ctc technology & energy

engineering & business consulting

Municipal Digital Equity Plan

Prepared for the City of Cambridge, MA

June 2025

Columbia Telecommunications Corporation

301.933.1488 • www.ctcnet.us

Contents

Figures

Tables

1 Introduction

The City of Cambridge commissioned CTC Technology & Energy (CTC) to engage in a study to document gaps in digital equity—a condition in which all residents have access to adequate broadband service and devices and possess the skills to use these resources—and develop strategies to bridge these gaps. This report presents findings and offers recommendations for how the City and other entities can address gaps.

The City has long been offering significant digital equity services to residents. Most recently, under an MBI grant, Cambridge has been using the services of six full-time staff members called digital navigators. These staff members have been deployed at seven organizations to help provide skills training and other efforts aimed at closing the City's digital divide. This navigation program in Cambridge is part of a regional effort called the Digital Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Consortium that includes 32 digital navigators, an initiative of the MassHire Metro North Workforce Investment Board.[1]

These digital navigators have proved very successful in addressing the needs of diverse and low-income residents; according to a recent Consortium presentation, the program has supported 1,869 community members across several municipalities since August 2024 with a total of 2,983 requests for help (or "tickets.") A recent presentation on these data is provided as Appendix A.

This program—and the data developed through this study—has revealed both deep and persistent digital equity gaps in Cambridge and also a proven way to continue addressing these gaps. Because grant funding for the current program is ending by mid-2026, this report recommends among other things that the City or other funders continue to support digital navigator positions in the City.

1.1 Overview of key data findings

Key findings are presented in Section 2 and include the following:

BROADBAND ACCESS GAPS: The end of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) in early 2024 removed a $30 monthly benefit from 4,473 low-income households in Cambridge; today low-income Cambridge households experience relatively larger subscription gaps. Among the 14.3 percent of households without wired broadband services, 63.9 percent earn less than $75,000 annually, per federal survey data.

DEVICE ACCESS GAPS: Similarly, low-income Cambridge households face larger challenges in accessing the devices they need. Only 71 percent of those with an annual household income under $60,000 reported on an MBI survey that they had sufficient device access, compared to 95 percent for people from higher-income households.

DIGITAL SKILLS GAPS: Cambridge residents with household income of less than $60,000 report significantly lower confidence performing common online tasks. For example, only 55 percent of the respondents from lower income households reported in the MBI survey that

[1] See Digital JEDI Consortium, https://massdigitaljedi.org/

online job searching was "easy" compared to 78 percent for those from higher-income households.

1.2 Overview of key recommendations

The full set of recommendations is provided in Section 3 and includes the following:

RETAIN DIGITAL NAVIGATORS: To meet the needs of low-income Cambridge residents, the City and others should continue supporting digital navigators to the extent funding allows. As part of this engagement, CTC met with the organizations using these services to develop an understanding of what these organizations might need after the grant-funded efforts end over the next 12 months. The needs were documented across three categories of City entities: City departments, housing providers, and other nonprofit entities. It is estimated that one full time (F/T) navigator would entail a cost of about $80,000 annually with benefits, not including overhead or other administrative costs; at least seven would be needed to meet organizational needs. These needs are documented in Section 3.1.

SUPPORT A VARIETY OF EFFORTS BY AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS: Beyond digital navigators, housing providers can pursue strategies for providing enhanced connectivity and meeting device needs of residents. They can explore MBI programs for Wi-Fi buildouts, provide vouchers for free internet access, start or continue partnerships with device-provision and training programs, and pursue other approaches as described in Section 3.2.

PURCHASE DEVICES TO SUPPORT CITY SERVICES: The City or other funders should consider meeting the increasing device needs of City departments that offer services to residents. This could include funding 75 Chromebooks or PCs at the Cambridge Public Library, 75 Chromebooks at the Cambridge Community Learning Center, and a smaller number of tablets and hotspots so that the Cambridge Public Health Department can better perform outreach to low-income residents—including people without housing—in Cambridge. These equipment needs are detailed in Section 3.3.

1.3 Project overview

This study was funded by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) at the MassTech Collaborative under its Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. Funding came from State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds provided under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Tasks performed by CTC included the following: Analyzing the availability of broadband service, level of competition, and broadband pricing in Cambridge (see Section 4).

- Determining levels of enrollment in the now-defunct Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which offered a $30 monthly subsidy toward broadband bills until earlier this year and estimating of the gap in utilization by eligible households so as to inform future efforts to enroll residents in available low-cost plans (see Section 0).
- Conducting interviews with stakeholders from eleven entities over the course of several meetings and follow-up communications to further illuminate gaps in affordability, skills, and devices; existence of local programs; and the need for digital navigators and other resources going forward (see Section 5).

- Promoting MBI's statewide residential digital equity survey (see Appendix B) and reporting on Cambridge-specific findings on topics including broadband utilization, affordability, skills, device access, and related topics (see Section 7).
- Developing recommendations on strategies and activities designed to address gaps using potentially available funding, potentially augmented by local funds (see Section 3).
- Tracking how other towns and cities have used funds from MBI's Implementation Grant Program to execute programs in digital literacy, device distribution, education, outreach and adoption, and public space improvements and Wi-Fi availability in apartments (see Appendix C).
- Outlining models for how, in the absence of the ACP, the city can consider helping residents connect to broadband service with low-cost and any future subsidy programs. This includes opportunities for single-payer broadband arrangements with internet service providers, and promotion of low-cost broadband programs offered by local providers (see Section 6).

2 Key data findings with respect to digital equity gaps in Cambridge

The following are high-level findings from numerical survey data and broadband availability data analyzed for the study.

Narratives from stakeholders—including the Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge Housing Authority, Cambridge Community Learning Center, Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Cambridge Council on Aging, Cambridge Public Health Department, and the affordable housing providers Housing Rehab Inc (HRI) and Just a Start (JAS)— are provided in Section 5.

The recommendations, based on all data sources including the stakeholder meetings, are provided in Section 3.

2.1 With respect to home internet subscription rates, low-income Cambridge households experience large gaps, but are subscribed at somewhat higher rates than the statewide and national figures

According to American Community Survey (ACS) data, 85.7 percent of households in Cambridge subscribe to residential internet services via wireline technology (cable, fiber, or DSL), which exceeds the state figure of 81.2 percent and the national figure of 74.6 percent. Among the 14.3 percent of households without wired broadband services, 63.9 percent earn less than $75,000 annually. Whereas just 3.2 percent of households with annual incomes above $75,000 do not subscribe, 8.5 percent of households that earn between $20,000 and $75,000 per year, and 19.5 percent of households that earn below $20,000 do not subscribe to a home wireline internet service. These figures point to further need for programs to connect households with programs that provide discounts or subsidies for broadband subscriptions, specifically focusing on the lowest income households.

2.2 Similarly, low-income Cambridge households face larger challenges in accessing the devices they need

Of respondents to the MBI survey, most (82 percent) said everyone in their household has access to the computing devices they need to meet their everyday needs for internet use. However, only 71 percent of those with an annual household income under $60,000 said they had sufficient access; the figure for those in households with higher incomes was 95 percent.

Citywide, ACS data show that only 2.1 percent of Cambridge households do not own a personal device to access the internet, which is significantly lower than the state and national averages of 4.9 percent and 5.2 percent, respectively. This is further reflected in the rate of ownership by type of device. Approximately 92.1 percent of Cambridge households own a desktop or laptop computer, 68.9 percent of Cambridge households own a tablet device, and 94.3 percent of households owning a smartphone device. But the MBI survey reveals that the gaps are faced mostly by low-income households.

2.3 Cambridge residents with household income of less than $60,000 report significantly lower confidence in performing common online tasks

Low-income Cambridge residents face additional challenges with respect to their knowledge of how to use computers and broadband. For example, 78 percent of respondents with household income above $60,000 reported that searching and applying for a job online was “easy,” yet only 55 percent of the respondents from lower income households said so. Similarly, 73 percent of respondents with income above $60,000 found searching and applying for benefits or resources online to be "easy," but only 44 percent of their counterparts felt the same, marking an even greater difference of 29 percentage points between these two income groups. This shows that those who are more financially limited continue to need digital skills and literacy support in Cambridge through a continuation of existing programs and digital navigator services.

2.4 The end of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) removed this $30 monthly benefit from 4,473 low-income households in Cambridge

The ISPs in Cambridge all participated in the ACP, either directly or through an affiliate. The federal ACP program paid a $30 monthly subsidy for broadband service for eligible low-income residents. As of the program’s end in early 2024, FCC data show that 4,473 households in Cambridge were receiving the ACP subsidy—or 26.9 percent of the estimated 16,640 households eligible for the program.[2] This enrollment rate had increased by nearly nine percentage points in the last year of the ACP—enrollment rates for eligible households were at 18.2 percent in January 2023 and had progressed to 22.2 percent in June 2023. This increase may reflect the success of efforts by local entities to boost awareness and participation. But the end of the program meant that 4,473 households lost this benefit, worsening the affordability challenges faced by low-income households in the City.

2.5 Broadband infrastructure is ubiquitous, and there is growing competition in the City, but affordability remains a challenge for low-income households

Broadband is ubiquitously available in Cambridge; the issue is not a lack of infrastructure but of affordability and of the ability of low-income households to navigate low-cost program enrollment.

The FCC’s National Broadband Map data show that cable services from Comcast serves every residential location, including every residential apartment or “unit,” across the City. Competition from fiber is available to a small but growing number of residential units. As of March 2025, 59,101 (or 93 percent of) total residential units in Cambridge have access to services from only one wireline provider (Comcast) but 4,523 have an option from another wireline provider including Verizon fiber, Starry fiber and Astound cable service. And a growing source of competition are the fixed-wireless services from four providers, as described in the next subsection.

Most residences with fiber are in large multiple dwelling unit (MDU) buildings that have an average of 100 units per building. Many of these are new developments. But the wider lack of wireline service

[2] Estimates are based on 2022 American Community Survey reported data on household income, food stamp recipiency, Medicaid recipiency, supplemental security income, and public assistance income.

competition means most Cambridge residents are not able to take advantage of competitive pricing or promotional offerings from other wireline providers, even though, as noted below, there are some fixed-wireless services available.

2.5.1 Fixed wireless services are available to many Cambridge households and offer another alternative to cable services in the City, but performance is uneven

Cambridge has fixed wireless services from Starry, T-Mobile, AT&T, and Verizon, which collectively report that they offer their services to approximately 11,068 (or 92 percent of) residential locations, including 60,395 (or 94 percent of) units across the City. However**,** performance of these networks is dependent on individual subscribers' distance from wireless facilities, and data speeds that may be cut (or "throttled") by these providers during times of congestion. (In the case of T-Mobile, AT&T and Verizon, the services also require a bundled mobile plan and phone as an additional cost.) The providers state that 8,154 (or 74 percent of) locations, and 49,706 (or 78 percent of) residential units can get speeds at or above 100/20 Mbps.

2.5.2 Starry has partnered with the Cambridge Housing Authority to offer its low-cost fixed wireless and fiber services at multiple housing authority developments

Across the City, Starry serves 34,536 units at speeds at and above 100/20Mbps. In 2022, Starry and the Cambridge Housing Authority announced a partnership and goal of serving more than 2,630 units in Cambridge Housing Authority developments with Starry's Connect internet service at $15 per month.[3] Speeds for Starry Connect are 30/30 Mbps and only available to residents of public and affordable housing developments.

In December 2024, the Housing Authority approved a new partnership with Starry to deploy fiber at two developments—Manning Apartments (208 units) and Newtowne Court (268 units). This effort is being funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Both Manning and Newtowne Court already receive Starry Connect services, and interested tenants will reportedly be able to transfer their Starry Connect subscriptions to fiber services at no extra cost. For new subscribers to Starry services, tenants of these developments will pay no more than $35 per month for fiber.[4]

2.6 Across the income spectrum, Cambridge residents are very concerned about privacy and security online

Cambridge residents who participated in the MBI residential survey expressed deep concerns about online safety and privacy. These sentiments held across the income spectrum, with 84 percent of respondents saying they are "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" by their online safety. Almost all respondents, 84 percent, said they were most concerned about their data being stolen or used without their consent. Additionally, 60 percent are most concerned that they or a loved one

[3] "Starry Expands its Ultra-Low-Cost Broadband Access Program to the Cambridge Housing Authority," Cambridge Housing Authority, https://cambridge-housing.org/starry-expands-its-ultra-low-cost-broadband-access-program-to-the-cambridge-housing-authority/.

[4] "Municipal broadband takes a step in Cambridge with fiber-optic test at Manning, Newtown Court," Cambridge Day, https://www.cambridgeday.com/2024/12/17/municipal-broadband-takes-a-step-in-cambridge-with-fiber-optic-test-at-manning-newtown-court/

could get scammed or tricked, and 50 percent are most concerned about being tracked or surveilled. This suggests a need for broad-based skills training and education in this area.

3 Recommendations

Following are recommendations based on data developed over the course of the study.

3.1 Continue to support a network of digital navigators connected to trusted organizations to address residents' complex digital literacy and access needs.

Through a grant-funded pilot program that began in 2024, six Cambridge entities are using the services of six full-time staff members called digital navigators. These entities are Cambridge Community Television (CCTV), Just a Start (JAS), Cambridge Public Library (CPL), Cambridge Public Schools (CPS), Homeowners' Rehab Inc. (HRI), and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). The program has two sources of grant funding with different timelines: ARPA funding provided through the city that ends in December 2025, and funding through an MBI grant that ends in June 2026.

A clear theme from engagements with City departments, housing providers and nonprofits in the City was the need for continued digital navigation support to assist residents in Cambridge with a wide variety of challenges, by facilitating access to devices to close the digital divide, and empowering community members with digital literacy and job readiness skills.

But the grant funding that supports the existing program will be exhausted next year, and the Trump administration recently announced it would not fund Capacity Grant programs that would have covered MBI's Launchpad program for potential continued support. MBI's one-time $100,000 implementation grant will be available, but continuing digital navigators at any level will require significant additional funding from other sources. One source could be the City budget—which is devoted to City departments. Other sources could be operating budgets of housing providers, potentially supported by increased rents to tenants. A third could be local or regional philanthropies.

This study documented requests for digital navigators, and these requests are organized below in three categories – City departments, housing providers, and other nonprofit entities. It is estimated that one full time (F/T) navigator would entail a cost of about $80,000 annually with benefits, not including overhead or other administrative costs associated with staffing.

Table 1 shows digital navigator requests from City entities,

Table 2 shows such requests from housing providers, and Table 3 shows the requests from Cambridge Community TV and the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee.

Given the constrained funding environment, it is recommended that the City determine what it can fund for City needs; that the housing providers explore what their operational budgets (potentially augmented by increased rents) can support; and that all entities explore what could be supported by philanthropies or other funding sources.

Table 1: Digital navigator needs identified by City departments

Entity	Digital navigator capacity requested for the entity	Level of digital navigators used now
Cambridge Public Library: Continue digital navigator position to support patrons with a variety of needs	1 F/T position	1 F/T position

Entity	Digital navigator capacity requested for the entity	Level of digital navigators used now
Cambridge Learning Center: One additional full-time staff position at CLC to support IT and digital skills training needs	1 F/T position	P/T support from two navigators
Council on Aging: Occasional support to lead one digital literacy class per week	3 hours/week	P/T Support through grant-funded SCES navigator
Cambridge Public Schools: Digital navigator support for CPS on a full-time basis, including hosting an event to educate parents and guardians on how to protect students from online harms	1 F/T including to support parent events	1 F/T position

Table 2: Digital navigator needs identified by housing providers

Entity	Digital navigator capacity requested for the entity	Level of digital navigators used now
Cambridge Housing Authority: Navigator duties to include leading expansion of CHA's Tech Goes Home program to serve 30 residents per year.	1 FT position	1 F/T position
Just a Start (JAS): Digital navigator to support residents with enrollments and skills needs	1 FT position	1 F/T position
HRI: Digital navigator to support residents with enrollments and skills needs	1 FT position	1 F/T position

Table 3: Digital navigator needs identified by other organizations

Entity	Digital navigator capacity requested for the entity's needs	Level of digital navigators used now
Cambridge Community TV: A navigator would continue as a full-time staff position serving needs of CCTV members and the community. If digital navigation coordination was needed to support multiple digital navigators—as was the case under the grant program—CCTV would be a logical site for a coordinator position. CCTV has developed a budget based on the hope that multiple navigators will continue to be funded.	1 F/T position for internal needs	1 F/T + 1 F/T coordinator under the grant funded citywide program
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee: Occasional support to assist patrons, especially multilingual and during evening hours, on a variety of topics	P/T support with flexible hours	P/T (referrals to other digital navigators in the community)

3.2 Beyond digital navigators, housing providers can pursue strategies for providing enhanced connectivity and meeting device needs of residents

Cambridge has three significant public and affordable housing entities in the City—Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), Just-A-Start (JAS), and Homeowners Rehab Inc. (HRI)—which collectively maintain over 8,000 units.

Through engagement with these entities, it was evident that many residents of public and affordable housing units in Cambridge face challenges paying the monthly cost of home internet services and in obtaining devices.

Recommendations are highlighted in Table 4. The housing providers have options for pursuing MBI programs, identifying internal funding or finding other sources to carry out recommendations that align with their goals.

Table 4: Internet access needs identified by public and affordable housing providers

Recommendation	Potential annual cost
Explore MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program for CHA units that do not have a second internet service provider	CapEx and first-year OpEx paid by grant; ongoing OpEx requires custom estimate
Explore MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program to provide free in-unit Wi-Fi access for Rindge Tower Apartments and the George Close Building, managed by JAS	CapEx and first year OpEx paid by grant; ongoing OpEx requires custom estimate
Explore options for free Wi-Fi in common areas for the Rivermark and Finch properties managed by HRI	Seek custom quotes
Provide a combined total of 50-100 devices per year for 3,000 HRI and JAS units	$25,000 for 25 laptops and 25 Chromebooks (average $500 each) $23,000 for 25 T-Mobile hotspots with annual 50GB subscriptions
Provide a combined total of 50-100 Internet Essentials vouchers for HRI and JAS residents per year	$17,940 for 100 annual Internet Essentials vouchers or custom quote for bulk purchase
Fund CHA's Tech Goes Home program to serve 30 residents per year	Cost may be low or zero if TGH has adequate grant support. Without grant support, the TGH cost to support local training programs and supply laptops and software is about $1,500 per learner

3.3 Support City departments to meet increased need for devices

Devices are integral for City department entities to help residents learn digital skills and to help engage with residents who may be otherwise difficult to reach because they are not connected through online platforms.

These needs are highlighted in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Table 5: Device needs

Need	Potential cost
Fund the Cambridge Public Library so it can partner with an organization like MACIR[5] to provide residents with Chromebooks and PCs for access to digital literacy training, job readiness skills, and support services.	$30,000 for 75 additional devices
Provide the Community Learning Center 75 Chromebooks for student use and an ongoing annual investment to replace aging and outdated equipment	$30,000 for 75 additional Chromebooks $10,000 to fund replacements of existing Chromebooks
Provide 10 tablets with mobile data subscriptions to Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) outreach staff	$2000 for 10 tablets; $6000 for 10 annual hotspot subscriptions at 50GB
Provide three AT&T hotspots to CPHD mobile vaccination clinics	Approximately $2000 per year

3.4 Additional funding needs

Support for expansion of CCTV's foundational technology program is well justified by the data. And exploring cybersecurity resources are of significant interest among entities and residents of Cambridge and should be explored as needed.

Table 6: Additional recommendations

Need	Potential annual cost
Expand CCTV's Foundational Technology program to in-person classes once per week	$12,480
Explore cybersecurity programming/partnership opportunities	Leverage free resources of MassTech Collaborative's MassCyberSecurity online safety initiatives

[5] Mass Association for Computer and Internet Resources

3.5 Background on needs and requests expressed by City departments, housing entities, and nonprofit groups

The following are narrative descriptions that informed the recommendations, needs and requests summarized in the tables above. These subsections are organized by entity.

3.5.1 The Council on Aging requested part-time digital navigator support to host digital skills training

The Cambridge Council on Aging (COA), a division of the Department of Human Service Programs, reports it is able to meet the needs of participants at the two senior centers it operates with its current staffing and limited navigator hours offered through Somerville Cambridge Elder Services (SCES) but identified barriers to digital equity for seniors in Cambridge more broadly—particularly those who may not visit a COA senior center. Representatives noted that digital literacy classes can prioritize individuals seeking employment, and some older adults on a limited income may not be able to afford a computer but are not eligible for device distribution through available programs because they do not meet the job seeking criteria.

COA is interested in facilitating digital literacy training that focuses on lifelong learning for purposes beyond job readiness, with the goal of reaching residents who may not otherwise visit the Center. To do this, COA would need to host a digital navigator or instructor for an estimated three hours per week to lead such a class. This navigator could potentially partner with an organization like Tech Goes Home to combine the digital literacy course with device distribution.

3.5.2 CCTV requested funding support for expanding its technology classes, retaining a digital navigator, and potentially a coordinator if multiple digital navigators are retained across the city

CCTV provides extensive computer and broadband training and resources to hundreds of people each year, including live online Foundational Technology Classes covering a variety of digital skills topics.

CCTV would like to expand its Foundational Technology Classes to in-person classes once a week, continuing to reach the same number of people per year (342 participants); to do this, CCTV would need an additional $12,480 per year.

CCTV also employs a full-time digital navigator and a full-time coordinator for the city's Digital Navigator Pilot program. CCTV estimates it would require $200,000 in funding per year to continue the digital navigator and digital navigator coordinator as full-time staff positions at CCTV and also cover a proportional fraction of overhead, administrative, and programmatic costs. To meet City needs, the digital navigator position could continue as a full-time staff position at CCTV providing services to City residents; a second navigator could serve as a coordinator if multiple other digital navigator positions are funded.

3.5.3 CEOC requested one part-time digital navigator to help participants access services and resources online

Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC), a nonprofit anti-poverty organization, sees approximately 75 individuals weekly who need support using the internet to complete an application or other task, such as finding housing and accessing benefits like health insurance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Representatives report that it has been helpful to refer participants to the city's digital navigator pilot, particularly for device assistance and digital skills support, and sees sufficient need among the people it serves to support a part-time digital navigator with flexible hours (including in the evenings) who is multi-lingual. Because they do not have the capacity to manage additional staff, this navigator would ideally be provided by another entity.

3.5.4 CHA requested the continued support for its full-time digital navigator to lead the expansion of CHA's Tech Goes Home program

The CHA engaged a digital navigator through the city pilot program to facilitate its digital equity efforts, including leading a program it previously launched with Tech Goes Home to provide access to devices and digital skills training for elderly residents.

As funding for the navigator ends at the close of 2025, the CHA would like funding to continue this position full-time. Having a full-time digital navigator would allow the CHA to increase the capacity of its Tech Goes Home program to 30 residents per year. The CHA would also need financial support for the devices.

3.5.5 Cambridge Public Library has requested funding support for maintaining its digital navigator services to facilitate digital skills support and device distribution

The Cambridge Public Library (CPL) has long been an anchor institution for the city's digital equity efforts. CPL established a digital equity department in 2023 that offers technology classes and one-on-one Tech Help sessions. With seven locations open for a combined 359 hours per week, including evenings and weekends, the Library's robust Digital Equity services and talented staff serve the broadest community including low-income and low-literacy community members. While its classes have been well attended, the one-on-one sessions are most in demand and many additional patrons request help from librarians outside those official appointments.

Separately from this programming, CPL has a full-time digital navigator through the city program and reports that this navigator has seen appointments booked out weeks in advance and particular demand for hotspot and laptop provision.

To meet the demand for individualized support, the library would like to maintain the digital navigator full-time when funding for the program ends, either as a staff position with the library or contracted through a partner organization.

Device access is a recurring request during library technology classes, one-on-one Tech Help sessions and navigator appointments. The Cambridge Public Library needs funding to partner with an organization like MACIR to efficiently provide devices to community members to close the opportunity gap from digital literacy training to job readiness.

