspx>

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). DP02 Selected Social Characteristics in the United State. ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles. U.S. Department of Commerce. [DP02: SELECTED SOCIAL ... - Census Bureau Table](#)

is increasingly worn from intense usage, with various common issues (e.g., low battery life, glitches, keyboard malfunctions). Community members have reported a knowledge divide within households, where children build digital literacy faster than adults. Programming is needed to help parents learn about the devices their children use for school and the virtual platforms EBPS uses for outreach (e.g., Parent Square and School Brains).

While students can use EBPS' internet network to use their Chromebooks in school, they rely on their household internet service when using these devices at home. EBPS does not currently provide hotspots to students without fast and reliable internet service at home. However, the Library keeps one mobile hotspot in-house for student use, as EBPS software sometimes restricts users' access to public Wi-Fi networks.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy empowers Internet users to utilize devices effectively, navigate common software platforms, and access and participate safely and effectively on the Internet. In a society where essential resources and services are increasingly virtual, digital literacy is critical for communication, accessing banking, telehealth services, and healthcare information, and accessing information on municipal programs and services.

MBI Statewide Public Survey data indicates potential and support for improving digital literacy among East Bridgewater respondents regarding cybersecurity and accessing community resources and services. 44% of survey respondents indicated they are "Very concerned" about internet safety, and 75% indicated they are most concerned that their "data could get stolen or used without [their] consent." Cybersecurity is a state of protection against the criminal or unauthorized use of data, achieved through protective software and individual precautions. Cybersecurity is critical for all age groups, businesses, and municipal operations. In particular, older adults can face cybersecurity vulnerabilities, requiring digital literacy training to avoid scams and fraudulent attacks.

Regarding digital literacy training, 40% of East Bridgewater public survey respondents indicated they would be most interested in "a do-it-yourself training module" for digital skills support. This training format offers learners flexibility in timing and privacy, mitigating the fear and shame that can stem from a lack of digital skills. However, communities should support a variety of digital literacy training opportunities, offering flexibility for learning with different schedules, proficiency levels, language speakers, and formats to reach as many people as possible. In particular, community members have noted a need for primary digital literacy course offerings and training focusing on using technology to make everyday tasks easier.

Digital Literacy Resources

Municipal entities, including the COA and the Library, are challenged with finding and retaining qualified digital literacy instructors due to a high turnover rate for these positions. The Library does not currently offer targeted digital literacy programming or device assistance or have a dedicated staff member with technical knowledge of

hardware technology. The COA has tried using Zoom to conduct programming, but participants needed help to use the platform and preferred outreach via cable. Both of these entities assist patrons on an individual, as-needed basis.

The Town lacks a formalized network of digital navigators with adequate knowledge and capacity to serve the East Bridgewater community. The Town's current digital navigators are typically high school students, with limited availability during working hours. Community members have expressed the importance that digital navigators must be adequately vetted for safety reasons and to determine if they are suitable for instruction to kids and seniors.

Municipal Outreach

Technology is an important tool that municipalities leverage in public outreach and service distribution. Currently, the Town of East Bridgewater relies on the Town Website, municipal BuzzAround e-newsletter, Facebook, and the Council on Aging monthly newsletter for simple outreach. 53% of MBI Statewide Public Survey respondents indicated that online government services are "Very accessible" for them.

To reach as broad an audience as possible, the Town should diversify its municipal outreach to include a variety of virtual and non-virtual methods. Additionally, outreach should consist of push methods of outreach and pull strategies, providing accessible information hubs.

Local and Regional Partnerships

There is potential for the Town to collaborate and partner with local and regional groups and institutions to support providing digital literacy training opportunities. While the Library is the Town's primary digital equity hub, other institutions, such as the YMCA, offer public Wi-Fi networks. The Town could organize practicum opportunities with universities, such as East Bridgewater State or Massasoit Community College, to provide digital equity research or digital navigation services for the Town.

There is also potential for collaboration with other municipalities in the region. Municipalities could develop and utilize a single network of digital navigators and digital literacy instructors, rotating through each community to maximize the reach of these resources. Towns throughout the region should also communicate to determine if similar digital equity planning initiatives are being considered or implemented. The Town of East Bridgewater can conduct this outreach and be a regional leader in digital equity planning and literacy instruction.

6

Future Funding

East Bridgewater can leverage available and future funding opportunities to support digital inclusion initiatives, and advance digital equity in the Town. These funding programs target critical implementation areas, including workforce training, .