3.5.6 CPS has requested digital navigator support, including hosting a "parents' night" event on helping students avoid online harms

Representatives of Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) report that the district itself is relatively well-resourced and effective at providing students with the hardware to support their learning needs, but the digital navigator assigned to CPS through the city pilot program has been helpful in reaching families to provide more individualized, comprehensive support around digital equity needs. CPS would like this support to continue on a full-time basis.

CPS would also like to offer education for parents and guardians around helping children manage their online activity and avoid online harms, suggesting this training could take the form of a "parents' night" event hosted by an expert in these issues.

3.5.7 CLC has requested full-time digital navigator support to manage technology needs and digital skills training for students, and replace Chromebooks for student use

The Community Learning Center, operated by the city's Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), provides free education and job training services to approximately 800 adult learners per year, of whom 90 percent are immigrants from more than 70 countries. About two-thirds are women and nearly all are low-income.

CLC teaches basic digital skills as part of all classes through customized, hands-on training, and the need for skills training greatly outstrips CLC's current capacity. Approximately 75 of the Chromebooks CLC has for learners to use on site or borrow have reached the end of their useful life and need replacement.

CLC could use at least one additional full-time employee to enable the center to fully meet the technology demands of teachers and students and to be effective in its education and digital equity work with underserved residents. CLC would also like to provide new devices and software for students and teachers, with an ongoing annual investment to replace aging and outdated equipment and to maintain devices.

In addition, CLC would benefit from greater support from and connections to the city Information Technology Department and the Cambridge Public Schools IT Department with regard to the use of technology as a tool for education.

3.5.8 JAS and HRI have requested support for the purchase of Internet Essentials vouchers and low-cost devices for distribution, as well as continued digital navigator support

Just A Start (JAS), a nonprofit community development corporation, and Homeowners' Rehab Inc. (HRI), a community development corporation, both have a full-time digital navigator through the city's pilot and emphasize the importance of continuing this support.

HRI estimates a need to provide 25-50 prepaid vouchers for Internet Essentials and 25-50 low-cost devices for residents per year after funding for the pilot ends. JAS estimates similar numbers on an annual basis to serve its residents and students in its adult career training program.

Both would like to continue the digital navigator positions in 2026 and beyond. HRI would like external funding for this position, but if it could not secure this funding it would potentially seek to pay for the position out of HRI's operations budget. JAS would like to continue the position full-time and would require funding for the majority of this salary.

Comcast operates the Internet Essentials Partnership Program, which allows organizations to become sponsors for communities they serve by purchasing at least 25 Internet Essentials vouchers for a minimum period of six months. The sponsor will pay the full amount of either an Internet Essentials ($14.95 per month) or Internet Essentials plus ($29.95 per month) subscription for every voucher activated.

To become a sponsor, entities can fill out an inquiry form here. See Appendix D for more information on the Internet Essentials Partnership Program.

3.5.9 Consider exploring MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program for CHA units that do not have a second internet service provider

The Cambridge Housing Authority owns and manages affordable housing developments and also administers vouchers for rentals in privately owned housing. The CHA serves more than 10,000 low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities; in total, it serves almost 10 percent of the City's population.[6]

The CHA conducted a survey of its residents in 2023, which included questions on internet access. The survey was completed by 199 residents, reflecting 9 percent of the CHA's occupied units. A third of respondents (34 percent) reported they do not subscribe to internet service at home other than their smartphone plan. Of those subscribing to home internet, 79 percent used Comcast and 44 percent paid more than $60 per month, indicating they are not enrolling in available low-cost plans or are adding video bundles.

To combat this challenge, the CHA has made notable efforts to improve access to affordable internet to its residents, including new contracts with fixed wireless providers, incentives for providers to build fiber in three properties, and the promotion of Comcast's low-cost internet subscription Internet Essentials. However, there are a number of developments that still do not have access to a second provider and are limited to costly subscriptions.

To further address this access and affordability challenge the CHA is interested in pursuing MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi Program, which installs Wi-Fi for every unit in an affordable or public housing development. As detailed in Recommendation 0, MAPC will provide procurement support, capital expense funding, and funding for the first year of operating expenses to provide free Wi-Fi access to residents of public and affordable housing in Massachusetts.

If the CHA is interested in applying for this program it can express its interest for each potential development at this link. For more information on the Apartment Wi-Fi Program see Section 8.3.2.

3.5.10 Consider exploring MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program to provide free in-unit Wi-Fi access for Rindge Tower Apartments and the George Close Building, managed by JAS

Just A Start (JAS) is a nonprofit community development corporation that has developed and maintains 650 affordable apartments in Cambridge and provides additional services to its tenants including career training, housing assistance, and financial education. JAS offers free Wi-Fi in its community rooms; however, these rooms have restrictive hours and can be closed for events.

A representative at JAS stated that a significant challenge among its tenants is the cost of internet, highlighting that a number of tenants struggle to cover the cost of a monthly subscription or lack internet in unit. JAS would like to support its tenants by facilitating free or low-cost residential internet opportunities and is interested in pursuing MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program at two developments as a potential solution.

[6] "About," CHA, https://cambridge-housing.org/about/.

MBI has partnered with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to provide procurement support, capital expense funding, and funding for the first year of operating expenses to provide free Wi-Fi access to residents of public and affordable housing in Massachusetts. The size of the grant program is $5.6 million and MAPC will initially lead all project management and procurement efforts. Operational expenses for year two and beyond are expected to be assumed by local partners, including the municipality, public housing authority, and community development corporations.

The two developments that JAS is interested in pursuing the Apartment Wi-Fi program for are Rindge Tower Apartments and the George Close Building, which have 273 units and 61 units respectively. Using this program to install Wi-Fi would be the most cost-effective way for JAS to fulfill its goal of providing reliable internet in its community rooms.

If JAS is interested in applying for this program for Rindge Tower and George Close it can express its interest at this link. For more information on the Apartment Wi-Fi Program see Section 8.3.2.

3.5.11 CPHD has requested support for the purchasing of tablets and hotspots for use by its outreach staff and mobile vaccination clinics

The Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) provides a range of on-the-ground public health outreach efforts in the city – and often faces challenges reaching people who are not connected online.

CPHD would like to provide 10 tablets with mobile data subscriptions to its staff working in the community so they can help residents access and navigate health care resources available online and facilitate follow-up among unhoused people and others who can be challenging to reach. CPHD would also like to provide three AT&T hotspots to its mobile vaccination clinics.

3.5.12 Explore cybersecurity programming/partnership opportunities

Concerns about online safety and privacy in Cambridge are significant, with 84 percent of Cambridge respondents to the MBI survey stating they are either somewhat concerned or very concerned about their online safety. Even further, 84 percent of Cambridge respondents said their main concern online is having personal data stolen or used without their consent and 60 percent of respondents said that they were concerned about them or a loved one getting scammed or tricked.

MBI's State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) states that a future action to address online safety will include the development of a statewide cybersecurity curriculum. Additional actions will include training existing digital navigators so they support, protect, and inform clients about their online safety, and embedding cybersecurity awareness into youth digital literacy programming.

Cambridge stakeholders can leverage the resources of MassTech Collaborative's MassCyberSecurity online safety initiatives. As part of this, there is also a timely opportunity to apply for a state grant to enhance cybersecurity awareness for anyone using City or other government networks.[7]

[7] "About the Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program," Mass.gov, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-the-municipal-cybersecurity-awareness-grant-program#how-to-apply-.

4 Broadband availability conditions and participation in the ACP in Cambridge

This section provides an analysis of current broadband conditions in the City of Cambridge related to infrastructure availability, level of competition, uptake of services (and of available subsidies) by residents, and device ownership. Data is based on publicly available information from the U.S. Census Bureau, the American Community Survey (ACS), and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

4.1 Cambridge has ubiquitous wired broadband coverage from Comcast, and limited but growing fiber coverage

CTC reviewed FCC data, researched websites of broadband providers operating in Cambridge to collect market data on residential broadband pricing, availability, and level of competition.

Comcast provides high-speed cable internet service to every residential address and unit in the City. Fiber services are limited but growing across Cambridge, with approximately 5,775 (or 9 percent of) units served by Comcast Xfinity, Verizon Fios, and Starry Fiber services. Fixed wireless services (distinct from mobile services) are available from Starry, T-Mobile, Verizon Wireless, and AT&T to many households.

Verizon DSL service was an option in Cambridge as the only other wireline option for internet service, offered over its legacy copper network, and it is possible that some Cambridge residents still use this service. However, a representative at Verizon stated that the company is no longer offering its DSL service to new customers. Providers that still offer DSL to legacy customers do report said coverage to the FCC as required; however, the FCC is not making this data publicly available at this time.

Table 7 provides an analysis of broadband availability data for Cambridge. FCC data are based on reports of service availability from service providers and show a total of 12,042 "broadband serviceable locations" (BSL), which generally means addresses. Because individual address may contain numerous apartment units (with a total of 63,624 in the city), the data is also presented by "units."[8] Table 8 provides an analysis of the competitive broadband landscape in Cambridge. Served speed is defined as a minimum of 100/20 Mbps. Underserved is defined as reported speeds of between 25/3 Mbps and 100/20 Mbps.

Table 7: Broadband service in Cambridge from FCC data as of June 2025

Tech	ISP	Number of locations		Number of Units	
		Total BSLs: 12,042		**Total units:** 63,624	
Cable	Comcast (Xfinity)	12,042	100%	63,624	100%

[8] The FCC Broadband Data Collection reporting uses the term "broadband serviceable location (BSL)" to represent address level information. A BSL is shown as a single served address for locations that may have more than one household or unit, as is the case with duplexes and multi-tenant or apartment buildings. In cases where an address or location is serviced by a single provider or technology, an assumption can be made that the same is true for all households or units at that location.

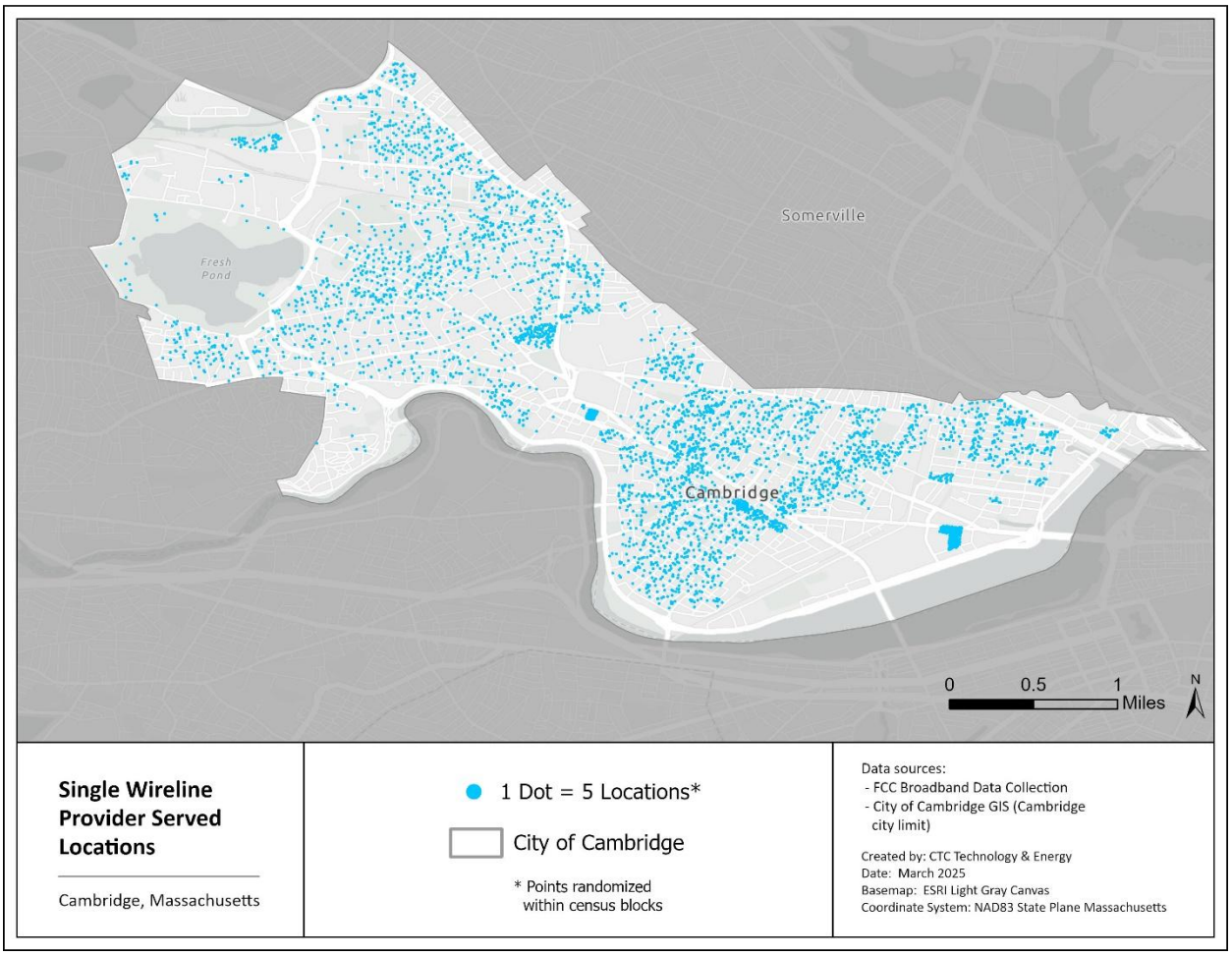
	Astound Broadband	692	6%	2,154	3%
Licensed Fixed Wireless	Starry	**Total:** 3,434 **≥100/20Mbps:** 3,434	29%	**Total**: 34,536 **≥100/20Mbps:** 34,536	54%
	Verizon Wireless	**Total:** 4,947 **≥100/20Mbps:** 4,581	41% 38%	**Total:** 29,968 **≥100/20Mbps:** 28,650	47% 45%
	T-Mobile	**Total:** 8,741 **≥100/20Mbps:** 4,037	73% 34%	**Total:** 44,297 **≥100/20Mbps:** 19,886	70% 31%
	AT&T	**Total:** 5,578 **≥100/20Mbps:** 516	46% 4%	**Total:** 29,724 **≥100/20Mbps**: 3,082	47% 5%
Fiber	Comcast (Xfinity)	13	1%	1,551	5%
	Verizon	25	0.2%	2,725	4%
	Starry	15	0.1%	1,499	2%

Table 8: State of high-speed broadband competition in Cambridge per FCC data

Availability of wireline broadband service		**Addresses**	**Units**
Addresses where 100/ Mbps download, 20 Mbps upload (100/20) or higher is available	Competition from two or more wireline providers	730	5,890
	Fiber available in competition areas	53	5,775
	Only one wireline provider	11,316	59,101
Served only by licensed fixed wireless		5	21
Underserved addresses—no options at 100/20 Mbps but can get at least 25/3 (wireline or licensed fixed wireless)		1	2
No 25/3 or greater (wireline or licensed fixed wireless)		2	52
Total locations		**12,042**	**63,624**

Table 7 and Table 8 above demonstrate that Comcast cable services are available at every location and unit in Cambridge, and that it is the only wireline provider at 11,316 addresses, and 59,101 units, across the City. Figure 1 below shows all locations in Cambridge with access to only one wireline provider, Comcast.

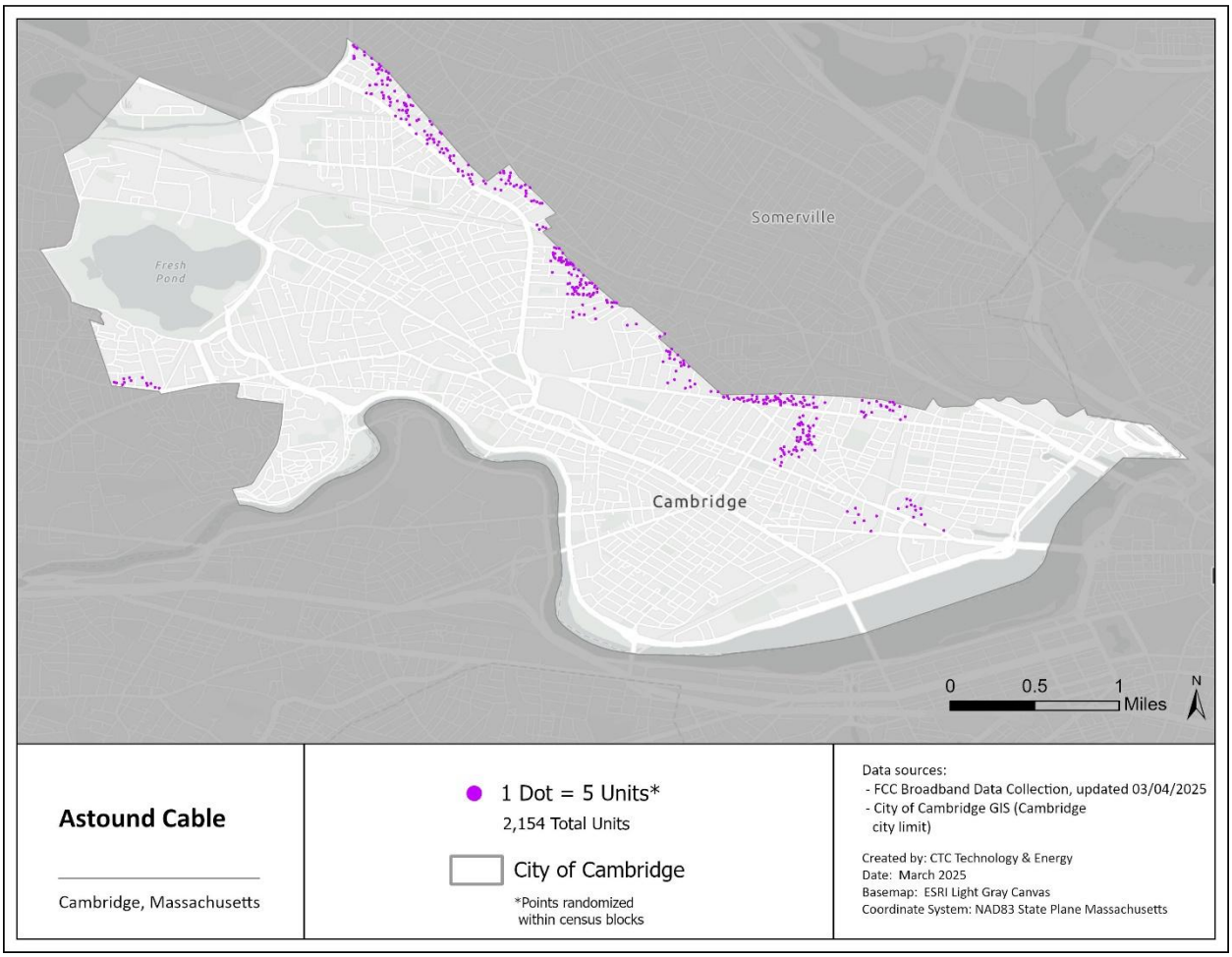
Figure 1: Locations with access to only one wireline provider



4.1.1 Cable service

Cambridge has two cable providers: Comcast and Astound. While Comcast serves all 63,624 residential units within City limits, Astound serves and provides a competitive option in 2,154 of those residential units. Astound's coverage area in Cambridge is primarily located along the Somerville line. Figure 2 shows Astound's service coverage in the city.

Figure 2: Astound service coverage in Cambridge



4.1.2 Fiber service

The City of Cambridge has a growing fiber presence by Comcast Xfinity, Verizon Fios, and Starry. In total, there are 53 locations in Cambridge that receive fiber services, 13 of which receive Comcast, 25 that receive Verizon, and 15 that receive Starry fiber. Although location counts are low, these providers serve 1,551, 2,725, and 1,499 residenital units respectively, which indicates that each provider is targeting their fiber deployment in large multi dwelling unit (MDU) buildings across the City. Table 9 show all residential locations that are served by fiber and what provider serves that address, and Figure 3 maps these locations.

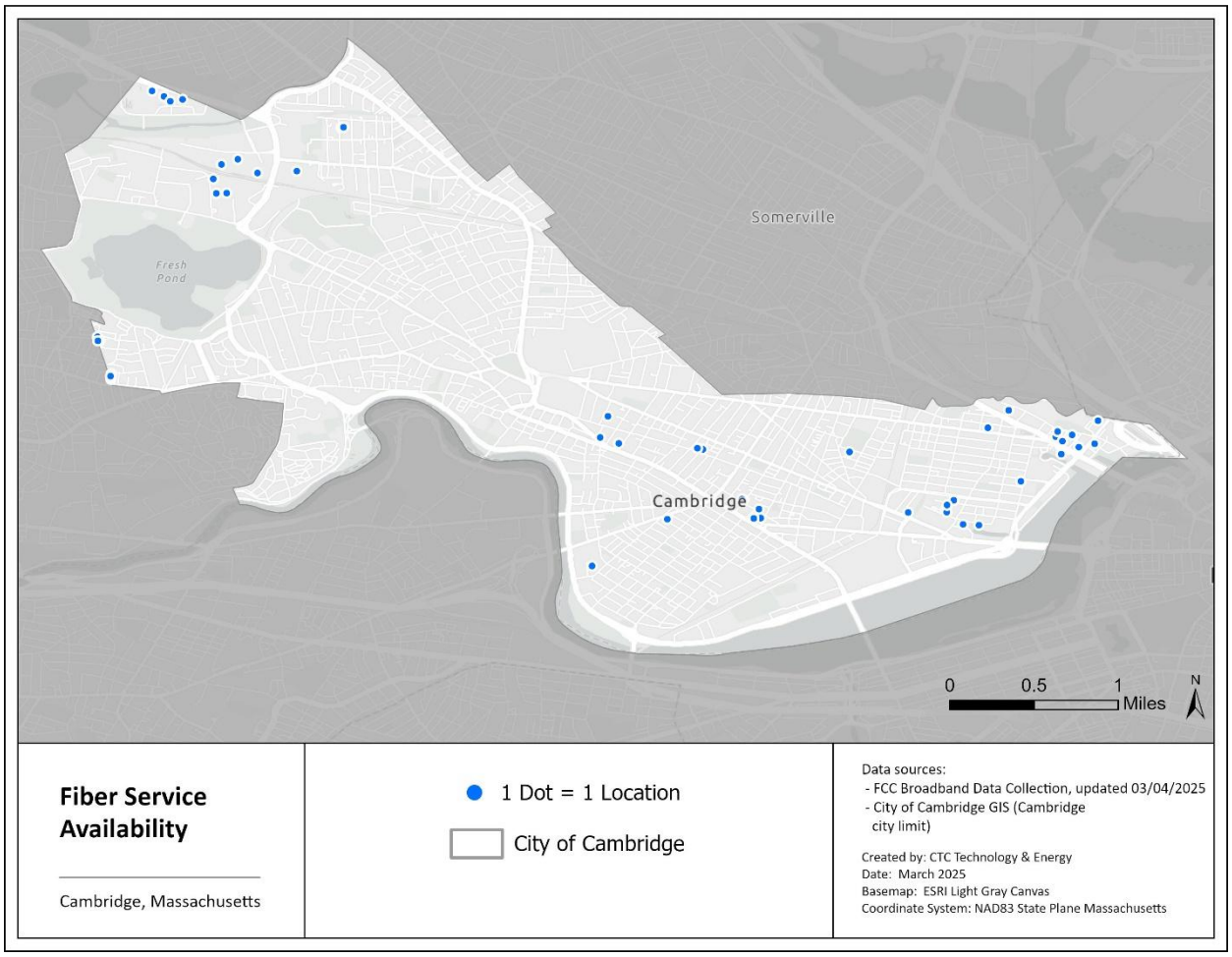
Table 9: List of all locations in Cambridge with fiber services

Locations in Cambridge with fiber services	Fiber provider at location
26 YORK ST	Starry
9 ELLERY ST	Starry

182 BINNEY ST	Starry
4 CANAL PARK	Starry
10 MUSEUM WAY	Starry
157 PLEASANT ST BLDG 2	Starry
47 COTTAGE ST	Starry
47 BISHOP RICHARD ALLEN DR	Starry
118 JACKSON ST	Starry
115 JACKSON ST	Starry
51 NORFOLK ST	Starry
77 BISHOP RICHARD ALLEN DR	Starry
364 RINDGE AVE	Starry
1105 MASSACHUSETTS AVE	Starry
22 WATER ST	Starry
113 1ST ST	Verizon
1 EARHART ST	Verizon
1 LEIGHTON ST	Verizon
450 WATER ST	Verizon
15 FAIRVIEW AVE	Verizon
10 WARE ST	Verizon
350 3RD ST	Verizon
350 KENDALL ST	Verizon
8 FAIRVIEW AVE	Verizon
10 FAIRVIEW AVE	Verizon
105 BROADWAY	Verizon
53 WHEELER ST	Verizon
90 FAWCETT ST	Verizon
80 FAWCETT ST	Verizon
25 ERICSSON ST	Verizon
9 ERICSSON ST	Verizon
21 ERICSSON ST	Verizon
15 ERICSSON ST	Verizon
17 ERICSSON ST	Verizon
22 WATER ST	Verizon
1 EARHART ST	Verizon
303 3RD ST BLDG 2	Verizon
303 3RD ST	Verizon
201 CONCORD TPKE	Verizon
223 CONCORD TPKE	Verizon
3 GLASSWORKS AVE	Comcast Xfinity
32 WEST ST	Comcast Xfinity
295 HARVARD ST	Comcast Xfinity
2 LEIGHTON ST	Comcast Xfinity
9 COLUMBIA ST	Comcast Xfinity

413 MASSACHUSETTS AVE	Comcast Xfinity
50 CAMBRIDGEPARK DR	Comcast Xfinity
130 CAMBRIDGEPARK DR	Comcast Xfinity
68 GORE ST	Comcast Xfinity
195 CONCORD TPKE	Comcast Xfinity
201 CONCORD TPKE	Comcast Xfinity
90 ACORN PARK DR	Comcast Xfinity
80 CAMBRIDGEPARK DR	Comcast Xfinity

Figure 3: Fiber coverage by provider in Cambridge



4.1.3 Fixed wireless service

Residents have the option to subscribe to fixed wireless services from Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T, and Starry. These are known as "licensed fixed wireless" or LFW services because they use licensed spectrum under the exclusive control of the respective companies. In the case of Verizon, T-Mobile, and AT&T, these are known as "5G Home Internet" and are an add-on to the more common mobile services from those companies. The FCC notes that mobile wireless providers have been making these offerings an increasingly attractive alternative to services such as Comcast, given the more

competitive pricing.[9] Yet these remain a complement to, and not a full replacement of, cable and fiber services. Providers can throttle or reduce capacity in favor of mobile voice and data traffic during times of congestion. And the delivered speeds can vary greatly depending on distance from the wireless equipment or interferences in the line of sight in the environment. Starry is a different case in that it is not a mobile provider; its business model is to place wireless transmitters and receivers on building rooftops and then serve those buildings using in- building wiring.

(Another fixed wireless provider, NetBlazr, seems to have ceased service in recent years. In CTC's 2022 report, NetBlazr was expanding its service across Cambridge, offering fixed-wireless service to some buildings where they could get permission to install rooftop receivers and establish a line-of-sight from their transmitters. As of March 2025, Netblazr does not appear in National Broadband Map data as a licensed or unlicensed fixed wireless network and is therefore not included in this report.)

Figure 4 shows reported fixed wireless coverage levels by available speed and includes data from all four providers; however, this is self-reported data from the companies and likely significantly overstates what is reliably available. The quality of the coverage will significantly vary depending on how far away the location is from the equipment or whether there are barriers that could block or weaken a signal, such as trees and buildings. Many premises may not receive the reported level of service on a consistent basis.

With that said, FCC data shows that approximately 11,068 (or 92 percent of) locations in Cambridge—and 60,395 (or 95 percent of) residential units—are served by licensed fixed wireless. Of these**,** 49,706 units (or 78 percent) of locations are available at served speeds at or above 100/20 Mbps, 595 (or 1 percent of) locations are underserved receiving speeds above 25/3 Mbps and below 100/20 Mbps, and 10,094 (or 16 percent of) locations receiving unserved speeds at or below 25/3 Mbps.

In these figures, the dots represent five locations and are positioned randomly within census blocks. (The dots do not represent specific addresses.)

[9] "2020 Broadband Deployment Report," FCC, https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-20-50A1.pdf.

Figure 4: Fixed wireless coverage by speed in Cambridge[10]

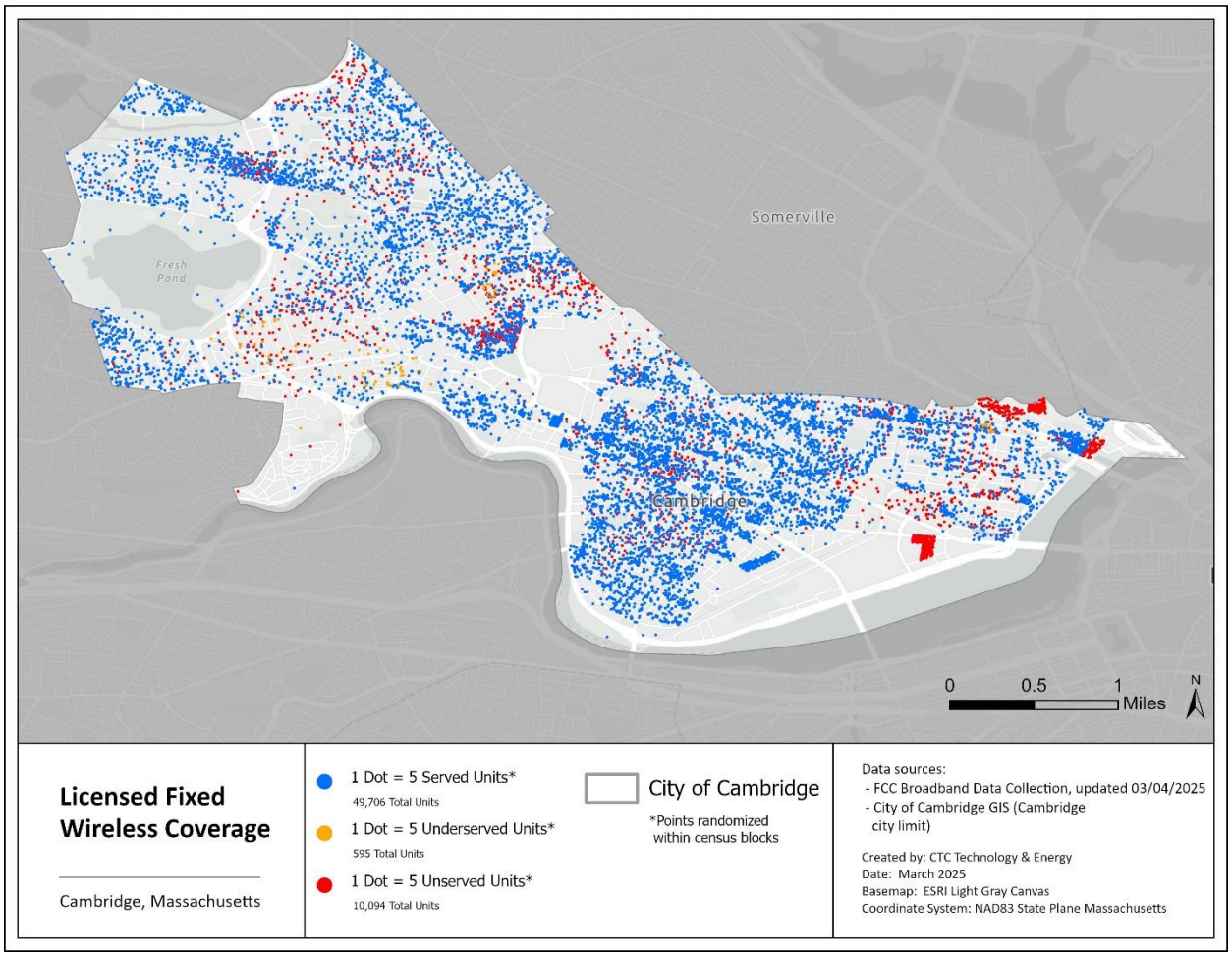


Figure 5 shows Starry's fixed wireless coverage across Cambridge. In total, Starry serves 3,434 locations and 34,536 units in the City—all of which are served by speeds at or above 10/20Mbps.

Starry has also made a concerted effort to offer its fixed wireless services in Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) developments, partnering with CHA in 2022 to offer its low-cost program "Starry Connect" at more than 2,630 public housing units in the City. See Table 14 for more details on Starry Connect and other service offerings.

[10] As reported to the FCC using the federal Broadband Data Collection rules, gaps in speed ranges reflect no reported locations at speeds between the ranges.

Figure 5: Starry's licensed fixed wireless coverage area in Cambridge

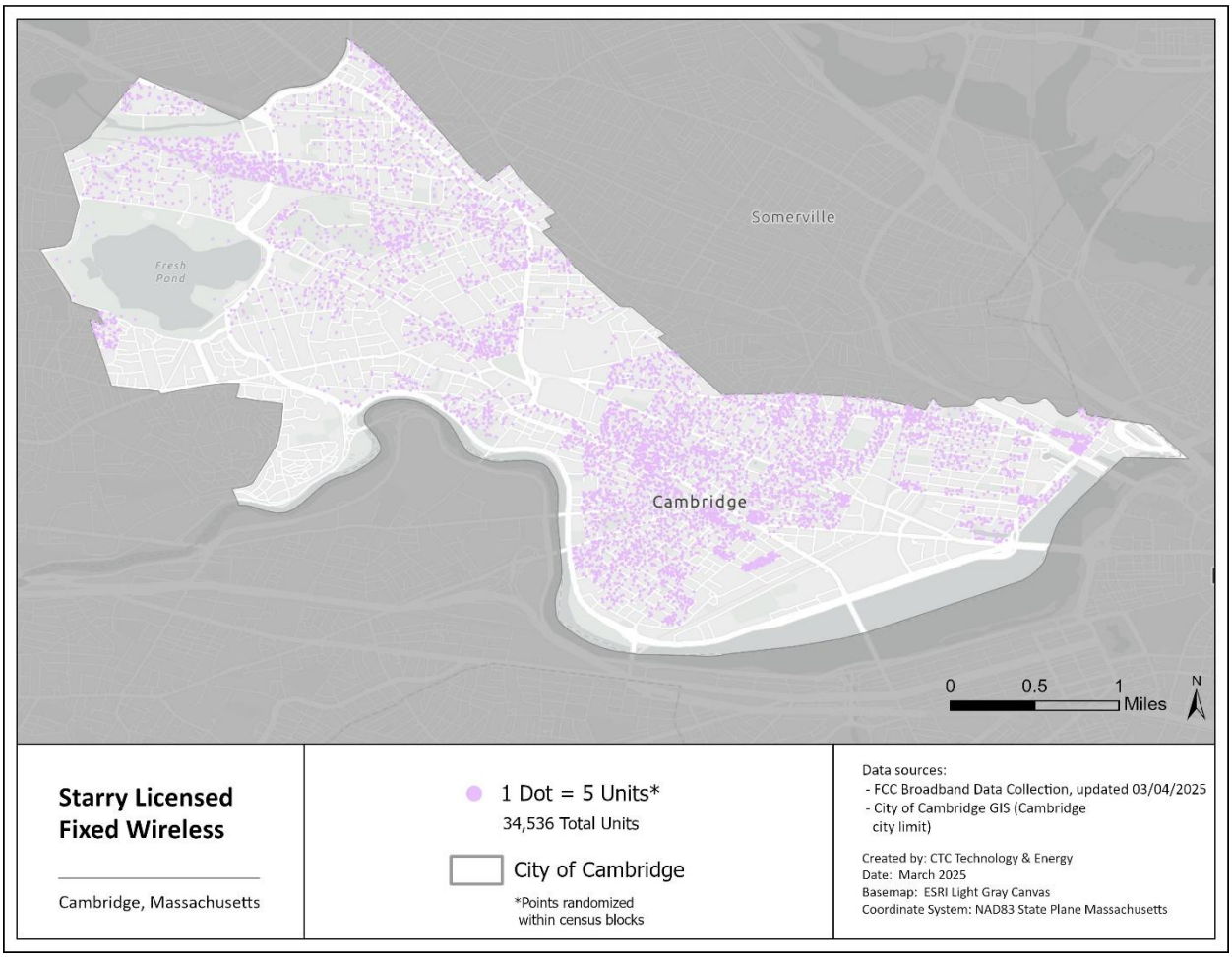


Figure 6 shows Verizon's fixed wireless coverage across Cambridge. Verizon 5G services reach 4,947 locations and 29,968 units in the City. When looking at served speeds at or above 100/20 Mbps, Verizon's fixed wireless services serves approximately 4,581 (or 38 percent of all) residential locations, and 28,650 (or 45 percent of all) residential units in Cambridge.

Figure 6: Verizon's fixed wireless coverage in Cambridge

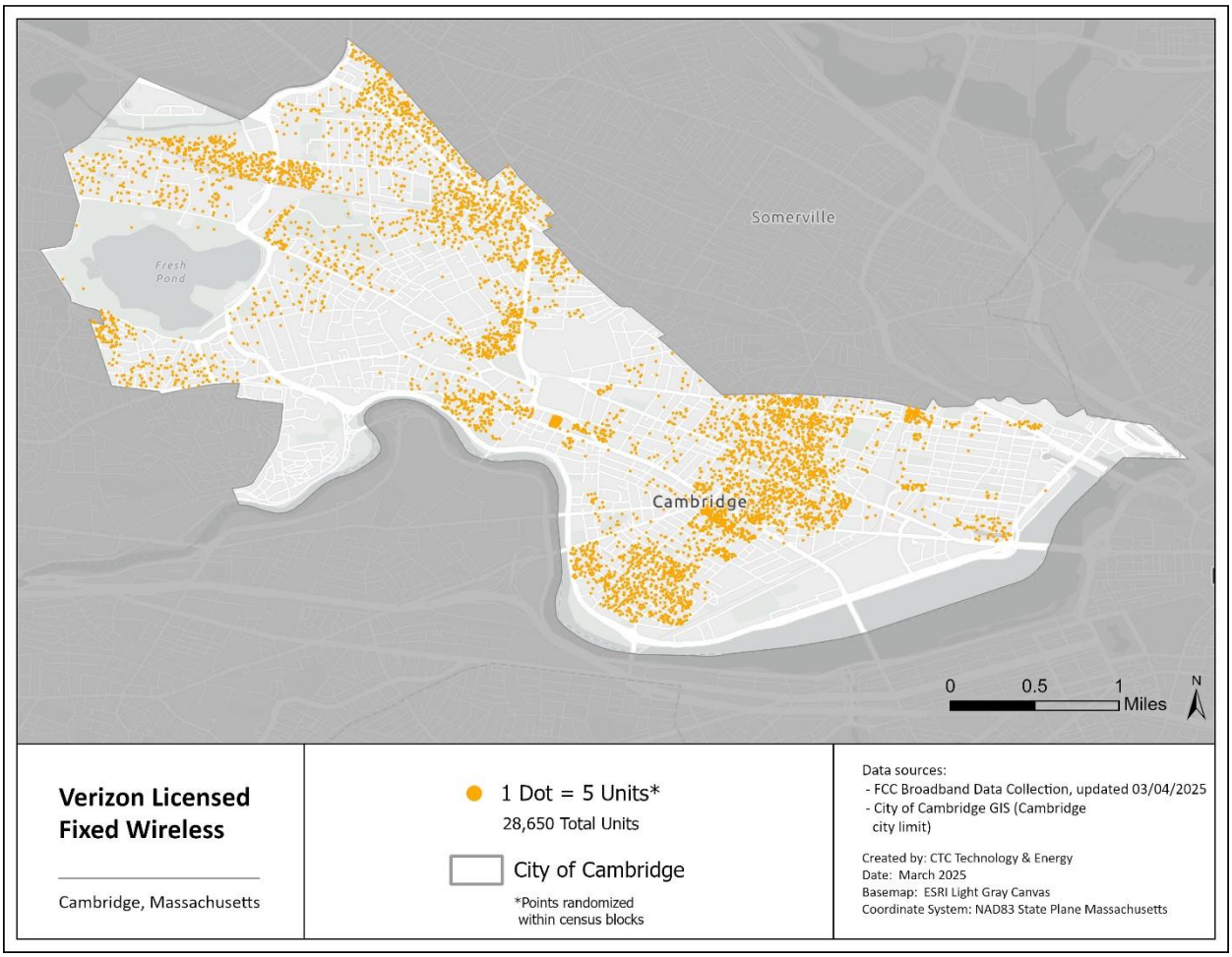


Figure 7 shows T-Mobile's fixed wireless coverage across Cambridge. In total, T-Mobile's licensed fixed wireless services reach 8,741 locations and 44,297 units in the City. However, when looking at served speeds at or above 100/20 Mbps those number drop significantly. The number of locations and units served by T-Mobile at speeds at or above 100/20Mbps is 4,037 (or 34 percent), and 19,886 (or 31 percent) respectively.

Figure 7: T-Mobile's fixed wireless coverage in Cambridge

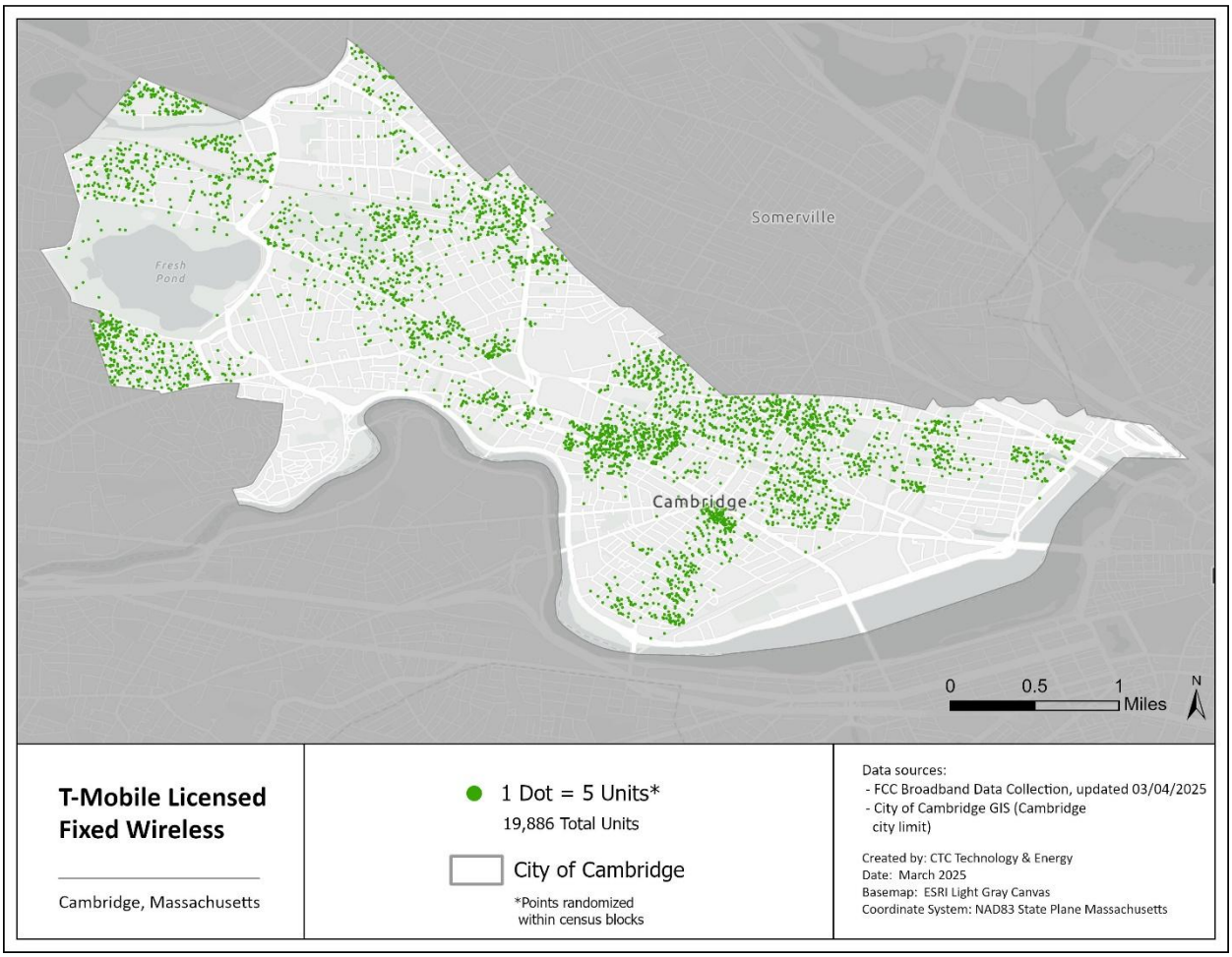
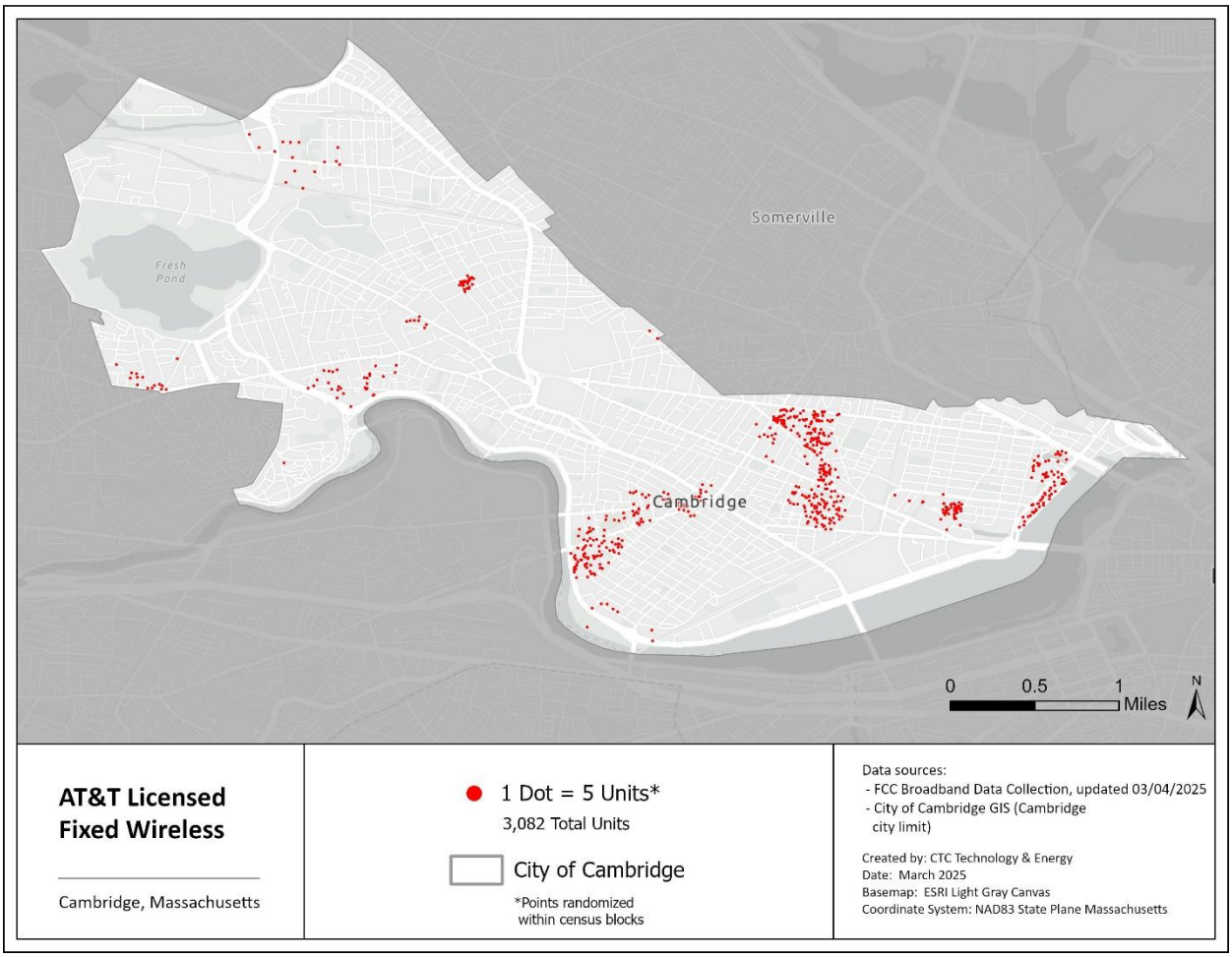


Figure 7 shows AT&T's fixed wireless coverage across Cambridge. In total, AT&T's licensed fixed wireless services reach 5,578 (or 46 percent of all) locations and 29,724 (or 47 percent of all) units in the City. When looking at served speeds at or above 100/20 Mbps, AT&T's fixed wireless services serves approximately 516 (or 4 percent of all) residential locations, and 3,082 (or 5 percent of all) residential units in Cambridge.