Funding Opportunities

The Town of East Bridgewater can leverage the following funding programs to support the implementation of this plan.

Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp) YouthWorks Funding

Commonwealth Corporation's YouthWorks is a state-funded youth employment program that supports skills training for youth up to age 25 from households earning less than 200% of the federal poverty rate.⁹

YouthWorks funding can support workforce training in East Bridgewater for career opportunities in the local broadband economy and skills in digital literacy training.

Lead for America American Connection Corps

The Lead for America American Connection Corp (ACC) is a service membership focused on advancing economic prosperity and bridging the digital divide.¹⁰ The ACC supports broadband development, digital inclusion, and civic leadership in communities through a network of ACC Members who provide critical capacity-building services for the host organization or municipality. MBI has funding to cover host-site funding matches for up to 15 municipalities in Massachusetts.

⁹ Commonwealth Corporation. (n.d.). YouthWorks. commcorp.org. [Commonwealth Corporation - YouthWorks \(commcorp.org\)](https://commcorp.org)

¹⁰ American Connection Corps. (n.d.). American Connection Corps. americanconnectioncorps.org. [American Connection Corps](https://americanconnectioncorps.org)

East Bridgewater can apply to host an ACC Member to assist with public outreach and education regarding digital literacy training opportunities and existing programming subsidizing broadband internet and device costs (e.g., ACP).

Office of Secondary and Elementary Education

The U.S. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) Title II, Part A grant program provides grants to state educational agencies and subgrants to local educational agencies to increase student achievement consistent with challenging state academic standards and improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers.¹¹ Eligible activities under Title II, Part A, include providing support and professional development for teachers.

East Bridgewater can apply for OESE Title II, Part A funds for professional development to empower teachers to adopt BLENDED teaching methods, leveraging technology while protecting students against unproductive online behavior.

Efficiency and Regionalization Program

The Efficiency and Regionalization (E&R) Grant Program is intended to provide financial support for government entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives, allowing for long-term local government sustainability.¹² This program is open to municipalities and regional school districts.

EBPS can apply for E&R grant program funding to support its translation and interpretation program, including costs associated with equipment or software. The Town can apply for E&R funding to support collaborative efforts with regional institutions and municipalities, including educational practicum opportunities and digital equity planning initiatives.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) Apartment Wi-Fi Program works with municipalities, public housing authorities, and affordable housing developers to build Wi-Fi networks for residents. The Apartment Wi-Fi Program provides funding, project management, and procurement support to fund the construction of Wi-Fi networks, providing residents with equal or superior service to what is available from commercial ISPs at no cost to residents. Program funding covers all capital costs associated with network design, construction, equipment, and the first year of ongoing operating expenses.¹³

East Bridgewater should connect with representatives from MBI and/or MAPC to learn about the Apartment Wi-Fi Program and find out if there are any opportunities to leverage this program in local affordable housing apartment buildings.

¹¹ United States Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants—Title II, Part A. [oese.ed.gov. Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants—Title II, Part A - Office of Elementary and Secondary Education](https://oese.ed.gov/Supporting-Effective-Instruction-State-Grants-Title-II-Part-A-Office-of-Elementary-and-Secondary-Education)

¹² Division of Local Services. (n.d.). Efficiency & Regionalization grant program. [Efficiency & Regionalization grant program | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/efficiency-and-regionalization-grant-program)

¹³ Metropolitan Area Planning Council. (n.d.). Apartment Wi-Fi. [mapc.org. https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/digital-equity/apartment-wi-fi/](https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/digital-equity/apartment-wi-fi/)

Goals



Establish a framework for promoting digital equity in East Bridgewater.



Track the local broadband market to support a variety of services for consumers and promote job opportunities locally.



Support a wide range of training opportunities to strengthen digital literacy throughout the community.



Support effective device access and digital literacy training in East Bridgewater Public Schools (EBPS).



Explore local and regional partnerships and pursue increased funding.



Promote affordable devices and access to broadband internet.

Recommendations

1

Establish a framework for promoting digital equity in East Bridgewater.