Figure 8: AT&T's fixed wireless coverage in Cambridge



4.2 Approximately 6.5 percent of Cambridge households rely on mobile services alone

As noted later in Section 4.4.1, roughly 6.5 percent of Cambridge households reported in the ACS survey that they are solely using a cellular internet service for broadband connectivity at home, which is lower than the state and national rates. Although Cambridge households rely less on their phones to access the internet in comparison to the state and nation as a whole, it is likely that some Cambridge consumers find current costs of home internet unaffordable in the City, making some choose to rely on cellphone data plans or external hotspots to access the internet.

The FCC has repeatedly noted that mobile service is an inadequate substitute for fixed broadband services;[11] however, an estimated 11.3 percent of U.S. adults continue to rely on their smartphones

[11] E.g., 2020 Broadband Deployment Report, para 11.

and mobile data plans as the only source of home broadband connectivity[12] – a trend that is more common among young adults and low-income households[13].

When the ACP was available, only 26.9 percent of eligible households enrolled in the program

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which once provided a $30 monthly subsidy toward some home internet subscriptions, presented an opportunity for many low-income residents to purchase broadband more affordably. Although this program has now ended, its rate of enrollment in the City provides an indication of the need for (and enrollment support in) other low-cost internet options for Cambridge residents.

FCC data reported by zip code showed that 4,473 households in Cambridge were receiving the ACP subsidy, which is 26.9 percent of the estimated 16,640 eligible households in the City.[14] This rate of enrollment is low, with just over one in every four households taking advantage of the ACP by the end of the program. Additionally, the rate in which those enrolled in the program only increased by nearly 9 percentage points over the ACP's final year. This may reflect limited efforts to promote the program and increase enrollment. This data is shown in Table 10.

Residents that were once enrolled in the ACP, or those who avoided enrollment due to challenges with the application process, may need continued help enrolling in low-cost programs offered by the City's broadband providers, as described in the next subsection. While outreach may help a number of residents enroll in local providers low-cost programs, there will also be some that are uninterested or unwilling. This may be the case if a household cannot afford internet even if it receives a low-cost subscription to service, feels no need to use the internet, receives satisfactory service from a cellular provider, or receives free internet access through a communal source.

Table 10: ACP enrollment in Cambridge[15]

Date	Eligible households enrolled	Enrolled Households	Eligible Households	Unenrolled eligible households
January 2023	**18.2%**	3,032	16,640	13,608

[12] "American Community Survey," US Census, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S2801?q=internet&g=010XX00US_040XX00US25_060XX00US2500562430,2500946365.
[13] Andrew Perrin, "Mobile Technology and Home Broadband 2021."
[14] Estimates of total number of eligible households are calculated by The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society through its ACP tool, using 2021 American Community Survey reported data on household income, food stamp recipiency, Medicaid recipiency, supplemental security income, and public assistance income. "The Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment Performance Tool," Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, https://www.benton.org/acp_tool.
[15] "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," USAC, data as of June, 2025, https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/.

June 2023	**22.2%**	3,699	16,640	12,941
End of program	**26.9%**	4,473	16,640	12,167

4.3 Cambridge residents can obtain relatively affordable service offerings from providers, but initial prices may rise significantly after promotional periods end

All broadband providers in Cambridge participated in the now-expired ACP, except for T-Mobile 5G internet. Although the ACP is now gone, Comcast, Verizon, Starry, and Astound still offer their own low-cost programs to eligible low-income households. People who were previously enrolled in ACP may need assistance navigating and pursuing these low-cost internet service options, which are included in the following subsections.

4.3.1 Service offerings and prices by internet service provider

4.3.1.1 Comcast service offerings and prices

Table 11 shows Comcast's service offerings in Cambridge. Options that had been free to those enrolled with ACP and/or are designed for eligible low-income residents are shaded green.

Comcast offers service to all residential units in Cambridge. While Comcast does offer promotional pricing for the first year of service, the cost of a subscription increases significantly after 12 months for all subscription packages except Internet Essentials and Internet Essentials Plus.

In 2022, Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) partnered with Comcast to purchase hundreds of pre-paid vouchers for CPS households, which provided one-year subscriptions to Comcast's Internet Essentials program. This program was in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and was available to any household with a student that qualified for the Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program and lived in a household that had not received Comcast internet service in the last 90 days prior to enrollment. This voucher program is no longer being offered by CPS. At the time of this effort, Internet Essentials offered a speed of 50/10 Mbps and was priced at $9.95 per month. Recently, Comcast increased its service speed to 75/10 Mbps service and its monthly price to $14.95.

Table 11: Comcast (Xfinity) advertised service plans in Cambridge (low-income programs in green)

Package	Internet speed	Monthly cost	Terms
Internet Essentials	50/10 Mbps	$14.95	Available to eligible low-income customers following an application process and subject to certain conditions. Internet Essentials also includes added benefits; customers can purchase a refurbished computer for $149.99.
Internet Essentials Plus	100/20 Mbps	$29.95	Available to eligible low-income customers following an application process and subject to certain conditions. Internet Essentials also includes added benefits; customers can purchase a refurbished computer for $149.99.

Package	Internet speed	Monthly cost	Terms
NOW Internet 100	100/10 Mbps	$30	Requires self-installation and activation of refurbished gateway. Payments must be made online only via credit, debit, or prepaid card. Autopay and paperless billing required. Unlimited data. Pricing subject to change.
NOW Internet 200	200/10 Mbps	$45	Requires self-installation and activation of refurbished gateway. Payments must be made online only via credit, debit, or prepaid card. Autopay and paperless billing required. Unlimited data. Pricing subject to change.
Connect More	400/40 Mbps	$40 for the first 24 months, then $93/mo.	Pricing guaranteed for 12 months. No term contract. Can apply $10/mo. automatic payments and paperless billing discount. Optional modem or gateway lease for $15/mo. Professional installation fee of $100.
Fast	600/40 Mbps	$55 for the first 12 months, then $108/mo.	Pricing guaranteed for 12 months. No term contract. Can apply $10/mo. automatic payments and paperless billing discount. Optional modem or gateway lease for $15/mo. Professional installation fee of $100.
Gigabit	1100/40 Mbps	$70 for the first 12 months, then $118 /mo.	Pricing guaranteed for 12 months. No term contract. Can apply $10/mo. automatic payments and paperless billing discount. Optional modem or gateway lease for $15/mo. Professional installation fee of $100.
Gigabit Extra	1300/40 Mbps	$85 for the first 12 months, then $123/mo.	Pricing guaranteed for 12 months. No term contract. Can apply $10/mo. automatic payments and paperless billing discount. Optional modem or gateway lease for $15/mo. Professional installation fee of $100.
Gigabit X2	2,000/300 Mbps	$105 for the first 12 months, then $123 /mo.	Pricing guaranteed for 12 months. No term contract. Includes $10/mo. automatic payments and paperless billing discount with a stored bank account. Discount is $5/mo. when using a stored credit card. Professional installation fee of $100.

4.3.1.2 Astound service offerings and prices

Astound offers three main plans as shown in Table 12. There is a large difference in price between their discounted rate and their non-promotional rate. Astound customers who sign up for their plans are offered the promotional rate for the first year of service, however, after this first year their rates will increase by nearly $100 per month.

Table 12: Astound's advertised service plans in Boston

Internet speed	Monthly Cost	

150/20 Mbps (Internet First 50)	$9.95	Eligible households must be: • A participant in public assistance programs like the National School Lunch Program, housing assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, and others • Students under federal assisted aid programs can qualify for Internet First by supplying an award letter. • Must not be subscribed to Astound services within sixty (60) day period immediately prior to applying
150/20 Mbps (Internet First 150)	$19.95	
300/20 Mbps	Discounted price $25.99/mo.; regular price $143.99/mo.	Discounted prices are available for the first two years of service. One time activation fee of $14.99. Price does not include Network Access & Maintenance Fee of up to $16.93/month, subject to change. $99.95 installation fee.
600/20 Mbps	Discounted price $35.99/mo.; regular price $148.99/mo.	Discounted prices are available for the first two years of service. One time activation fee of $14.99. Price does not include Network Access & Maintenance Fee of up to $16.93/month, subject to change. $99.95 installation fee.
940/20 Mbps	Discounted price $45.99/mo.; regular price $153.99/mo.	Discounted prices are available for the first two years of service. One time activation fee of $14.99. Price does not include Network Access & Maintenance Fee of up to $16.93/month, subject to change. $99.95 installation fee.
1500/50 Mbps	Discounted price $55.99/mo.; regular price $158.99/mo.	Discounted prices are available for the first two years of service. One time activation fee of $14.99. Price does not include Network Access & Maintenance Fee of up to $16.93/month, subject to change. $99.95 installation fee.

4.3.1.3 Verizon service offerings and prices

Verizon Fios coverage in Cambridge is limited, with only 25 locations, which include 2,725 residential units, having access to Fios services as of March 2025. However, service coverage is slowly growing across the City.

Table 13 outlines Verizon Wireless and Fios service plans. Verizon does not require users to subscribe to Verizon Wireless mobile plans to get these home internet options, but significant discounts are only available if the fixed wireless service is bundled with a Verizon mobile plan and handset. In addition to its three tiers of Fios service, Verizon offers a reduced cost program for any new or existing Verizon customer on any fixed wireless or fiber residential internet plan. Eligibility for Verizon Forward is limited to those that participate in Lifeline (income is 135% or less than the Federal Poverty Guidelines or uses SNAP or Medicaid), participates in Special Supplemental

Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or who received a Federal Pell Grant within a year prior to application.[16]

Table 13: Verizon advertised service plans

Package	Internet speed	Monthly cost	Notes
5G Home Internet (Verizon Forward Program)[17]	Can be applied to any Fios package	$30 discount to regular price of subscriptions	Eligibility includes Federal Pell Grant recipient within the last year, qualify for Lifeline (through participation in SNAP, Medicaid, or have income be 135% below FPL), and WIC. Wireless router included; available to existing customers. Can use Lifeline discount if applicable.
5G Home Internet	50/5 to 85/10 Mbps	Discounted price $35/mo.; regular price $60/mo.	$10 discount available with Autopay and paperless billing. $15 discount when bundled with postpaid Verizon cellular plan and 5G phone. Pricing guaranteed for 24 months. Wireless Router included. Pricing for wireless plan and phone not included here.
5G Home Internet Plus	85/10 to 250/20 Mbps	Discounted price $45/mo.; regular price $80/mo.	$10 discount available with Autopay and paperless billing. $25 discount when bundled with postpaid Verizon cellular plan and 5G phone. Pricing guaranteed for 36 mos. Wireless Router included. Pricing for wireless plan and phone not included here.
Fios 300	300/300 Mbps	$59.99	Pricing guaranteed for 24 months. No term contract. Router included. $99 for professional installation. $10 off monthly bill with auto pay & paper-free billing. Unlimited data.
Fios 500	500/500 Mbps	$84.99	Pricing guaranteed for 36 months. No term contract. Router included. $99 for professional installation. $10 off monthly bill with auto pay & paper-free billing. Unlimited data.
Fios 1 Gig	940/880 Mbps	$99.99	Pricing guaranteed for 48 months. No term contract. Router included. $99 for professional installation. $10 off monthly bill with auto pay & paper-free billing. Unlimited data.

4.3.1.4 Starry service offerings and prices

Starry offers several tiers of service, including symmetrical service at its lowest speed tiers. Table 14 summarizes these offerings.

Starry offers a low-cost subscription called Starry Connect, which offers 30/30 Mbps service and is only available to public and affordable housing developments. The company defines such developments as ones where at least 90 percent of the units are owned by a public housing authority,

[16] "Verizon Forward," Verizon, https://www.verizon.com/discounts/verizon-forward/.
[17] "Verizon Forward," Verizon, https://www.verizon.com/discounts/verizon-forward/.

are subsidized by federal, state, or local dollars, or are income-restricted or rent-regulated/stabilized under a local or state or federal affordability program or officially classified as workforce housing by a local housing agency.

Starry filed for bankruptcy in 2023 but has successfully exited its Chapter 11 Restructuring as of August of that year. During this restructuring process, Starry continued to operate as normal and remains in operation across its five markets today in Cambridge, Boston, New York, DC, Denver, and Los Angeles.

In December 2024, the Cambridge Housing Authority announced a newly approved partnership with Starry to deploy fiber services at Manning Apartments and Newtowne Court developments, which have more than 200 units at each property. Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), this new effort is meant to build on the existing partnership that Starry has with the housing authority, by providing an affordable fiber option for its tenants, many of which are currently subscribed to Starry's fixed wireless service, Starry Connect. Any tenants that are interested in switching from Starry Connect to its fiber services will be able to do so at no extra cost or price increase. For new subscribers to Starry services, Manning and Newtowne Court tenants will pay no more than $35 per month for fiber.[18]

Table 14: Starry's advertised home internet service plans in Cambridge

Service	Advertised download/upload speeds	Monthly price (non-promotional)	Notes
Connect	30/30 Mbps	$15.00	Only available in Starry Connect Communities (public and affordable housing)
Starry 200	200/50 Mbps	$45.00	Unlimited data, no installation fees, no early termination fee, $9 modem rental.
Starry 300	300/50 Mbps	$65.00	Unlimited data, no installation fees, no early termination fee, modem included.
Starry 500	500/50 Mbps	$75.00	Unlimited data, no installation fees, no early termination fee, modem included.
Starry 800	800/50 Mbps	$85.00	Unlimited data, no installation fees, no early termination fee, modem included.
Starry 500*	500/250 Mbps	$70.00	Promotion for 1st year - $60 per month *250 Mbps upload availability dependent on site capacity (i.e., internal building infrastructure)

[18] "Municipal broadband takes a step in Cambridge with fiber-optic test at Manning, Newtown Court," Cambridge Day, https://www.cambridgeday.com/2024/12/17/municipal-broadband-takes-a-step-in-cambridge-with-fiber-optic-test-at-manning-newtown-court/

Service	Advertised download/upload speeds	Monthly price (non-promotional)	Notes
Starry 800	800/250 Mbps	$80	Promotion for 1st year - $70 per month
Starry Gigabit	1Gig / 50 Mbps	$85	Promotion for 1st year - $75 per month
Starry Gigabit*	1 Gig / 250 Mbps	$85	Promotion for 1st year - $75 per month *250 Mbps upload speed availability dependent on site capacity (i.e., internal building infrastructure)

4.3.1.5 T-Mobile service offerings and prices

Table 15 shows pricing for T-Mobile's 5G Rely Home Internet service plan at $55/month for 5G Home Internet-only service. T-Mobile will provide 5G Home Internet at $30/month if it is bundled with a cellular plan that costs between $60 and $100 per month for a single line.[19] T-Mobile prices its 5G Home Internet plans regardless of provided speeds; as noted above, Table 7 shows how these speeds vary widely.

T-Mobile did not participate in ACP directly for either its 5G Home Internet or mobile data plans.[20] Only T-Mobile affiliates – Metro by T-Mobile and Assurance Wireless – participated in ACP and offered discounts on mobile data plans. Cambridge residents that qualified for ACP were required to sign up with prepaid provider Metro by T-Mobile for 5G Home Internet and could apply the ACP discount to the bundled 5G prepaid mobile plan.[21]

Table 15: T-Mobile fixed wireless advertised service plans in Cambridge

Package	Internet speed	Monthly Cost	Notes
Rely Home Internet	87-318 Mbps Download/ 14-46 Mbps Upload	$55 ($35 when bundled with a phone line)	Pricing does not include a $5/mo. autopay discount. Includes unlimited data and gateway router at no charge. One-time $35 device connection charge at sign up.

[19] See T-Mobile Home Internet webpage, https://www.t-mobile.com/home-internet/plans?INTNAV=tNav%3APlans%3AHomeInternetPlan (accessed January 19, 2023).
[20] See T-Mobile Newsroom, February 8, 2023 Press Release, "Taking part in ACP- through both Assurance Wireless and Metro by T-Mobile – is just one way that T-Mobile demonstrates its commitment to bringing wireless access to everyone." https://www.t-mobile.com/news/community/t-mobile-expands-acp; See also, T-Mobile website, "T-Mobile is proud to participate in the new federal Affordable Connectivity Program, which offers internet service payment assistance to eligible households. We're making the program available through Metro by T-Mobile and Assurance Wireless." https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/affordable-connectivity-program?INTNAV=fNav%3AAdditionalSupport%3AAffordableConnectivityProgram.
[21] Metro by T-Mobile 5G Home Internet, https://www.metrobyt-mobile.com/plans/home-internet (accessed January 19, 2023).

Amplified Home Internet	133-415 Mbps Download/ 12-55 Mbps Upload	$65 ($45 when bundled with a phone line)	Pricing does not include a $5/mo. autopay discount. Includes unlimited data and gateway router at no charge. One-time $35 device connection charge at sign up.
All-in Home Internet	133-415 Mbps Download/ 12-55 Mbps Upload	$75 ($55 when bundled with a phone line)	Pricing does not include a $5/mo. autopay discount. Includes unlimited data and gateway router at no charge. One-time $35 device connection charge at sign up. *Includes Wi-Fi mesh access point and 24/7 interactive video support for connected devices. Also includes a Hulu and Paramount+ subscription (may be discontinued at any time).

4.3.1.6 AT&T service offerings and prices

Figure 9 shows pricing for Internet Air—AT&T's new residential fixed wireless service at $60 per month. Like T-Mobile, AT&T has a fixed price for this plan regardless of actual and varied speeds received by individual households. AT&T states that it may temporarily slow data speeds if networks are busy. The company claims easy self-installation of Internet Air in under 15 minutes. AT&T Internet Air was eligible for the ACP.[22]

Figure 9: AT&T's advertised service plans in Cambridge

Package	Internet speed	Monthly Cost	
Internet Air	75/10 Mbps*	$60 mo.	Can receive $5/mo. Discount with autopay available after two bill cycles. No price increase at 12 months, no overage fees, no annual contract. Self-setup at no cost. Number of extenders determined at the sole discretion of AT&T.

4.4 American Community Survey data reveal that low-income Cambridge residents face gaps in subscriptions and device ownership

Data on internet adoption and device ownership is important to fully understanding the nature of the digital divide in Cambridge. While high-speed broadband services are available throughout Cambridge, many households do not subscribe or own devices necessary to fully use these services—and those lacking subscriptions or devices are largely lower-income households.

The ACS is conducted yearly and nationwide by the U.S. Census Bureau. However, it is important to note a five-year sampling period (2018 – 2023)[23] that may not accurately illustrate most recent trends.

[22] "Say Hello to AT&T Internet Air! Plug-And-Play Home Wi-Fi Installed in Less Than 15 Minutes," AT&T, https://about.att.com/blogs/2023/internet-air.html.

[23] The U.S. Census Bureau does not release data for communities the size of Cambridge for sampling periods less than five years in order to keep margins of error to a minimum.

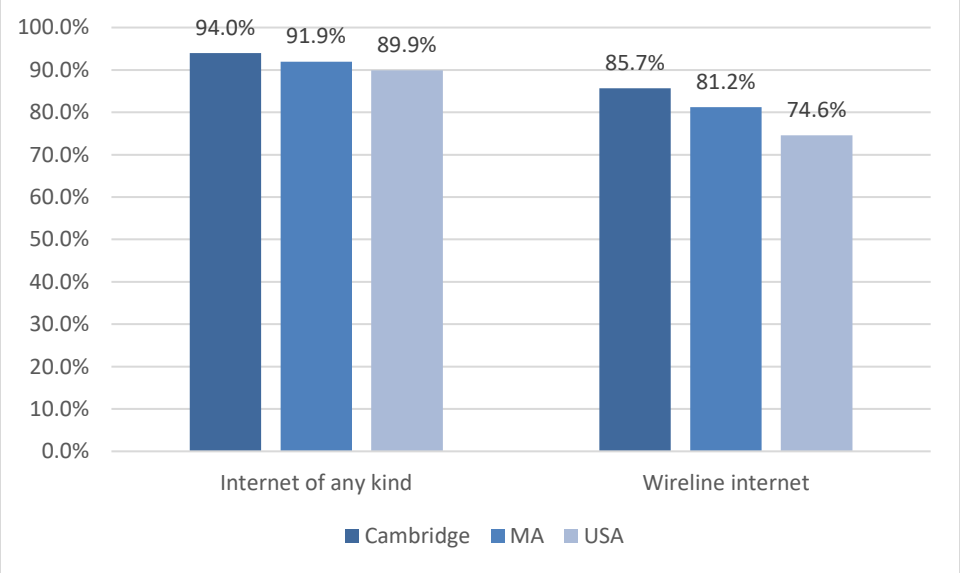
A preliminary analysis of the ACS data found in Cambridge:

- 14.3 percent of households lack a wireline internet subscription.
- 63.9 percent of households that lack a wireline internet subscription also earn less than $75,000 annually.
- 7.9 percent of households do not own a desktop or laptop computer device.

4.4.1 Cambridge leads state and national adoption rates for both wireless and wireline internet subscriptions, but low-income residents face significant gaps

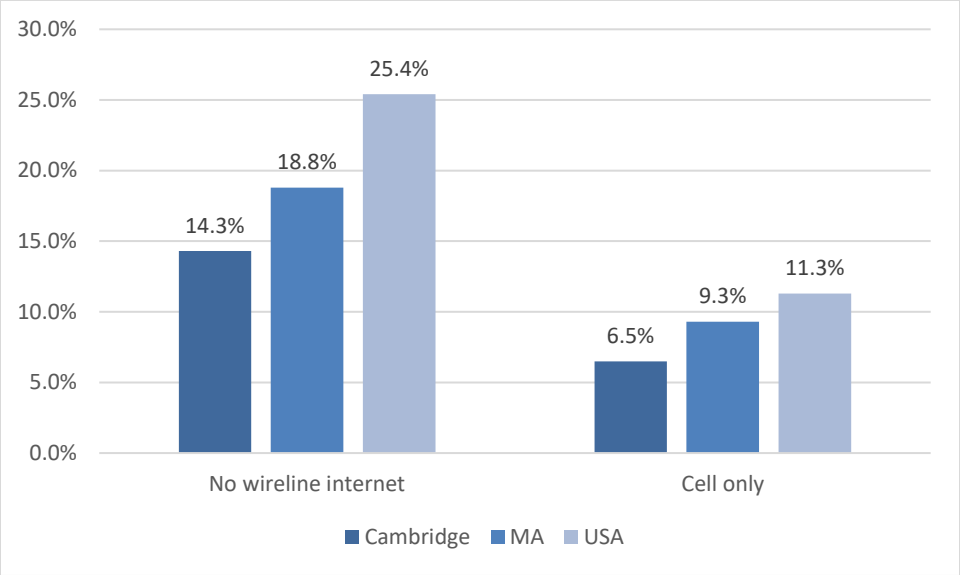
According to ACS data, 94 percent of Cambridge households subscribe to residential internet services. Most of these subscriptions, 85.7 percent, are via wireline technology (cable or fiber). The City leads the state and nation in subscriptions to internet of any kind and in wireline services, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 10: Internet subscription rates in Cambridge compared to the state and nation



An estimated 7,090 (or 14.3 percent of) households lack residential wireline internet service, which is less than the state and national rates of 18.8 percent and 25.4 percent respectively (Figure 11). Of those households without wireline service, roughly 3,200 (or 6.5 percent) are solely using a cellular internet service from their homes, which is also less than state and national rates. Lower income households may use their cellular connection and smartphone in lieu of a more robust connection. However, reliance on cellular service will not enable all members of a household to participate in the digital economy, because of data caps and the potential for the service to be throttled in times of mobile network congestion.

Figure 11: No access to wireline internet and mobile-only subscriptions compared to the state and nation

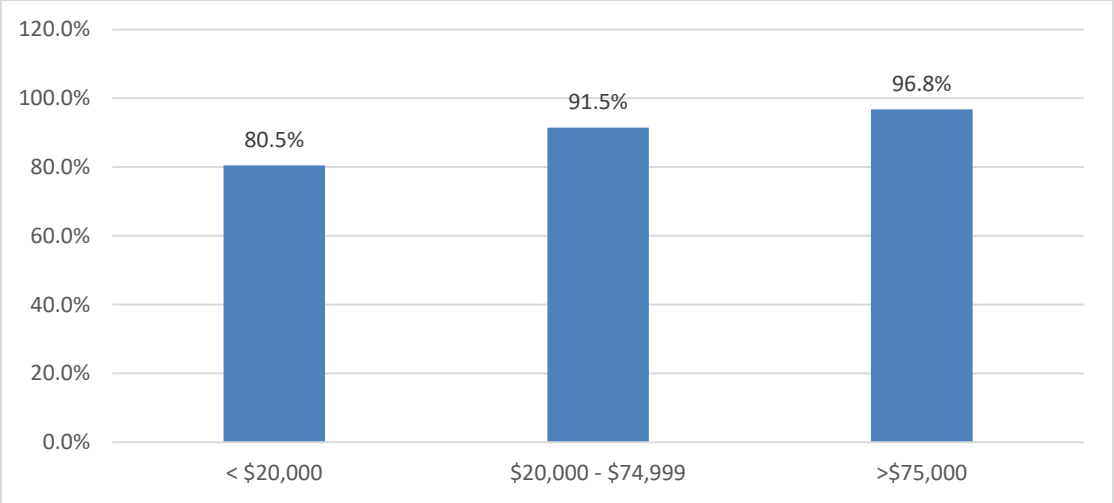


4.4.2 Most Cambridge households that lack wireline internet access earn less than $75,000 per year

In Cambridge, most of the households lacking an internet subscription are lower-income households. Whereas 96.8 percent of households making more than $75,000 subscribe to wireline internet services, only 91.5 percent of households making between $20,000 and $75,000, and 80.5 percent of those earning less than $20,000 do so.[24] After accounting for the total number of households across all three income brackets, an estimated 63.9 percent of (or 1,899 out of 2,969) households without an internet subscription earn less than $75,000 per year. Figure 12 shows subscription rates by income bracket.

[24] For both of these income brackets, some households are likely able to afford service yet choose not to purchase it because they simply are not interested. For this reason, a 100 percent subscription rate does not represent the ideal or goal rates for any given population.

Figure 12: Wireline internet subscription rates by income level



4.4.3 Cambridge leads both state and national rates in device (desktop/laptop, tablet, and smartphone) ownership rates

ACS data show that 97.9 percent of households in Cambridge own one or more computing devices, a figure that leads both the state and nation. Additionally, 92.1 percent of Cambridge residents own a desktop or laptop computer, which is approximately 9 percentage points higher than the state, and just over 12 percentage points higher than the national average. Cambridge residents also own smartphones and tablets at a higher rate than the state and nation. Access to affordable devices that meet a household's needs is a critical element of the effort to expand broadband access to any community. Looking across different types of devices, including desktop, laptop, smartphone, and tablet ownership, residents seem most likely to access the internet using a desktop, laptop, and smartphone (Figure 8).

Figure 13: Device ownership rates in Cambridge compared to the state and nation

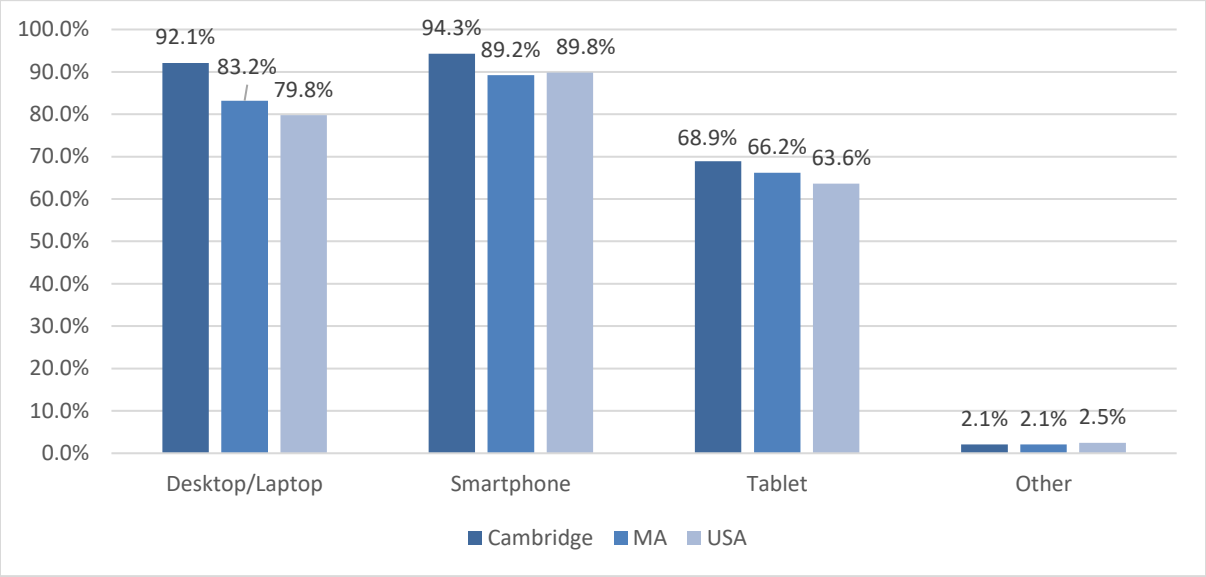
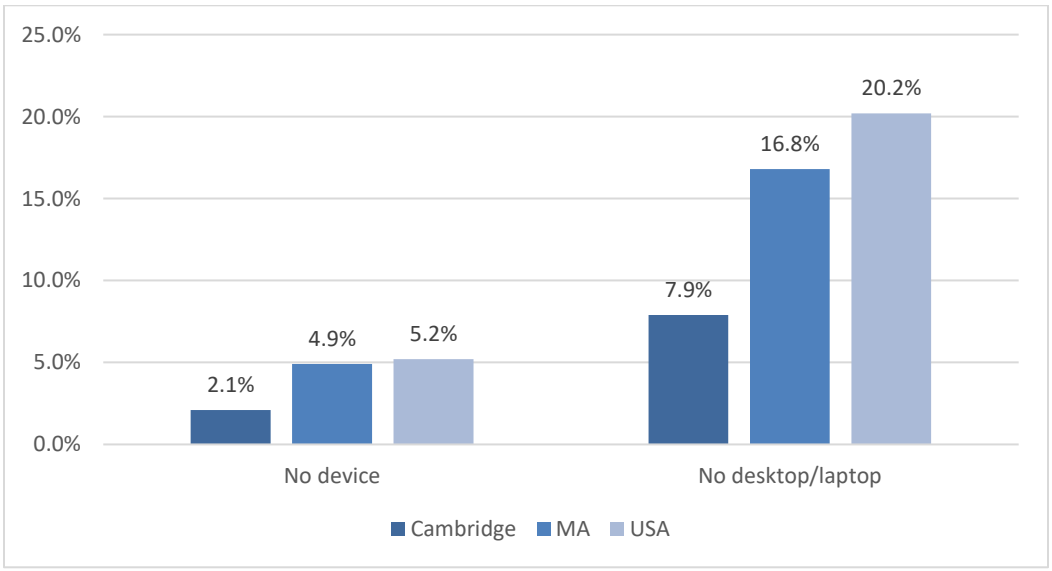


Figure 14 shows that 2.1 percent of (or 1,058) Cambridge households lack a device, which is significantly lower than both the state and national averages. Additionally, only 7.9 percent of (or 3,899) households in Cambridge do not have a laptop or desktop, which is significantly lower than the state (16.8 percent) and the nation (20.2 percent). Those without access to a laptop or desktop at home tend to rely on smartphones or tablets to access the internet, making it difficult for these residents to fully engage in the digital economy or successfully learn and work from home.

Figure 14: Lack of devices in Cambridge compared to state and national averages



Additional device barriers may exist even after device ownership numbers are improved. For example, for households with many individuals, a single desktop or laptop will likely not deliver sufficient capacity for all members of the household to meaningfully use the internet. Further,

ownership of a device is not sufficient to ensure full access to the benefits of broadband. Many households will require digital literacy training and access to technical support to maximize the benefits of these services.

5 Stakeholders report significant ongoing needs for digital navigator support for residents as well as devices and enrollment support

As part of this study, CTC met with key stakeholders identified by the city to document gaps they see in digital equity for Cambridge residents, their existing efforts to address these gaps, and the needs they identified. This section summarizes the reports and findings from these stakeholders. The next section summarizes the recommendations of this report.

5.1 Cambridge Digital Navigator Program Pilot

In August 2024, Cambridge entities began using the services of full-time staff members called digital navigators, funded by an MBI grant and ARPA funding through the city.[25] Six digital navigators are deployed with six organizations. The city's funding for the program ends in December 2025, with the MBI funding ending in June 2026. As part of this engagement, CTC met with the organizations using these services. This report section provides an overview of the program; other sections provide feedback from the organizations using the navigators.

The MBI grant funds three positions: Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) employs a digital navigator serving CCTV and a coordinator who supports the entire program in Cambridge; and Just a Start (JAS) employs a digital navigator. Through the MBI grant[26]

Through additional ARPA funding from the city, four more navigators are placed with Cambridge Public Library (CPL), Cambridge Public Schools (CPS), Homeowners' Rehab Inc. (HRI), and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). As of the writing of this report, the navigators stationed at CCTV and CPS have also begun to provide part-time support at the Community Learning Center (CLC).

Taken together, these seven positions constitute the Digital Navigator Program (DNP) Pilot.

The navigators provide the five categories of services listed below.[27]

- **Device Distribution:** Through a partnership with MACIR, refurbished laptops and hotspots prepaid for two years are available for distribution to eligible individuals who are pursuing career development or educational opportunities.
- **Internet Access:** Navigators can provide eligible residents with voucher codes for one year of Internet Essentials service.

[25] "City of Cambridge Launches Digital Navigator Pilot Program with Local Partners to Support Residents' Digital Needs," City of Cambridge, February 6, 2024, https://www.cambridgema.gov/news/2024/02/cambridgelaunchesdigitalnavigatorpilotprogramwithpartnerstosupportresidentsdigitalneeds.

[26] The Digital Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Consortium, an initiative of the Metro North Workforce Investment Board, received grant funding through MBI's Digital Literacy Initiative to hire a cohort of 32 digital navigators across the region. See, Digital JEDI Consortium, https://massdigitaljedi.org/; "Digital Literacy Initiative," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-literacy-initiative.

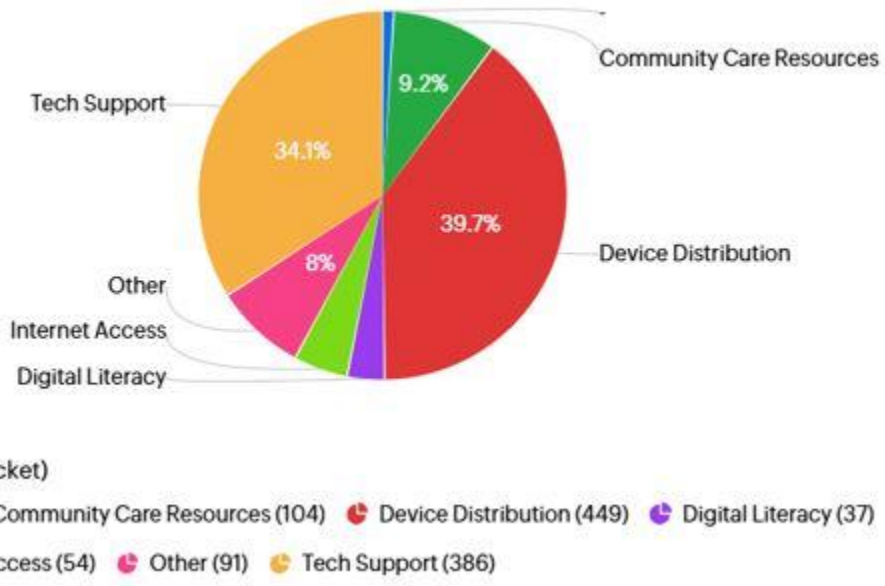
[27] Digital JEDI Consortium, https://massdigitaljedi.org/.

- **Digital Literacy:** The program offers intermediate and advanced digital literacy courses that teach career-focused skills to eligible participants. Classes are titled Windows 101/Microsoft Office, UI/UX Design, Front-End Web Development, and Advanced Excel.
- **Tech Support:** Digital navigators provide one-on-one technical support in person and virtually. This service is available to any community member.
- **Community Care:** Navigators connect residents with resources through partner organizations [28] to "reduce digital and economic challenges in underrepresented communities," including housing, childcare, and food security. This service is available to any community member.

Residents must meet the program's eligibility criteria[29] to access three of these services (Device Distribution, Internet Access, and Digital Literacy).

Metrics on the project are being collected by the City through the digital navigator coordinator based at CCTV. Figure 15 provides a snapshot of the kinds of activities the navigators are engaged in, showing a breakdown of the 1,132 total service tickets processed in the navigators' ticketing system from August 2024 to April 2025.

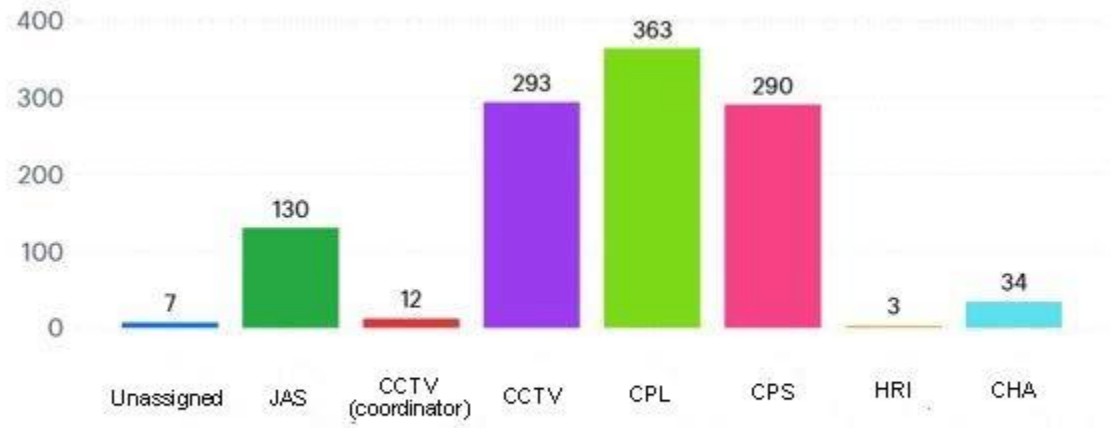
Figure 15: Tickets processed by Cambridge digital navigators, by service category (August 2024-April 2025)[30]



[28] "Our Partners," Digital JEDI Consortium, https://massdigitaljedi.org/our-partners/.
[29] "Eligibility," Digital JEDI Consortium, https://massdigitaljedi.org/eligibility/.
[30] Provided by CCTV. Note that the Cambridge program did not begin offering Digital Literacy courses until March 2025, perhaps leading to the low number of tickets for Digital Literacy.

Figure 16 shows the number of tickets processed by each navigator, identified by their primary host organization. (The navigators started at different times, resulting in numerical disparities.)

Figure 16: Tickets processed by Cambridge digital navigators, by navigator (August 2024-April 2025)[31]



The Digital Navigator Coordinator's quarterly report to MBI included the following examples of impacts of the digital navigator services in Cambridge.[32]

- A South African immigrant being able to find employment and take classes after receiving a laptop from the program
- An unhoused community member who received a laptop and is using it to take continuing education courses online
- An Afghani immigrant who was an educator in Afghanistan but requires new credentials to work here in the U.S. and needed a laptop to continue course work, apply for jobs, and further her computer skills so she can get a higher-paying job

The navigators are paid a living wage for their work and receive professional development through the program to strengthen their own skills and support their career goals.

5.2 Cambridge Council on Aging

The Cambridge Council on Aging (COA) offers health, wellness, and recreation services for adults aged 60 and older at two senior centers: the Cambridge Senior Center in Central Square and the

[31] Provided by CCTV.
[32] Provided by CCTV. Note that the navigators assigned to CPS and CCTV also provide part-time support at CLC as of the writing of this report.

North Cambridge Senior Center. During fiscal year 2024, 1,354 residents participated in COA's programs of all kinds, which include virtual and in-person classes.[33]

The Cambridge Senior Center has an on-site computer lab with 10 computers that are available to participants. Participants can visit the lab to ask questions about wireless devices, laptops, and applications such as Zoom and Facebook during Older Adult Tech Help hours, which are held on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.[34] COA also hosts a workshop on identifying scams and staying safe online in the lab. Separately, COA holds a monthly event on online safety with the Cambridge Police Department and Cambridge Consumers' Council.

These programs are run by one COA staff member who works 13 hours per week, as well as volunteers who lead the tech help hours on Wednesdays.

In addition to the computers on site, COA has 20 Chromebooks purchased during the COVID-19 pandemic available for participants to borrow. However, COA receives few requests for the devices. Representatives report that many participants use their smartphones for internet access.

COA previously lent out hotspots as well and saw slightly more demand for these during the pandemic but no longer makes them available as that demand has largely disappeared. COA works closely with the Cambridge Public Library, which has a robust device lending program (see section 5.6), to secure access for participants who request assistance. The senior centers also provide free Wi-Fi access for participants.

While COA reports it is able to meet the needs of participants at the Center with its current staffing and resources, representatives see inequities for the older adult population in Cambridge as a whole—particularly among residents who may not visit a senior center.

While COA does not see strong demand for laptops, some older adults on a limited income may rely on a smartphone because they cannot afford a computer. COA states that laptops provide better accommodations for visual impairments and access to health care platforms, for example. Representatives note, however, that older adults are not eligible for device distribution through programs like the city's digital navigator pilot because they do not meet the job seeking criteria (see section **?**.

Similarly, representatives note that digital literacy classes (including those through the city pilot) can prioritize individuals seeking employment.

To help address these barriers, COA is interested in facilitating digital literacy training that focuses on lifelong learning for purposes beyond job readiness, with the goal of reaching residents who may not otherwise visit the Center. To do this, COA would need to host a digital navigator contracted through a partner organization for an estimated three hours per week to lead such a class. This navigator could potentially partner with an organization like Tech Goes Home to combine the digital literacy course with device distribution.

---

[33] Total does not include walk-ins to other public events or participants who do not check in to a class.
[34] See, for example, "February 2025 – Happenings and Events," COA, https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/DHSP/COA/CoaNews.pdf.

5.3 Cambridge Community Television

CCTV is one of the leading examples in Massachusetts of a community TV station that goes out of its way to provide extensive computer and broadband training and resources to hundreds of people each year—not including hundreds or thousands more who view pre-taped courses. In addition to running three 24-hour cable TV channels that host community-created content and publicize City and school meetings, CCTV provides media production facilities to the Cambridge community. In 2024, CCTV offered a total of 83 low-cost or free classes that reached 649 participants.

As part of this educational programming, CCTV holds one-hour live online technology lessons, with recordings made available on its website, through its Foundational Technology program.[35] The program is heavily attended by seniors; topics range from device help and troubleshooting an internet connection to digital skills training such as "Recognizing Fake News: What Are the Signs?" In 2024, CCTV offered 40 online Foundational Technology lessons to 342 total participants. CCTV also offered in-person technology support through two technology help sessions attended by nine people in 2024.

In addition to running these programs, CCTV hosts one of the digital navigators in the city pilot program (and CCTV also employs the digital navigator coordinator for the citywide program).

At CCTV, the navigator offers 30-minute appointments scheduled in-person or virtually or via walk-ins and can accommodate up to six appointments per day, in addition to administrative and client support tasks. The services most in demand at CCTV are device distribution requests, community care referrals such as job search and tech support requests including filling out applications for health services, childcare, school applications, and immigration applications.

Still, the demand outstrips what CCTV can provide. CCTV would like to expand the Foundational Technology Classes to in-person classes once a week, continuing to reach the same number of people per year (342 participants); to do this, CCTV would need an additional $12,480 per year. This includes facility use, instructor teaching and planning time, and program coordination (see below).

Item	Quantity	Rate	Cost
Foundational Tech Teacher In-Person Teaching Time	52 hours	$30 Per Hour	$1,560
Foundational Tech Teacher Planning Time	52 hours	$30 Per Hour	$1,560
Program Coordination & Facilitation Costs (marketing class, enrolling students, sending reminders, tracking attendance)	104 hours	$30 Per Hour	$3,120
Facility Use (Includes classroom setup, breakdown, and	52 hours	$120 Per Hour	$6,240

[35] "Foundational Tech," CCTV, https://www.cctvcambridge.org/foundational-tech/.

maintenance of technology [laptops, projector])			
Total for expanding Foundational Tech classes			$12,480

Funding for the program is expected to end in December 2025. CCTV would like to continue the digital navigator and digital navigator coordinator as full-time staff positions at CCTV and suggests the impact of the program could be increased by adding virtual evening and weekend hours and increasing the outreach budget. CCTV estimates it would require $276,211 in funding per year for these two positions along with administrative, facility, and programmatic costs including outreach (see below).

Digital Navigator Program Budget	**Description**	**Annual Expense**
Digital Navigator Coordinator	FT Program oversight	$86,789
Digital Navigator - CCTV	FT client support	$81,421
AD Education	Program support, 60% time	$72,785
AD Community Relations	Admin. support, 20% time	$22,343
Facilities (program space and utilities)	At 3% of total space	$10,473
Outreach supplies	For outreach	$2,400

The above is CCTV's request. Given the end of the Launchpad program, it is likely that there will not be a large enough number of digital navigators in the City to require the extra position of coordinator of those navigators.

5.4 Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee

Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC), a nonprofit anti-poverty organization, provides residents with help finding housing, financial education, and signup assistance with benefits like health insurance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), among other services.

Many services require residents to log into web-based portals. CEOC sees approximately 75 individuals weekly who need support using the internet to complete an application or other task. At times of the year such as tax season or open enrollment for the Massachusetts Health Connector and Medicare, the numbers can be far higher. It is often difficult to do these tasks on a smartphone, especially if residents need to upload documents to prove income or residency.

Common roadblocks for CEOC participants are a lack of computers in the home, lack of technology skills, and insufficient internet services in the home due to affordability barriers. For residents who speak a language other than English, CEOC reports that navigating translation features on websites can be challenging and the translations are not always accurate.

CEOC has 20 staff members, five of whom are part-time, who must help participants navigate these challenges as part of providing services. (Another 12 volunteers work in its food pantry.) Representatives report that it has been helpful to refer participants to the city's digital navigator pilot, particularly for device assistance and digital skills support, and would like to keep doing so if the program were to continue (see section 0).

CEOC sees sufficient need among the people it serves to support a part-time digital navigator with flexible hours (including in the evenings) who is multi-lingual. Because they do not have the capacity to manage additional staff, this navigator would ideally be provided by another entity.

They note limitations with the pilot, however, including that the device distribution excludes those who are not seeking employment but need a computer for daily life activities, such as older adults.

CEOC would potentially be interested in partnering in a device distribution program such as Tech Goes Home, in which CEOC would participate in a "train-the-trainer" model, depending on the staff time it would require.