	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	CHAMPION	COST	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	TIMING
1-1	Establish team of digital equity champions	Identify and recruit a team of digital equity champions within the East Bridgewater community who can coordinate regularly and advance the goals and objectives of the Digital Equity Plan. This group could include representatives of the Library, COA, EBPS, East Bridgewater Public Housing, municipal departments, and other local groups.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	0	N/A	Short-Term
1-2	Diversify the Town's methods of public outreach	Expand the Town's methods of public outreach to reach as many residents, businesses, and community groups as possible. Conduct outreach through virtual (e.g., Town Website, emails, social media) and non-virtual (e.g., flyers, tabling, mailers, door-to-door outreach) channels. Utilize push methods for disseminating information and promoting public events, including providing public information hubs and pull methods for soliciting feedback on municipal planning efforts.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator), Community Coalition for Change (Secretary)	0	N/A	Short-Term
1-3	Establish a methodology for tracking community sentiment	Facilitate continued community dialogue regarding digital equity issues and opportunities in the East Bridgewater community on a recurring basis (e.g., annually).	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	0	N/A	Long-Term
1-4	Socialize East Bridgewater's Digital Equity Goals	Prepare an informational flyer and distribute it locally regarding East Bridgewater's digital equity goals and digital equity champions.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator), EBPL (Director of Library Services), Community Coalition for Change (Secretary)	0	N/A	Short-Term

2

Track the local broadband market to support a variety of services for consumers and promote job opportunities locally.

	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	CHAMPION	COST	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	TIMING
2-1	Track major ISPs	Monitor the Town's major ISP (Comcast) to understand their coverage, rates, bundles, and any discount rates they offer. Define broadband affordability standards locally. Advocate for greater transparency and higher quality customer service among ISPs to reduce monthly internet costs for residents and ensure they only pay for the services they need.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	0	N/A	Medium-Term
2-2	Promote career development and employment opportunities under the broadband economy	Promote employment and professional development opportunities in tracking, developing, designing, and deploying broadband infrastructure locally, including vocational-technical education.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator), EBPS (Assistant Superintendent)	\$	CommCorps YouthWorks	Medium-Term
2-3	Consider public alternatives to privately owned ISPs	Explore opportunities to enhance reliability and affordability of broadband locally by establishing a municipally owned ISP, or partnering with other communities in the region that are already taking this on.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	0	N/A	Long-Term

3

Support a wide range of training opportunities to strengthen digital literacy throughout the community.

OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	CHAMPION	COST	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	TIMING
3-1 Establish a variety of digital literacy courses	Promote digital literacy training opportunities locally, focusing on hardware and software needed for accessing essential services/resources (e.g., telehealth, accessing medical records, enrolling in and maintaining benefits) and enhancing everyday life (e.g., social media, standard software programs, device advice, digital literacy basics). Promote various training models for digital skills support, including in-person classes and independent modules, to provide flexibility for schedules, proficiency levels, and language speakers to reach as many people as possible.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator & COA Director), Community Coalition for Change (Secretary), EBPL (Director of Library Services)	\$	N/A	Medium-Term
3-2 Develop and distribute topic-specific digital literacy guides in the community	Develop targeted guides to address widely reported digital skills gaps. Distribute these guides virtually via the Town Website and provide paper copies to the Library and Senior Center. One guide should address updating out-of-date devices, including how to learn more about modern devices and where residents can purchase these devices in the Town or region.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator & COA Director), EBPL (Director of Library Services)	\$	LFA ACC	Short-Term
3-3 Protect the community from common cybersecurity threats	Promote best practices in protection against common cybersecurity threats, including hacking, data and identity theft, and scams (i.e., ACP scamming) through providing dedicated training and outreach supported by the Town's digital equity champions.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator & COA Director)	\$	N/A	Medium-Term
3-4 Establish a team of digital navigators	Establish a digital navigation training squad with adequate knowledge and capacity to provide the East Bridgewater community with personalized technology assistance. Recruit East Bridgewater Jr/Sr High School students to supplement digital navigation efforts. Properly vet and support all digital navigators to ensure they are equipped to help residents safely and effectively. Establish a system to organize and track navigation efforts.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator), EBPS (Assistant Superintendent)	\$	CommCorps YouthWorks	Short-Term

4

Support effective device access and digital literacy training in East Bridgewater Public Schools (EBPS)

OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	CHAMPION	COST	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	TIMING
4-1 Strengthen digital literacy in families regarding EBPS hardware and software	Monitor the use of technology by teachers in EBPS classrooms and administration in communicating with families (e.g., Parent Square, School Brains). Develop a guide for EBPS families detailing standard hardware and software technologies employed by the district and resources they can access to learn more about their use (e.g., digital navigation squad, EBPS EdTech Support).	EBPS (Assistant Superintendent)	\$	N/A	Long-Term
4-2 Support digital literacy among EBPS faculty and staff	Apply for funds from Office of Elementary and Secondary Education: Title II, Part A Funds for professional development that will empower EBPS faculty to adopt blended teaching methods, leveraging in-person and virtual teaching methods to suit students' learning needs and preferences best.	EBPS (Assistant Superintendent), Community Coalition for Change (Secretary)	\$	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	Medium-Term
4-3 Utilize technology to address language barriers in education	Utilize translation and interpretation technology to assist EBPS' growing multilingual student population, with a focus on the District's most prominent language groups (i.e., Portuguese, Spanish, and Haitian Creole)	EBPS (Assistant Superintendent)	\$	Efficiency and Regionalization Program	Short-Term
4-4 Ensure EBPS has functional and updated devices for educational and administrative use	Apply for funding from MBI to support the District's capacity to replace devices as necessary, as the District's supply of Chromebooks becomes increasingly worn from intense usage.	EBPS (Assistant Superintendent)	\$	N/A	Medium-Term

5

Explore local and regional partnerships and pursue increased funding.

5-1

5-2

5-3

5-4

OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	CHAMPION	COST	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	TIMING
Strengthen connections with local partners	Maintain working relationships with local partners that can help to advance the Digital Equity Plan goals, including EBPS, the Library, COA, boards and committees, local nonprofits, media outlets, businesses, and community anchor institutions.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator & COA Director), EBPL (Director of Library Services), Community Coalition for Change (Secretary)	\$	N/A	Short-Term
Develop partnerships and programming opportunities with regional educational institutions	Organize practicum opportunities with universities, such as East Bridgewater State or Massasoit Community College, to provide digital equity research or digital navigation services for the Town, including personalized device assistance for Library patrons.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator), EBPL (Director of Library Services)	\$	Efficiency and Regionalization Program	Medium-Term
Connect with regional municipalities regarding digital equity planning	Stay coordinated with regional municipalities regarding digital equity planning and identify opportunities for collaboration. Consider developing a regional network of digital navigators and training instructors. Monitor state and federal digital equity initiatives, including MBI's development of the statewide BEAD plan.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	\$	Efficiency and Regionalization Program	Short-Term
Pursue state and federal grants supporting digital equity initiatives	Distribute the Digital Equity Plan among the Town's grant writing advisors, highlighting key goals, objectives, and future funding considerations.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	0	N/A	Short-Term

6

Promote affordable devices and access to broadband internet.

OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	CHAMPION	COST	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	TIMING
6-1 Improve Wi-Fi in public housing	Contact representatives of MBI and MAPC regarding the Apartment Wi-Fi Program to understand the benefits of leveraging this program in East Bridgewater Public Housing buildings. Ensure public housing buildings have adequate internet connectivity indoors, accounting for the age and structure of the buildings.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	\$	Apartment Wi-Fi Program	Medium-Term
6-2 Promote public subsidies for devices and broadband internet	Facilitate an outreach campaign, including mailed flyers and digital engagement via the Town's website and newsletter, regarding the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and how to enroll. Host enrollment drives locally at the Library, East Bridgewater Public Housing developments, Senior Center, and Town events.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	\$	LFA ACC	Medium-Term
6-3 Develop and maintain an inventory of free public Wi-Fi access points	Create an inventory of digital equity hubs in the community where people can access free, publicly available Wi-Fi networks and promote these locations to vulnerable demographic groups (e.g., EBPL, YMCA).	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator)	\$	N/A	Long-Term
6-4 Create a shared inventory of Wi-Fi hotspots between EBPS and the Library	Apply for funding to expand the Library's supply of hotspots. Establish a hotspot circulation program between EBPS and the Library to fill in gaps in internet access for students and community members.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator), EBPL (Director of Library Services), EBPS (Assistant Superintendent)	\$	Efficiency and Regionalization Program	Long-Term
6-5 Establish a local device reuse and recycling program	Explore opportunities to reuse functional devices between local digital equity hubs (e.g., EBPS to share functional Chromebooks with the Library and COA when updating devices). Provide public information regarding the proper disposal of technology waste.	Town of East Bridgewater (Town Administrator & COA Director), EBPS (Assistant Superintendent), EBPL (Director of Library Services)	0	N/A	Medium-Term