5.5 Cambridge Housing Authority

The Cambridge Housing Authority owns and manages affordable housing developments and also administers vouchers for rentals in privately owned housing. The CHA serves more than 10,000 low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities; in total, it serves almost 10 percent of the City's population.[36]

As part of a 2023 survey of residents, the CHA included questions on internet access. The survey was completed by 199 residents, reflecting 9 percent of the CHA's occupied units. A third of respondents (34 percent) reported they do not subscribe to internet service at home other than their smartphone plan. Of those subscribing to home internet, 79 percent used Comcast and 44 percent paid more than $60 per month, indicating they are not enrolling in available low-cost plans or are adding video bundles.

More than two-thirds of respondents with a home subscription (68.7 percent) used a smartphone to access the internet at home and just under two-thirds (63 percent) used a laptop computer. Only a quarter (26 percent) used a desktop computer, with respondents more likely to use a smart TV or streaming device (55.7 percent of respondents) or a tablet (34.4 percent).

These findings echo reports from stakeholders interviewed for this report who work with CHA residents, including the Community Learning Center and Cambridge Public Library. These stakeholders reported that reliable internet access at home is a barrier for their participants.

CHA has pursued a number of efforts over the past several years to ensure residents have access to affordable residential broadband—an issue that has been heightened with the end of the federal

[36] "About," CHA, https://cambridge-housing.org/about/.

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provided a $30 monthly subsidy for broadband subscriptions and was widely noted as one of the most impactful programs to promote broadband affordability.

First, the CHA has promoted Comcast Internet Essentials (see section 4.3.1.1) to residents—including enrollment efforts by CHA social workers at sites with senior residents. However, enrollment could be a challenge for some residents, given that Comcast requires enrollees to not have Comcast service for the previous 90 days and not have outstanding debt to Comcast from the past year—and large numbers of CHA residents already subscribe to far higher-cost Comcast services. Almost 73 percent of of respondents to the 2023 survey said they were aware of Internet Essentials, although the survey did not ask whether they were enrolled. Note that this does suggest a notable percentage (over a quarter of respondents) who could benefit from efforts to promote the program—and perhaps more who could use help navigating the eligibility requirements.

The CHA has also made efforts to bring competitive services to its units through contracts with two fixed wireless providers and an effort to build fiber into three properties.

Through a contract with CHA, Starry provides high-speed fixed wireless service at approximately 3,000 units across 50 properties, with the majority of these units (2,500) at 20 large MDUs. As discussed in section 4.3.1.4, the Starry Connect low-cost plan offers eligible subscribers 30/30 Mbps service for $15 per month, with higher-speed plans available at competitive prices to comparable Comcast plans. According to the 2023 survey, 9 percent of CHA residents with home service other than a mobile plan subscribe to Starry.

To provide a competitive wireline option for three MDUs, the CHA is undertaking a pilot with Starry to provide affordable gigabit service via fiber at the Frank J. Manning elderly housing high-rise and Washington Elms and Newtowne Court apartment complexes. MIT, which will contribute dark fiber, and the city are partners in the project.

As a solution for remaining units that do not have a second provider, the CHA is potentially interested in pursuing funding through MBI and MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program. The program supports affordable housing providers in deploying Wi-Fi networks as a free, competitive service option for residents.[37]

In terms of device access and skills training, the CHA launched a pilot with Tech Goes Home to provide access to devices and digital skills training for elderly residents. The program provides a free laptop upon completion of an introductory course on use of computers and the internet. Run by CHA staff in addition to their other responsibilities, the program has been able to train up to 15 residents per year.

The CHA engaged a digital navigator through the city pilot program (see section 0) to facilitate its digital equity efforts, including leading the Tech Goes Home program and working with CHA's on-site social workers to promote enrollment in Internet Essentials. The navigator helps residents confirm the service options available at their building and sign up for service, including assistance with self-installing equipment. The navigator also provides a range of tech support such as helping residents

[37] "Apartment Wi-Fi," MAPC, http://mapc.org/our-work/expertise/digital-equity/apartment-wi-fi/.

troubleshoot Wi-Fi connections; navigate operating systems and software on computers, smartphones, and tablets; and create email accounts to access services. According to data provided by the CHA in April 2025, tech support made up 67 percent of the navigator's service requests over the last 90 days.

As funding for the navigator ends at the close of 2025, the CHA would like funding to continue this position full-time. Having a full-time digital navigator would allow the CHA to increase the capacity of its Tech Goes Home program to 30 residents per year. (They would also need financial support for the devices.)

5.6 Cambridge Public Health Department

The Cambridge Public Health Department, a city department that is administered by the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA),[38] provides a range of outreach services within the city, such as mobile vaccine clinics and door knocking to promote priority public health initiatives.

While in-person, on-the-ground outreach is foundational to the success of its public health efforts, CPHD is working to grow its website as a resource to share information more broadly and tailor information for priority populations. As part of this effort, CPHD implemented usability recommendations provided by Perkins Access, an accessibility consulting group within the Perkins School for the Blind.

CPHD representatives identified a need for tablet computers and hotspots, as well as assistance accessing city IT resources.

CPHD would like to provide 10 tablets with mobile data subscriptions to its staff working in the community so they can help residents access and navigate health care resources available online and other resources such as Find It Cambridge, a city-run database of resources and services for residents. Providing staff with internet-connected devices in the field would also help them document issues and facilitate follow-up among unhoused people and others who can be challenging to reach.

CPHD also reports that internet access for its mobile vaccination clinics, which rely on an online system for reporting, is a particular challenge. The clinics currently use mobile hotspots from Verizon, and staff report coverage is poor within Cambridge. CHA would like to provide these clinics with three AT&T hotspots, which other city departments report get better coverage.

5.7 Cambridge Public Library

The Cambridge Public Library (CPL) has long been an anchor institution for the city's digital equity efforts, providing free access to the internet and devices for the many patrons who visit its seven locations each year. In Fiscal Year 2024, the library welcomed nearly 964,000 visitors.[39]

The library established a digital equity department in 2023 led by a Digital Equity Manager, which offered a total of 62 beginner and intermediate technology class sessions with topics like cybersecurity basics, iPhone and iPad usage, and Gmail and internet basics. These classes, which

[38] Cambridge Health Alliance, https://www.challiance.org/about-cha.
[39] Data provided by CPL.

expanded last year, had 225 attendees in 2024. The library also offered 220 one-on-one 30-minute Tech Help sessions with 407 attendees.

Separately from this programming, CPL has a full-time digital navigator through the city program. The library reports that this navigator has seen the highest demand of the navigators in Cambridge, with appointments booked out weeks in advance and particular demand for hotspot and laptop provision. Device distribution made up 42 percent of the navigator's service requests from the start of the program to April 2025, with tech support representing 51.7 percent of the requests. Over this time period, the navigator distributed 69 devices and held more than 400 in-person, virtual, and phone sessions with Library patrons.[40]

CPL has also partnered with the nonprofit Tech Goes Home (TGH) to offer patrons a free laptop and one year of internet service after they complete a series of digital skills-building classes. They renewed this partnership to offer a class at the Central Square Branch in spring 2025 and would like to offer additional courses with TGH throughout the year. CPL plans to continue the current model and scale of the TGH partnership. When planning to increase device distribution, CPL is interested in working with MACIR and other partners to manage costs, logistics, and workflows at scale.

The main library and six branches provide free access to Wi-Fi and computers. Patrons can also borrow hotspots, Chromebooks, and Chromebooks with built-in hotspots for two weeks at a time,[41] with approximately 150 hotspots in circulation and a waitlist. Representatives report that the hotspot lending program is heavily used by unhoused residents and those who cannot afford the cost of a home subscription. According to the library, the popular program has reached the limit of how many hotspots staff can effectively manage and is not ideally structured to serve the persistent needs for connectivity. Device loans for two weeks cannot consistently meet the needs of community members taking courses, searching for jobs or preparing for job interviews. Staff also spend significant time maintaining the devices each time they turn over.

The high demand for the library's lending program is symptomatic of inequities for residents in long-term access to devices and broadband, and the Library would like to see sustainable solutions to address these needs—echoing the findings and recommendations from engagement with stakeholders including the Cambridge Housing Authority and other affordable housing providers (see section 5.5, section 5.10), and service provider organizations including the Community Learning Center and Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (see section 5.9, section 5.4).

Although the library's technology classes have been well attended, the one-on-one Tech Help sessions are most in demand and many additional patrons request help from librarians outside those official appointments. To meet this demand for individualized support, the library would like to maintain the digital navigator full-time when funding for the program ends, either as a staff position with the library or contracted through a partner organization.

To help address the ongoing need for computing devices, the library would like to ensure the navigator has access to laptops and hotspots for distribution. The Cambridge Public Library needs

[40] Data from CPL Digital Navigator Pilot Program July 2024-April 2025 Update, provided by CPL.
[41] "Use Computers & Technology," CPL, https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/cambridgepubliclibrary/iwantto/uselibrarytechnology.

funding to partner with an organization like MACIR to provide devices to community members to close the digital equity gap. Devices may include Chromebooks for access to digital literacy training and support services, PCs with the MS Office suite that empower learners progress toward job readiness, and hotspots/or vouchers for internet access.

5.8 Cambridge Public Schools

Representatives of Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) report that the district itself is relatively well-resourced and effective at providing students with the hardware to support their learning needs, but would like to offer education for parents and guardians around helping children manage their online activity. The digital navigator assigned to CPS through the city pilot program has also been helpful in reaching families to provide individualized support around digital equity needs, and CPS would like to see this support continue on a full-time basis.

CPS serves more than 7,000 students[42] across 17 schools, including 11 elementary schools, four upper schools, one high school, and one high school extension program. The district supports students' and staff's technology needs for teaching and learning, which extend beyond the school day.

CPS operates a one-to-one device program that provides take-home Chromebooks for students in the sixth through twelfth grade and Chromebooks within elementary schools. For families with younger students who lack sufficient computer access at home, CPS will provide one upon request. The district also continues efforts initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide mobile hotspots to students with insufficient internet access, and reports that it is able to meet the demand with its existing supply of hotspots.

CPS is interested in offering additional education for parents and guardians on how they can help students manage their online lives at home—potentially covering topics such as online security and privacy, parental controls, and how parents and guardians can be more engaged around students' activity and the amount of time they spend online. Representatives suggest this training could take the form of a targeted "parents' night" event, either based at the schools or in the community, hosted by an expert in these issues.

One of the digital navigators in the city pilot program is prioritized to CPS (see, section 0). CPS reports that the navigator, who is a parent of a CPS student, has been effective in making connections with student families to provide individualized support and a broader perspective on their digital equity needs. Representatives note that this level of one-on-one assistance requires continued staffing that can commit time and be flexible in meeting with families across the district, and would like this digital navigator support for CPS to continue beyond the pilot on a full-time basis.

Further, while CPS has existing programs to support student families who lack internet access, representatives report it can be challenging to keep students connected

outside the home. Although representatives did not identify specific facilities, they would like to ensure community facilities where students frequently gather after school, including community

[42] "District at a Glance," CPS, https://cdnsm5-ss5.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3042785/File/CPS_District-at-a-Glance_web.pdf.

centers and out-of-school time partner facilities operated by the Department of Human Services Programs (DHSP),[43] have sufficient Wi-Fi access.

5.9 Community Learning Center

The Community Learning Center, operated by the city's Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), offers adult learners more than 11 types of free education and job training services including high school equivalency preparation, English for Speakers of Other Languages, support for the citizenship exam, and career pathways for health and life sciences. Classes—which are offered mainly in-person with some online components—are attended by approximately 800 learners per year, of whom 90 percent are immigrants from more than 70 countries. About two-thirds are women and nearly all are low-income.

CLC reports that reliable internet access is an issue for its participants, many of whom rent apartments using voucher subsidies or live in Cambridge Housing Authority units. Access to sufficient computing devices and the skills to use them presents an additional barrier.

CLC students face barriers which limit their community engagement and attainment of personal and professional goals. They report struggles to participate in online events and share their voices in surveys and meetings. Professionally, they need assistance applying for work and managing communication and basic digital requirements of most employment situations. Parents and caregivers need digital skills and support to engage with their children's schoolwork, school community, and application portals for schooling options, out of school time programming, and summer activities.

CLC teaches basic digital skills as part of all classes. This skills training is customized to students who need hands-on, incremental learning, and individualized support. The need for skills training greatly outstrips CLC's current capacity. Instructors integrate some of this training as part of core instruction. They rely on volunteer class aides to provide more hands-on help to learners.

CLC has approximately 100 Chromebooks for onsite class use and loans out an additional 85 devices for learners to use at home. Approximately 75 Chromebooks have reached the end of their useful life and need replacement.

The hardware needs of the center and the educational technology needs of staff and students are supported by 1.25 full-time employees (FTE). Their responsibilities include managing technology hardware, software, digital skills curricula and instruction, and supporting students with digital challenges.

To provide additional support, CLC hosts digital navigators from the city's pilot program (see section **?**) at its North Cambridge and Central Square facilities on a part-time basis. The current availability does not always align with CLC's evening class times, and learners need a basic level of digital skills

[43] See, "Cambridge School Year 2024-2025 After School Opportunities for K-8th Graders," Cambridge Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time, https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/1D8xbKbV4dnBQ_gXyYlWwCsQs6Z4aUoFP_qNDIzGtiIc/pub.

to use these navigators, given that receiving assistance requires creating an online service ticket and following up by email.

CLC could use at least one additional full-time employee to enable the center to fully meet the technology demands of teachers and students and to be effective in its education and digital equity work with underserved residents. In addition, CLC would benefit from greater support from and connections to the city Information Technology Department and the Cambridge Public Schools IT Department with regards to the use of technology as a tool for education.

CLC would also like to provide new devices and software for students and teachers, with an ongoing annual investment to replace aging and outdated equipment and to maintain devices.

5.10 Homeowners' Rehab Inc. and Just a Start

Just A Start (JAS), a nonprofit community development corporation, developed and maintains 650 affordable apartments in the city in addition to providing services including career training, housing assistance, and financial education. Homeowners' Rehab Inc. (HRI), a community development corporation, owns 1,700 apartment homes in Cambridge as part of its portfolio across four Massachusetts communities.

Both entities said that the major digital equity challenge facing their residents is a lack of affordable internet access. They would like to see long-term solutions to subsidize internet access for Cambridge residents who qualify based on income.

As one step, both would like to prioritize providing free Wi-Fi access at the following properties they manage. HRI would like to provide free Wi-Fi in common areas; JAS currently offers free Wi-Fi in community rooms at these properties but notes these rooms are open for limited hours and events, and would like to extend Wi-Fi to all units in the building.

Table 16: Priority properties identified by affordable housing providers to provide Wi-Fi access

Property	Address	Number of households	Need for Wi-Fi
Rivermark (HRI)	808 & 812 Memorial Drive	300	Common areas
Finch (HRI)	675 Concord Avenue	94	Common areas
Rindge Tower Apartments (JAS)	402 Rindge Ave.	273	In units
The George Close Building (JAS)	243 Broadway	61	In units

Both also have a full-time digital navigator through the city's pilot and emphasize the importance of continuing this support. In particular, they emphasize a critical need to continue offering the prepaid vouchers for Internet Essentials and low-cost device distribution (see section 0). HRI estimates a need to provide 25-50 vouchers and 25-50 devices for residents per year after funding for the pilot ends. JAS estimates similar numbers on an annual basis to serve its residents and students in its

adult career training program,[44] which would allow these students to complete homework and participate fully in classes. A JAS representative notes that the device distribution model through the program, where the navigator assesses need and provides basic education with a refurbished device, has worked well for residents compared to programs that require participants to complete a lengthier training before they can receive a device.

HRI's navigator hosts weekly events called "tech tables" at four sites—Inman Square Apartments, Putnam Square Apartments (an age-restricted property), and Finch and Trolley Square Apartments—covering a service area of 337 households. At these events residents can ask questions and receive assistance with device issues and tasks such as setting up an email account. The navigator is also hosting a series of four workshops for low-income and senior residents at these four sites focusing on various areas of digital literacy: understanding TV and internet service providers, online shopping safely, overview of search engines and AI 101, and online safety and scam awareness.

JAS's digital navigator is on site twice weekly at 402 Rindge and twice weekly at the George Close Building at 243 Broadway, covering a service area of 638 households at these and nearby JAS properties. The navigator helps residents access low-cost internet options, troubleshoot devices, and complete online tasks like banking and accessing health records. He is available outside on-site hours via phone or email and can meet with residents in their units to assist those who have mobility issues or need help with a larger device like a desktop computer. The digital navigator worked with over 100 unique households in 2024, many of whom reached out for assistance with a second issue.

Both providers note the importance of having a navigator to support residents with the online tasks required of them to maintain their eligibility for affordable housing.

HRI and JAS' navigators are funded through the end of 2025 and both would like to continue the position in 2026 and beyond. HRI would like external funding for this position, but if it could not secure this funding it would potentially seek to pay for the position out of HRI's operations budget to continue providing service coverage and support across its portfolio of 1,700 apartments. JAS would like to continue the position for an estimated 20 to 30 hours per week at an estimated cost of $30 per hour plus benefits, and would require funding for the majority of this salary.

HRI would also potentially be interested in partnering with an organization like Tech Goes Home to distribute devices to residents through a "train-the-trainer" model.

[44] "Adult Career Training," JAS, https://justastart.org/adult-career-training/.

6 The demise of the ACP was a challenge to low-income households nationally and in Cambridge, but there are options for filling this gap

Many households across the country relied on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to secure and maintain an internet connection at home, and the program's end has been a significant loss for many. A recent Benton Institute for Broadband & Society survey conducted immediately after the ACP ended in April 2024 found that 13 percent of households would disconnect their service without the ACP subsidy, and 36 percent of respondents would downgrade to a cheaper or slower plan.[45] Additionally, nearly half of respondents saw a home internet connection as an uncertainty, implying that they view their internet subscription as a service that may be canceled at any time based on the household's limited budget and varied costs each month. With over 23.2 million households enrolled in the program nationwide, and over 367,000 enrolled in Massachusetts, there are a significant number of households that are now feeling the tremendous impact of the program's end.

At the end of the ACP, Cambridge had 4,473 households enrolled, and as many as 12,167 potentially eligible households remained unenrolled. Some unenrolled yet eligible households may have not wished to subscribe, but accelerating enrollment efforts in low-cost programs offered by Cambridge's broadband providers would help close the enrollment and affordability gap and reinforce all digital equity programmatic efforts throughout this report.

Table 17: ACP enrollment in Cambridge over one year[46]

Date	Eligible households enrolled	Enrolled Households	Eligible Households	Unenrolled eligible households
January 2023	**18.2%**	3,032	16,640	13,608
June 2023	**22.2%**	3,699	16,640	12,941
End of program	**26.9%**	4,473	16,640	12,167

6.1 There are ways that Cambridge can support residents post-ACP, primarily through enrollment assistance in low-cost internet programs or by pursuing more ambitious subsidy efforts

A variety of low-cost services do exist through existing ISPs in Cambridge, which should be promoted through various channels throughout City as described in more detail below. Additionally, there are examples of more ambitious models of subsidy-based programs that have been demonstrated regionally or nationally that can be adopted locally.

6.1.1 ISPs in Cambridge offer several low-cost broadband programs

Verizon, Comcast, Starry, and Astound offer low-cost programs in Cambridge. Low-cost programs can provide significant relief to the 4,473 households that were previously receiving the ACP, plus

[45] "Leaving Money on the Table: The ACP's Expiration Means Billions in Lost Savings," Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, https://www.benton.org/publications/acp-expiration-means-billions-lost-savings.
[46] "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," USAC, data as of June, 2024, https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/.

others who would have been eligible for the program. Cambridge can utilize existing resources from local entities and organizations or consider creating a City digital navigator position (as referenced in Section 3.3) to support residents in the process for enrolling in these low-cost programs. A navigator would potentially help residents learn how to access competitive and lower-cost internet solutions by informing consumers about switching from expensive service plans that place a strain on monthly budgets to a more cost-effective plan.

Low-cost programs offered by ISPs in Cambridge are:

- **Verizon Forward,** which provides up to a $30 monthly discount toward any internet subscription for those who are eligible, resulting in service for as low as $20 per month.[47] Eligibility includes:
    - Federal Pell Grant recipient within the last year,
    - Qualify for WIC, or
    - Qualify for the FCC's Lifeline discount of $9.25 per month toward wireline or wireless service (through participation in SNAP, Medicaid, or other programs; or if income is 135 percent or less than the Federal Poverty Guidelines).[48]
- **Comcast Internet Essentials**, a cable internet plan that provides 75/10 Mbps service for the discounted price of $14.95 per month for eligible households.[49] Eligibility includes:
    - Participation in assistance programs like the National School Lunch Program, public housing assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, SSI, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, WIC, Federal Pell Grant, Veterans pension, and Tribal assistance, or were enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program
    - Have not had Xfinity Internet within the last 90 days
    - Have no outstanding debt on any Comcast account that is less than one year old
- **Comcast Internet Essentials Plus,** a cable internet plan that provides up to 100/20 Mbps service for the discounted price of $29.95 per month for eligible households. Eligibility requirements for Internet Essentials Plus are the same as for Internet Essentials, listed above.

6.1.2 Single-payer agreements with ISPs have proven to be successful in closing the digital divide in communities across the country

Single-payer internet arrangements—in which a jurisdictional entity partners with an internet provider to pay for a defined population's monthly internet bill through a bulk purchase agreement—

[47] "Verizon Forward," Verizon, https://www.verizon.com/discounts/verizon-forward/?cmp=KNC_H_P_COE_GAW_FiOS_99_99_BP-9122&abr=CMOGBRPLUS&c=A005126&gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhoXk08DKiAMVpwGtBh1igA4lEAAYASABEgK8nfD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds.
[48] "Lifeline," FCC, https://www.fcc.gov/lifeline-consumers.
[49] "Internet Essentials," Comcast Xfinity, https://www.xfinity.com/learn/internet-service/internet-essentials.

are common approaches nationally and are readily embraced by many ISPs. Cambridge could consider a single-payer agreement with a local internet provider, so that a segment of the City's population that is struggling to pay for home internet services each month is able to receive subsidized or free service. Cambridge could begin this process by issuing a request for proposals (RFP) from providers in the City to get an understanding of who would be interested in partnering with the City. Successful examples of this include:

- **Cambridge Public Schools:** The f Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) recognized that the cost of internet was a barrier to a home broadband subscription for many families with young children. To combat this, Cambridge Public Schools partnered with Comcast to offer free internet service to eligible CPS households.[50]

  CPS purchased hundreds of pre-paid vouchers for one-year subscriptions to Comcast's Internet Essentials program, which at the time was 50/10 Mbps that would otherwise have been $9.95 per month (recently, Comcast increased its service speed to 75/10 Mbps service and its monthly price to $14.95). See Table 3 above for more information.

- **Chicago Connected:** The National Digital Inclusion Alliance notes that through a single-payer program called Chicago Connected, more than 40,000 Chicago Public School students and their families have received broadband subscriptions since 2021.[51] Chicago Connected has become nationally recognized as a successful model for other entities nationwide.[52]

- **San Francisco/Monkeybrains**: The City operates the "Fiber to Housing program," which provides free internet to low-income San Francisco residents, through the Department of Technology and in partnership with the local internet provider Monkeybrains. Fiber to Housing began in 2018 and leverages existing municipal fiber resources and private sector partnerships to operate the program.[53]

- **Cruzio Equal Access Program:** Cruzio started its Equal Access program in California at the beginning of the pandemic, and the company has raised nearly $1 million for projects to cover both infrastructure and discounted services. The Equal Access project provides connectivity to students and their families who may not be able to afford internet service. Completed projects are located in the City of Santa Cruz, Live Oak, and Pajaro Valley (all located in Santa Cruz County).[54] These projects were completed through a partnership between Cruzio, the County Office of Education, and Community Foundation Santa Cruz

[50] "Internet Essentials Program," Cambridge Public Schools, https://www.cpsd.us/internet_essentials_program.
[51] "Chicago Connected," Chicago Public Schools, https://www.cps.edu/strategic-initiatives/chicago-connected/.
[52] "What Are Single Payer Agreements?" NDIA, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/blog/2020/08/28/what-are-single-payer-agreements
[53] "Monkeybrains and Fiber to Housing," Monkeybrains, https://www.monkeybrains.net/MB_fiber_to_housing.pdf.
[54] "Previous Projects," Equal Access Santa Cruz, https://equalaccesssantacruz.com/previous-projects/.

County, as well as the Housing Authority of the County and the Central Coast Broadband Consortium.

7 MBI Residential Survey results

This report is based on data collected from Cambridge residents who responded to a survey instrument created by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and posted online. PDFs of paper copies in nine languages were also made available to residents of the City.

The results presented in this section are based on analysis of information provided in the survey by 405 residents of Cambridge. Unless otherwise indicated, the percentages reported are based on valid responses from those who provided an answer and do not reflect individuals who said "don't know" or otherwise did not supply an answer because the question did not apply to them. Key results are noted where appropriate.

The report separately highlights answers from respondents reporting households earning less than $60,000. This threshold was used because in the MBI survey, the highest income tranche respondents were able to describe was "$60,000 or above."

This report focuses on data collected that is unambiguous regarding meaning or accuracy, relevant to the topic of digital equity, and provides insights that are potentially actionable.

The full survey instrument is posted in Appendix A: JEDI Digital Navigators Spotlight slide deck

Digital JEDI Consortium

Digital Navigators Spotlight

May 20, 2025

Digital JEDI Consortium

Justice • Equity • Diversity • Inclusion

05/20/2025

Agenda

- **Digital JEDI Consortium Overview** (5 mins)
- **Stories from the Digital Navigators Panel Discussion** (30 mins)
- **Impact Data** (10 mins)
- **How to Get Involved** (5 mins)

Digital JEDI Consortium Overview:

Goal/Mission:

Reduce the digital inequities in workforce/career development that **Black, Indigenous, POC (BIPOC), Immigrant, and Low-Income** communities experience in the Metro North and Northshore regions.

Desired Long-Term Impact:

Increase upward-economic mobility **among BIPOC, Immigrant, and Low-Income communities** in the Metro North and North Shore regions.

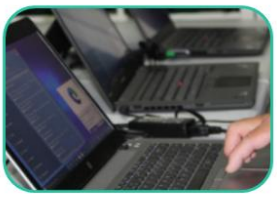
Program Initiatives:

Digital Navigator (DN) Cohort

- Individualized support for digital needs
- Professional Development Opportunities

Digital Literacy Courses

- Intermediate
- Advanced



Device Distribution

- Laptops
- Hotspots

Education, Outreach and Adoption

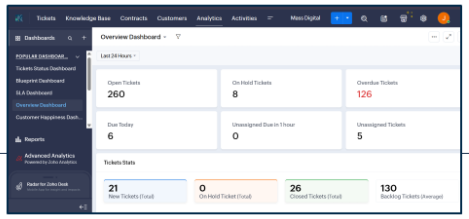
- Print and Digital Advertising
- Community-organizing and in-person outreach

Digital Navigator Cohort:

18 DNs at partner sites across Metro North and North Shore assist community members with 5 Digital Service Areas:

Tech Support	Device Distribution	Digital Literacy	Community Care Resources	Internet Access
• Assistance with Online Activities • Assistance with Software • Assistance with Hardware	• Refurbished Windows Laptops • Hotspots	• Entry Level Courses • Intermediate/Advanced Courses	• Information on community resources and social services • Information on educational and training opportunities	• Subsidized Internet Plans • Assistance with Wi-Fi Issues

Service Requests are stored as Tickets via the **JEDI Integrated services HUB:**



5

DN Professional Development

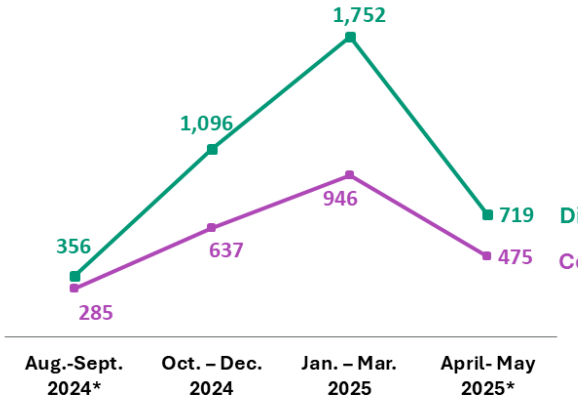
- Experience with ticketing systems and IT Support with MACIR (Massachusetts Association of Computer and Internet Resources)
- Professional Certifications: Google IT Certification
- Supplementary Trainings with NDIA (National Digital Inclusion Alliance)
- Direct Service and Case Management experience

DN Panel Discussion

- Samara Murrell, Moderator-Cambridge
- Dana Grotenstein, Cambridge
- Destiny Martinez, Everett
- Andres Martinez Chavez, Lynn
- Nelson Montesinos, Chelsea

Community Members and Digital Service Requests Overview

8/01/2024-5/13/2025



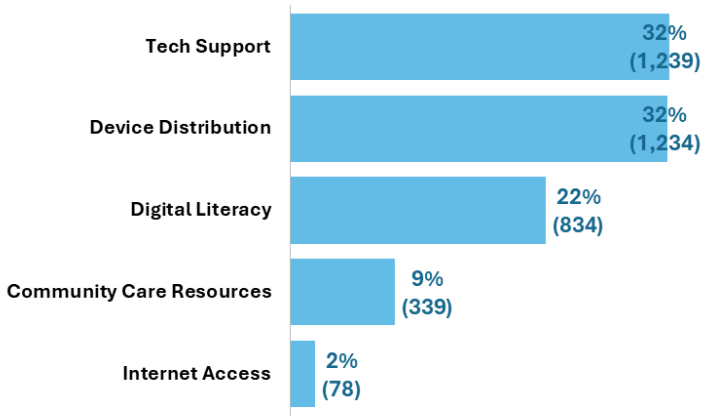
3,983
Digital service requests (tickets) received since August 2024

1,869
Unique community members supported since August 2024

*DN services officially went live in August
*Currently in the April-June quarter

Digital Service Request Categories

8/01/2024-5/13/2025



Jan.-Mar. 2025
First Quarter that Tech Support Exceeded Device Distribution Requests

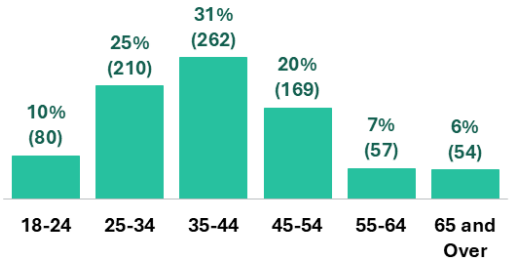
Tech Support
Top Request-Device Use, Software & Applications, Device Troubleshooting, Job Search & Online Applications

811
Laptops Distributed

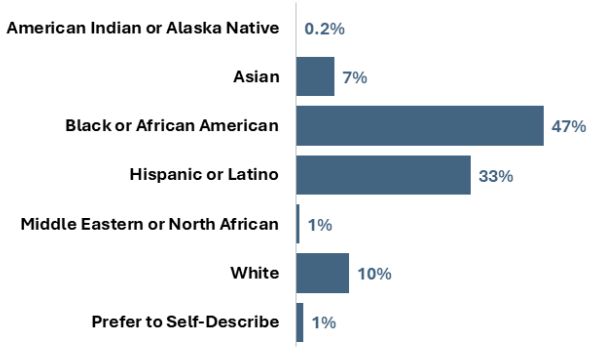
Demographics of Community Members

8/01/2024-5/13/2025

Over half of the community members are between the **ages of 25-44 years old**.



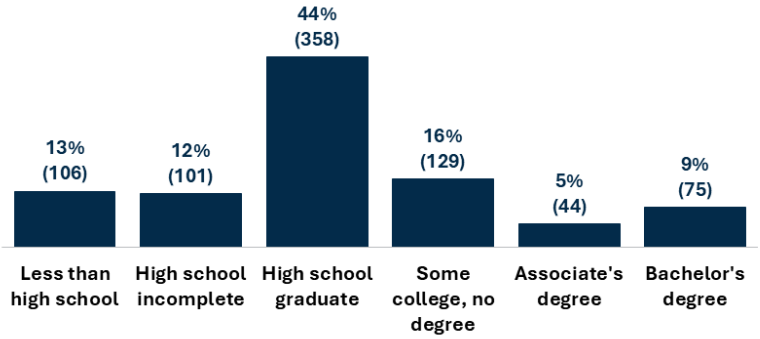
DNs are **reaching JEDI's priority communities**, with almost 90% identifying as Black, Indigenous, POC (BIPOC).



Education/Workforce Demographics

8/01/2024-5/13/2025

69% of community members supported have a high school diploma or less than high school education.



54%
Of community members reported they were looking for a job or to improve skills for career development.

This question is only asked for device distribution, digital literacy classes, and internet access.

Ways to Support the Digital JEDI Consortium

Support fundraising efforts to purchase more laptops.

Donation Form Link

Find new funding opportunities to sustain program.

Appendix B: MBI survey.

7.1 Residential internet service

Respondents were asked about internet connection types and providers. This information provides valuable insight into residents' need for various internet and related communications services.

7.1.1 Internet access

Although 93 percent of Cambridge respondents reported having either a home internet or mobile subscription, only 50 percent said they have wireline internet service in the home, leaving 50 percent not subscribing. Table 1 highlights the saturation of home internet subscriptions by key demographic groups. Respondents under age 60, those with a lower household income and with less education, those with children at home, and those who identify as a member of a racial or ethnic minority group are less likely than their counterparts to have wireline internet service.

Table 18: Home internet subscriptions by key demographics

	Percent having wireline internet	*Count*
TOTAL	**50%**	***405***
Respondent Age		
Less than 45	42%	*125*
45 to 59	49%	*83*
60 or older	66%	*112*
Income		
Less than $60,000	40%	*124*
$60,000 or more	74%	*111*
Education		
Less than a 4-year degree	34%	*118*
4-year college/university/bachelor's degree	66%	*90*
Postgraduate or professional degree	66%	*104*
Race/Ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	72%	*138*
Racial/ethnic minority	38%	*160*
Household Size		
One HH member	56%	*87*
Two HH members	74%	*84*
Three-four HH members	38%	*60*
Five + HH members	37%	*89*
Children in Household		
No children in HH	62%	*205*
Children in HH	35%	*112*
Gender Identity		
Man	59%	*86*
Woman	50%	*224*
Other gender identity	43%	*7*
Other Demographics		

Identify as person with disability	47%	*62*
Member of LGBTQIA+ community	49%	*37*
Serve on active duty in US Armed Forces	40%	*5*
Live in affordable housing	45%	*94*

7.1.2 Questions for those with home internet service

Respondents subscribing to home internet service were asked a series of questions about their service, including provider used and price paid.

7.1.2.1 Home internet service provider

Most (69 percent) households with home internet service have Comcast/Xfinity. Other internet service providers used include Starry (10 percent), T-Mobile (five percent), and Verizon Communications (four percent). Another 12 percent of subscribers use a variety of other internet service providers. (CTC combined answers in cases where the survey instrument listed the same provider twice, but under different brand or company names.)

7.1.2.2 How well home internet service works

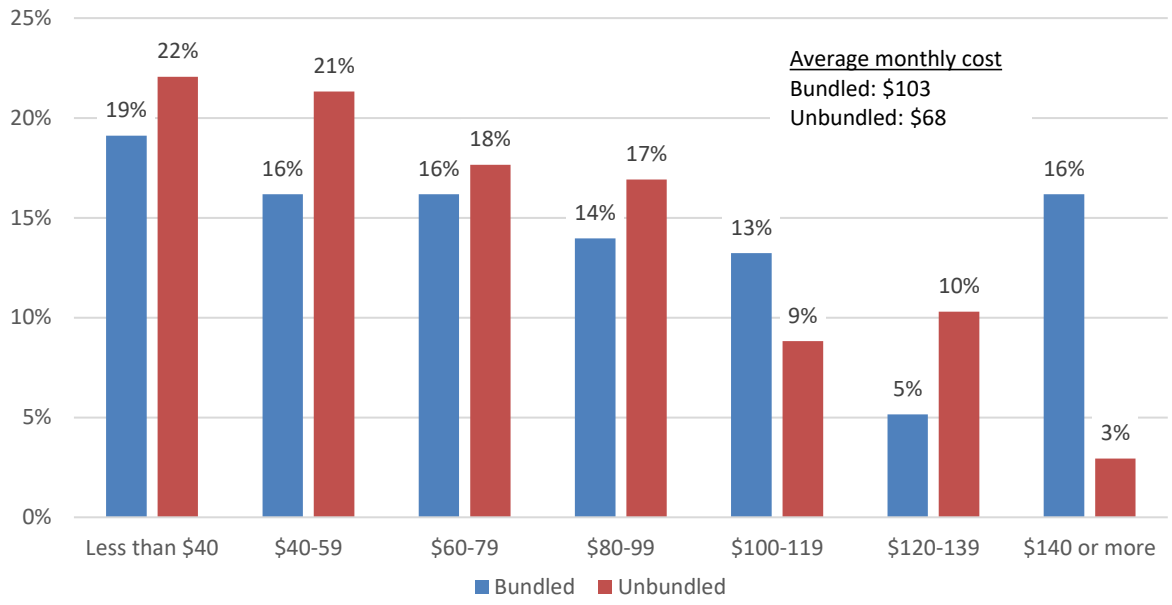
Most internet subscribers (76 percent) said their service is good enough to meet their household's needs, but 19 percent said it is not good enough and five percent said they do not know.

7.1.2.3 Internet service cost

Respondents were asked to give the cost of their home internet service, as well as indicate whether or not they bundle internet with TV and/or phone service. Overall, 49 percent of subscribers bundle their internet service.

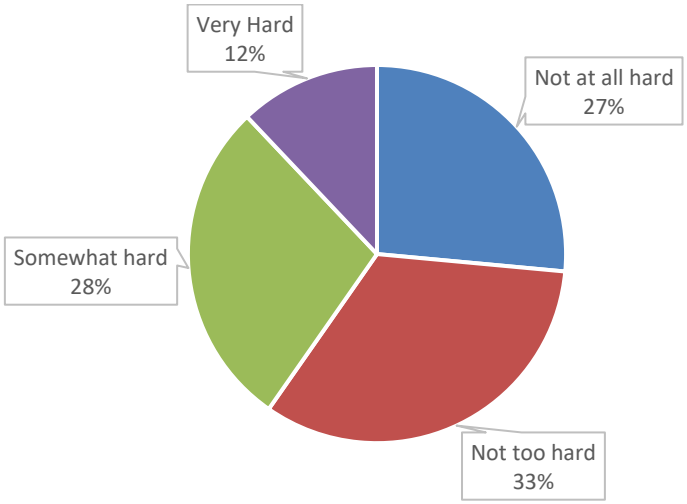
Respondents pay an average of $103 per month for bundled internet service and an average of $68 per month for unbundled internet service (see Figure 17). Thirty-five percent of those with bundled services pay at least $100 per month, compared with 22 percent of those with internet-only service.

Figure 17: Monthly price for internet service



Respondents were also asked how hard it is to pay their internet bill. Six in 10 subscribers said it is not at all hard (27 percent) or not too hard (33 percent) to pay, as illustrated in Figure 18. However, many subscribers said it is somewhat hard (28 percent) or very hard (12 percent) to pay their internet bill.

Figure 18: How hard is it to pay internet bill



As shown in Figure 19, nearly six in 10 of those earning less than $60,000 per year said paying their bill is somewhat hard (36 percent) or very hard (21 percent), compared with just one-fifth of those earning $60,000 or more per year. This data contributes to our finding that affordability is a significant concern for lower-income residents of Cambridge.

Figure 19: How hard is it to pay internet bill by household income

7.1.3 Questions for those without any home internet service—subscription or smartphone

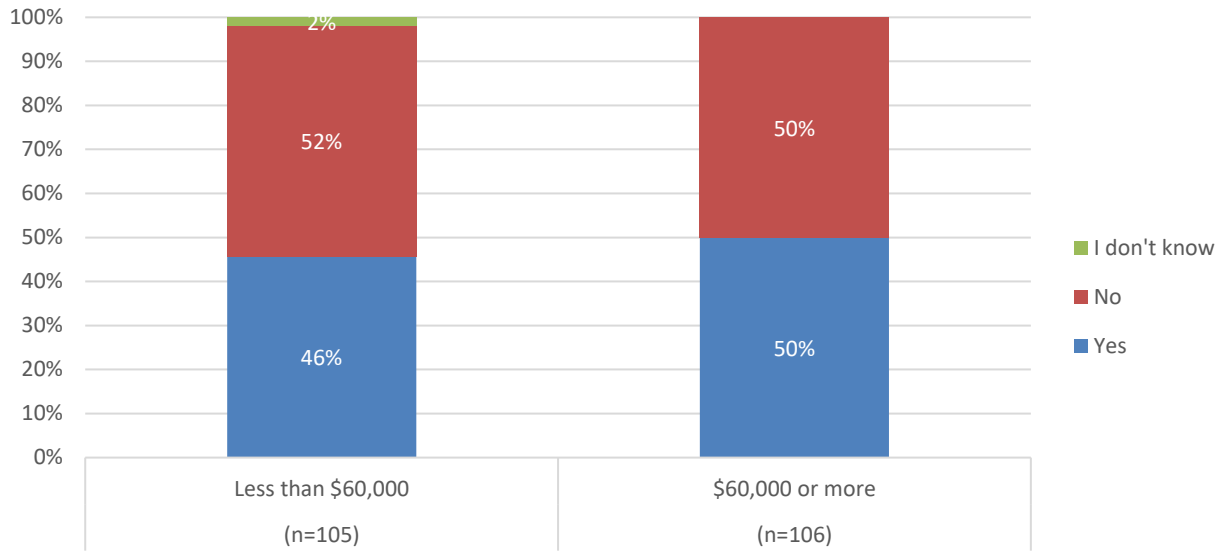
Respondents without internet services were asked to indicate the various reasons for this. The survey asked this question only of the very small number of people who lack any kind of service (neither a home subscription nor a smartphone), not the larger number who, while they might have a smartphone, don't have home internet subscriptions specifically. As such, this report will use American Community Survey data on this point.

Given that only 30 people who responded lack either a home subscription or mobile subscription, the sample is too small to analyze in-depth. Fifteen of the 27 individuals who answered cited the high expense as a barrier to having internet service. Twenty-three of 27 respondents without mobile or home internet service access the internet elsewhere outside the home; four individuals do not access the internet at any of the locations listed on the questionnaire.

7.1.4 Internet subsidy programs

All respondents were asked if they had heard of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which was available to eligible low-income households. As shown in Figure 20, only 46 percent of respondents with an annual household income of less than $60,000, and who thus might be in a position to take advantage of the ACP, are aware of this program. This datapoint supports our recommendation that enrollment support efforts be expanded in Cambridge.

Figure 20: Aware of the Affordable Connectivity Program by household income

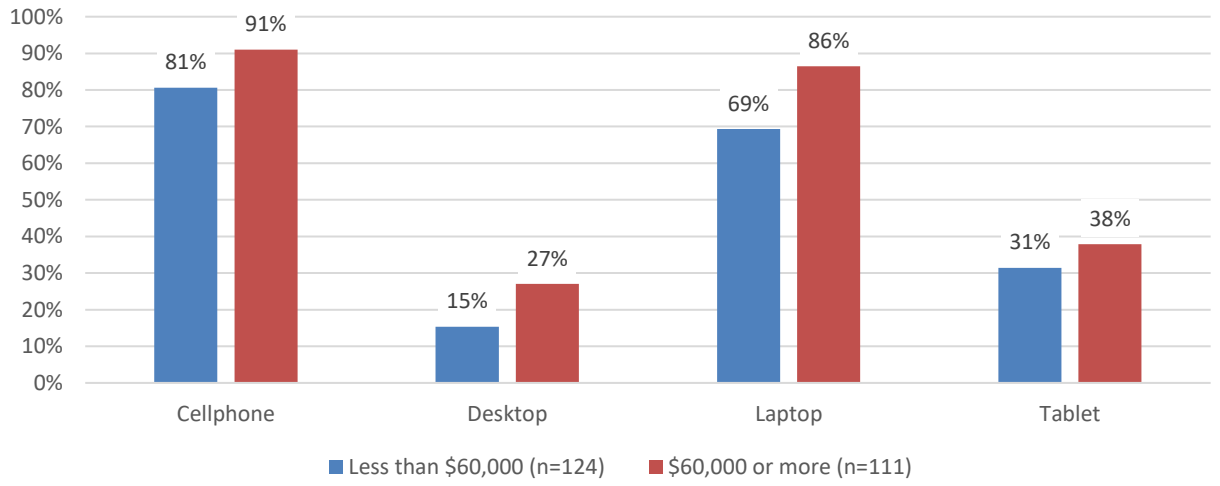


7.1.5 Computing devices used in household

Respondents were asked a series of questions about access to computing devices and types of devices used. Most respondents (82 percent) said everyone in their household has access to the computing devices they need to meet their everyday needs for internet use. However, those with an annual household income under $60,000 are less likely than those in higher-income households to have sufficient access (71 percent vs. 95 percent).

Specifically, those in lower-income households are less likely to use a cellphone (81 percents vs. 91 percent), desktop computer (15 percent vs. 27 percent), or laptop computer (69 percent vs. 86 percent) to connect to the internet, compared with those in higher-income households (see Figure 21). This informs our recommendation that device access programs for low-income residents of Cambridge be expanded.

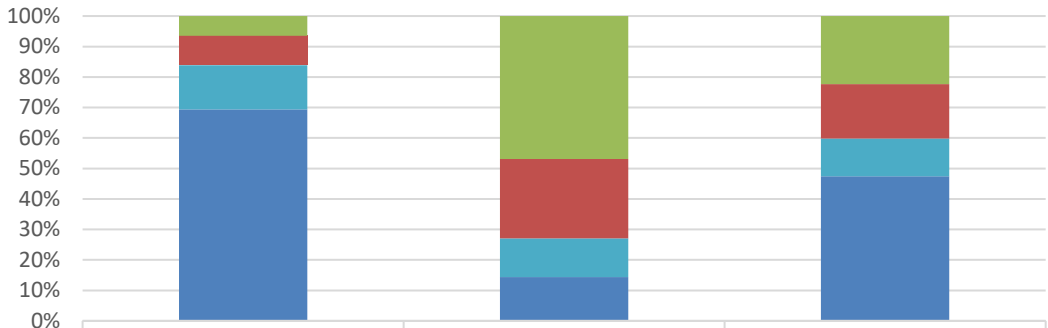
Figure 21: Devices used most of the time to connect to the internet by household income



As shown in Figure 22, 73 percent of respondents earning $60,000 or more per year would be able to

pay $500 or more for a laptop or desktop computer, compared with 16 percent of those earning under $60,000 per year. Sixty-nine percent of respondents in lower-income households could pay only $250 or less for a computer. Again, this informs our recommendation that device access programs for low-income residents of Cambridge be expanded.

Figure 22: Amount able to pay for laptop or desktop computer



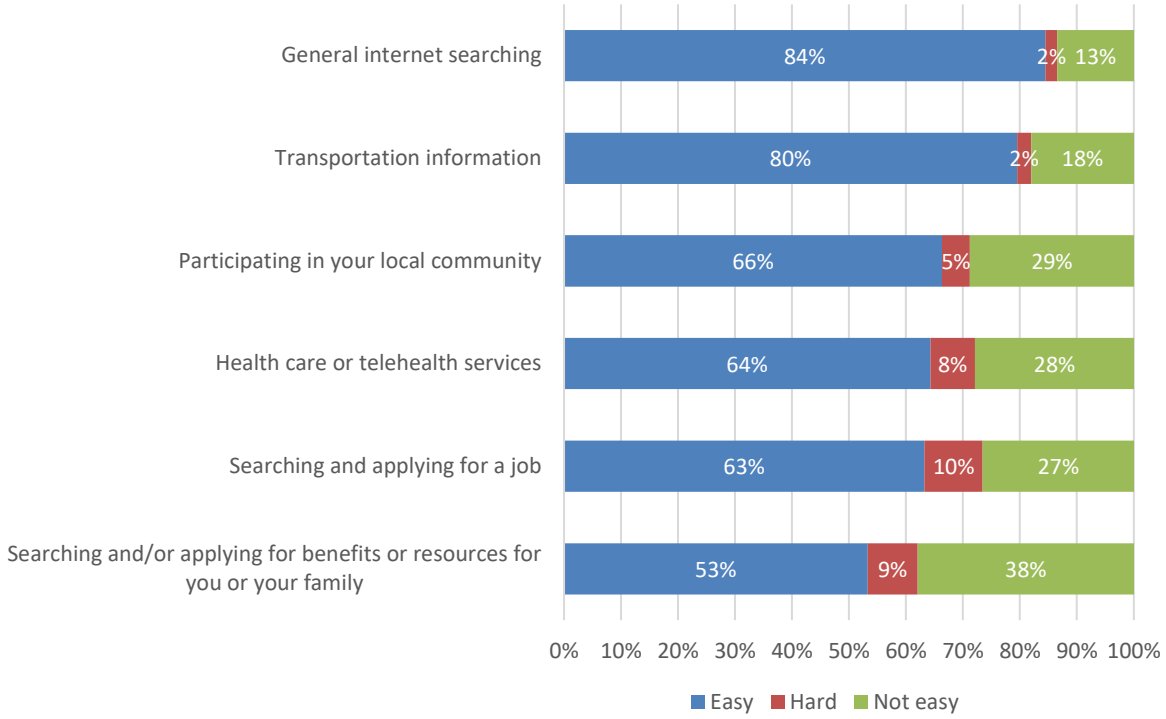
	Less than $60,000 (n=124)	$60,000 or more (n=111)	All Respondents (n=358)
More than $1,000	6%	47%	22%
$500-1000	10%	26%	18%
$250-500	15%	13%	12%
$0-250	69%	14%	47%

7.2 Digital skills

Respondents were asked a series of questions on how skilled they are using the internet in general and for specific activities. This information provides valuable insight into where there may be gaps in abilities and opportunities to educate residents. Nine in 10 respondents said they are able to regularly use the internet for online activities. However, a sizeable percentage of respondents said using the internet is hard/not easy for various tasks, as shown in Figure 23.

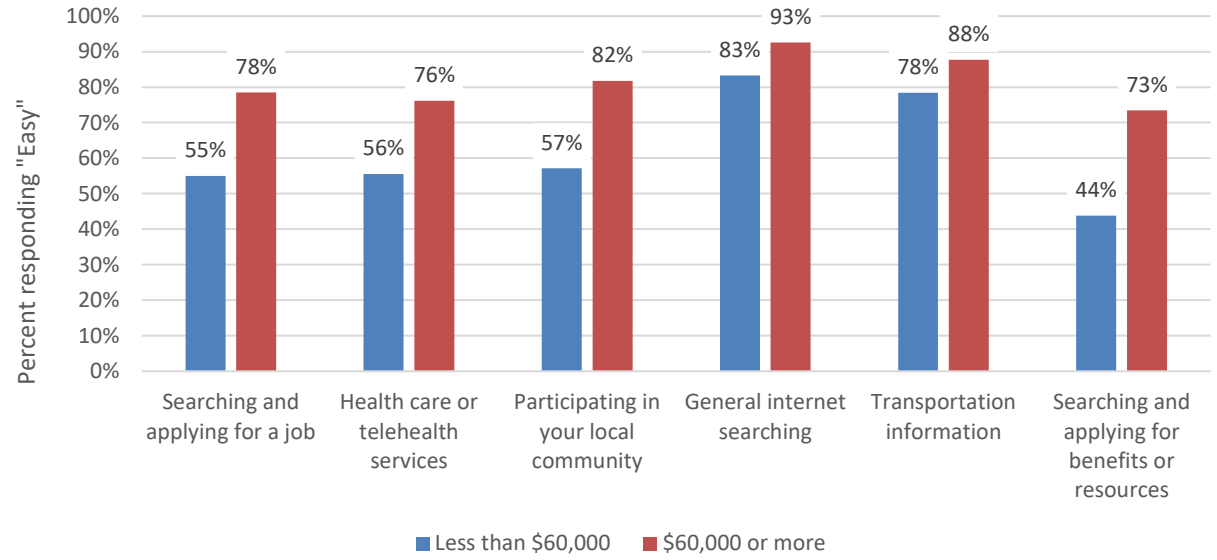
Most (84 percent) respondents said using the internet for general searching is easy, and 80 percent said using the internet transportation is easy. Roughly two-thirds said it is easy to use the internet for participating in their local community (66 percent), health care or telehealth services (64 percent), and searching for or applying for a job (63 percent). Fifty-three percent of respondents said it is easy to use the internet for searching and applying for benefits or resources.

Figure 23: Difficulty in using the internet for various tasks



However, as shown in Figure 24, respondents with a household income of less than $60,000 were less likely than those in higher-income households to say using the internet is easy for key tasks, particularly searching and applying for a job, health care or telehealth services, participating in their local community, and searching and applying for benefits and resources. This informs our recommendation that skills programs for low-income residents of Cambridge be expanded.

Figure 24: Ease in using the internet for various tasks by household income



Seventy-four percent of respondents were able to indicate the type of digital skills support they would be most interested in. Among this segment of respondents, preference was split among a do-it-yourself training module (29 percent), in-person classes (27 percent), and online classes (26 percent), as illustrated in Figure 25.

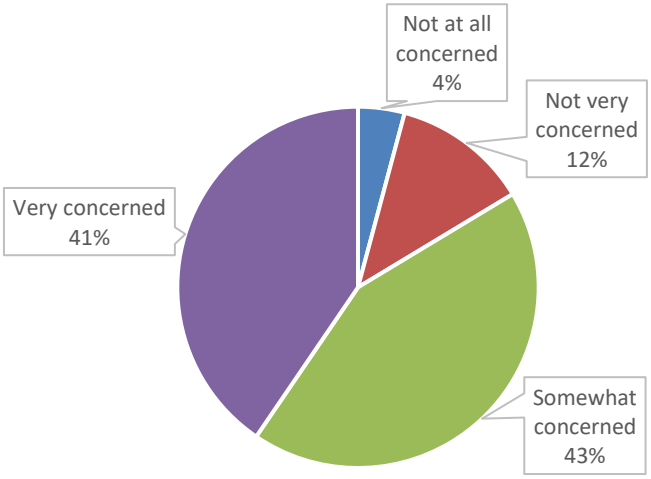
The question did not provide respondents with the opportunity to say they were not interested in taking any kind of class. In other jurisdictions, CTC has found that significant numbers of people, even those lacking skills, are not interested in attending classes. As such, these results should not be taken to mean that Cambridge needs to expand skills-training programs at the levels indicated here.

Figure 25: Digital skills support most interested in

7.3 Internet safety

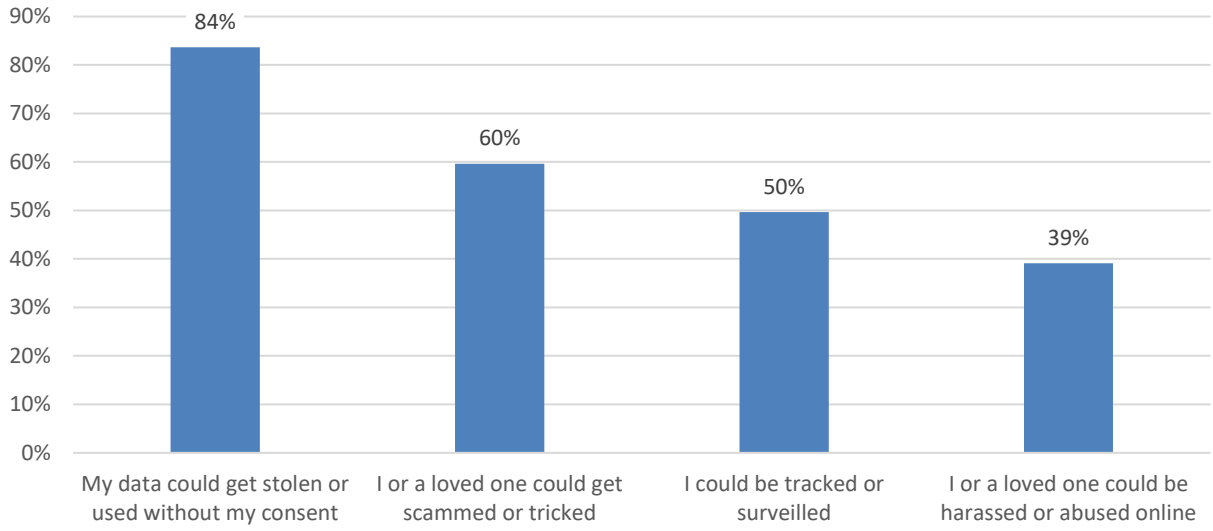
Cambridge residents across income and other demographic categories have significant concerns about online safety and privacy. Respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to individual awareness of, and the use of, measures to secure online privacy and internet safety. Most respondents are either somewhat concerned (43 percent) or very concerned (41 percent) about online safety (see Figure 26). Concern is high across all demographic groups.

Figure 26: Concern about online safety



Respondents are most concerned about their data being stolen or used without their consent, cited by 84 percent of those who responded to the question (see Figure 27). Six in 10 respondents are most concerned that they or a loved one could get scammed or tricked, and 50 percent are most concerned they could be tracked or surveilled. Another 39 percent are most concerned about being harassed or abused online.

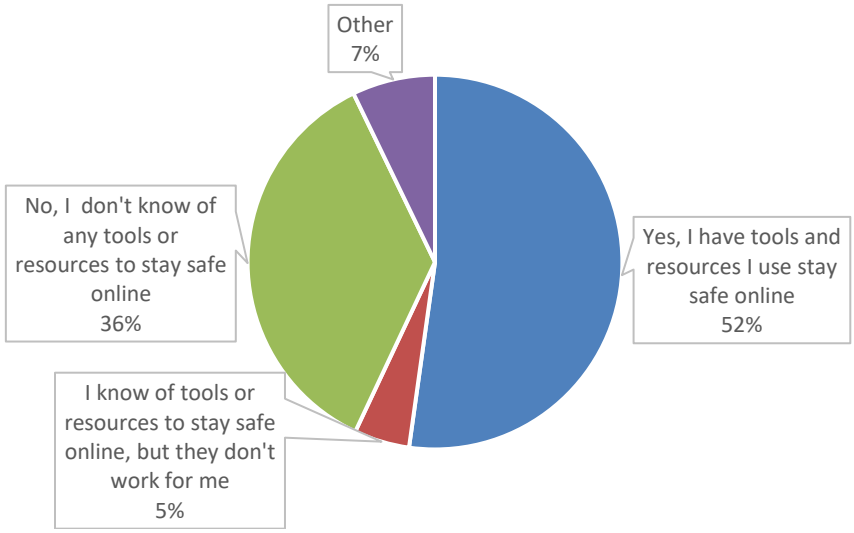
Figure 27: Most concerned about in regard to internet safety



More than one-half (52 percent) of respondents who answered said they have the tools and

resources they need to stay safe online (see Figure 28). (72 percent of respondents answered this question.) Another 36 percent of respondents said they do not know of any tools or resources to stay safe online, while five percent said they know of tools or resources but they do not work.

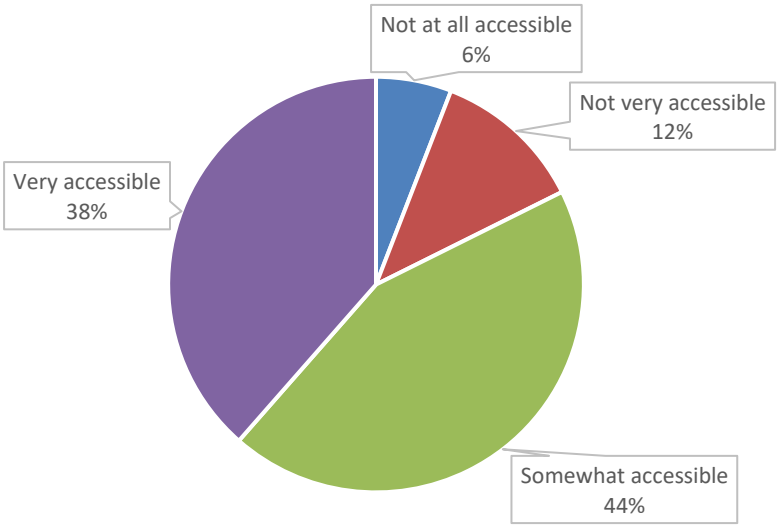
Figure 28: Aware of tools or resources respondents can use to stay safe online



7.4 Online accessibility and inclusivity

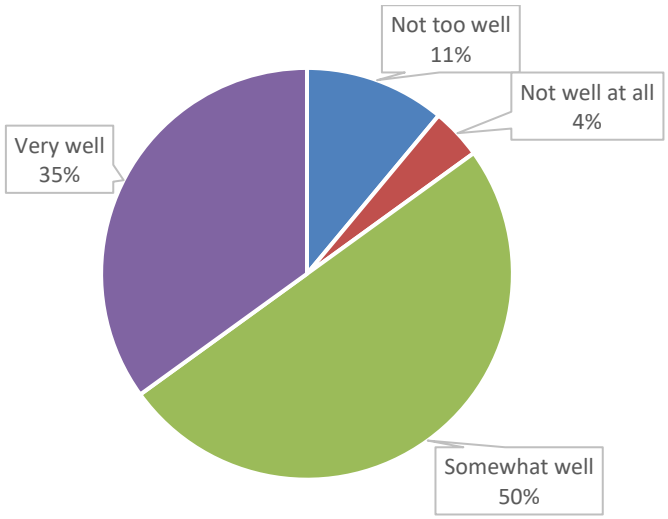
Respondents were asked questions related to online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services. Most respondents said online government services are somewhat accessible (44 percent) or very accessible (38 percent), as shown in Figure 29.

Figure 29: Accessibility of online government services



Eighty-five percent of respondents said online government services have worked somewhat well (50 percent) or very well (35 percent), as shown in Figure 30. Online government services are assessed highly across demographic groups.

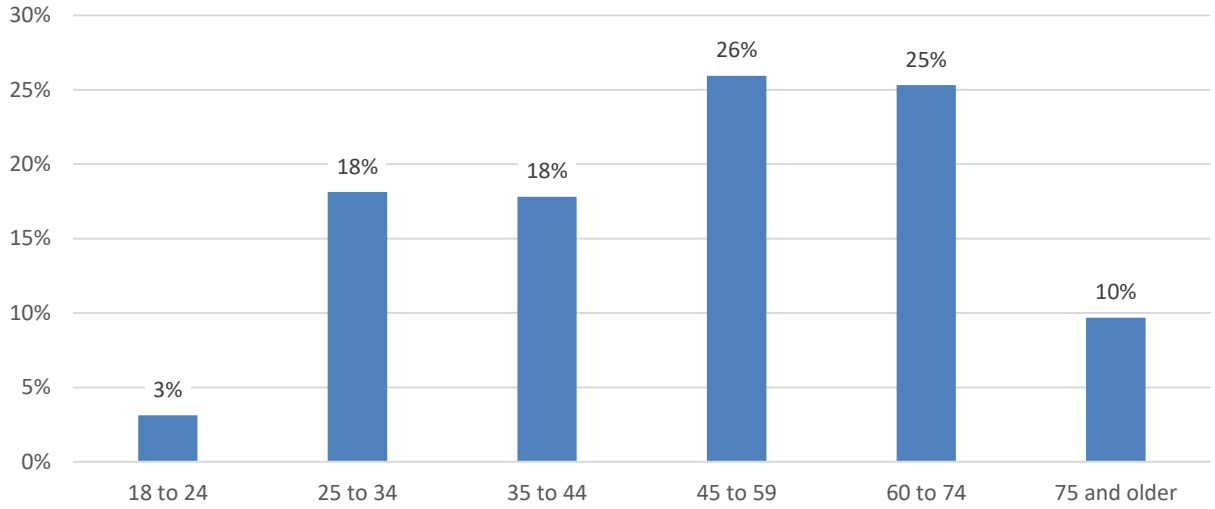
Figure 30: How well online government services have worked



7.5 Respondent information

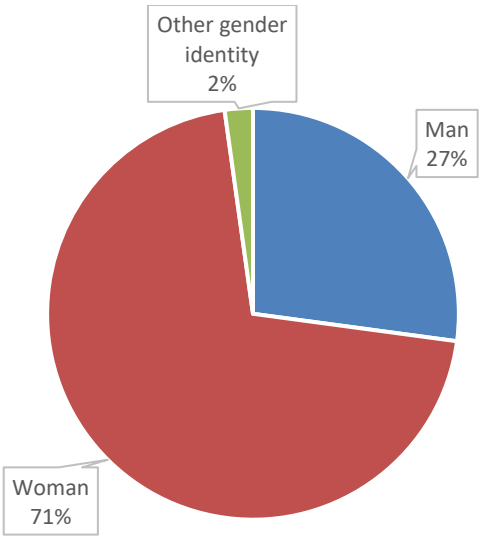
Basic demographic information was gathered from survey respondents and is summarized in this section. Several comparisons of respondent demographic information and other survey questions were provided previously in this report. As shown in Figure 31, 39 percent of respondents are under age 45, 26 percent are ages 45 to 59 years, and 35 percent are ages 60 or older.

Figure 31: Age of respondents



About seven in 10 respondents identify as a woman, and 27 percent identify as a man (see Figure 32). Two percent of respondents have another gender identity.

Figure 32: Gender identity



Respondents were asked to indicate the number of adults and children in their household. Twenty-six percent of households have two members, 19 percent have three or four household members, and 28 percent have five or more household members. Just 27 percent of respondents live alone (see Figure 33). More than one-third of respondents have children living in the household (see Figure 34).

Figure 33: Total household size

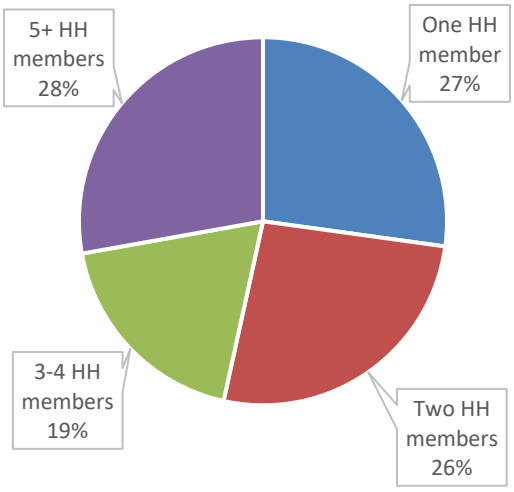
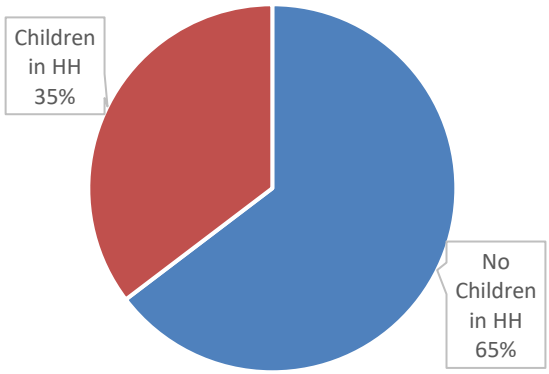
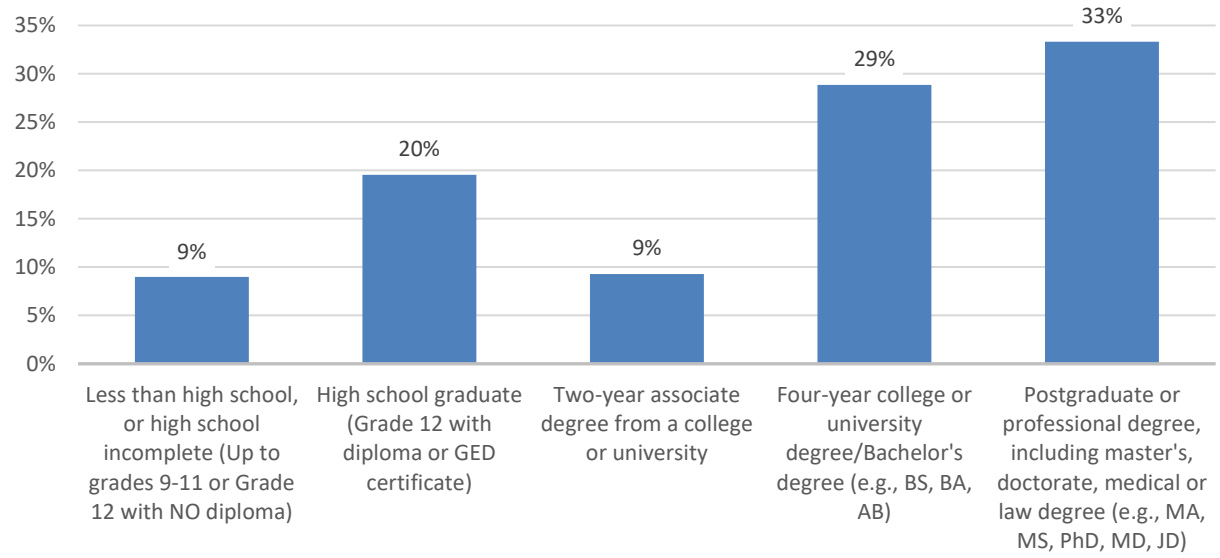


Figure 34: Number of children in household



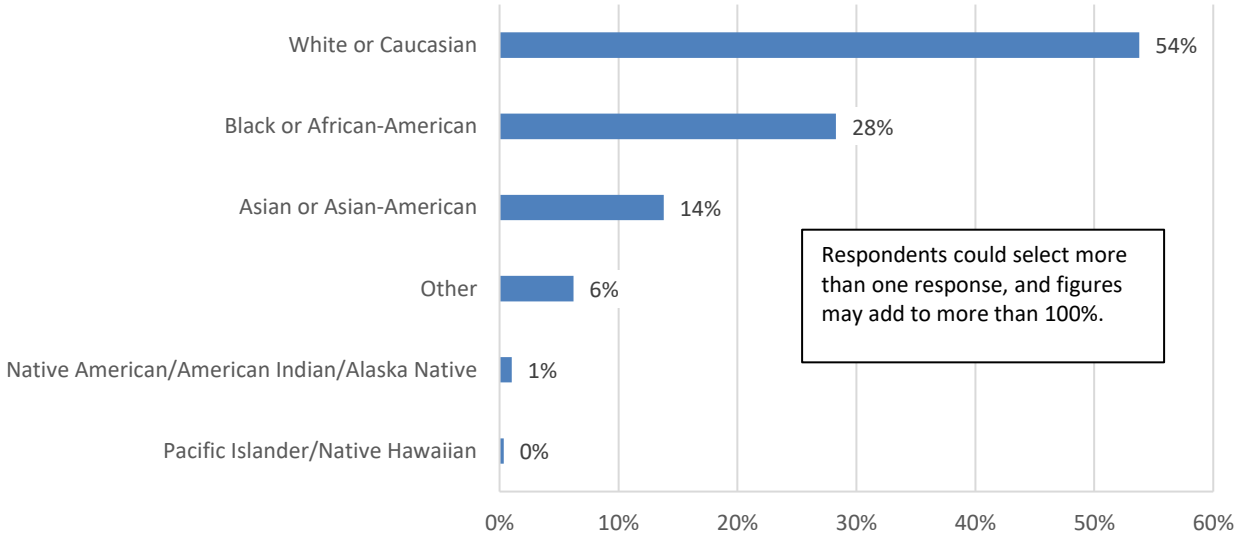
The respondents' highest level of education attained is summarized in Figure 35. Almost three in 10 respondents have a high school education or less, and nine percent have a two-year associate degree. Another 29 percent of respondents have a four-year college degree, and 33 percent have a postgraduate or professional degree.

Figure 35: Education of respondents



Respondents were asked to indicate what categories best describe their race (see Figure 36). Seventy-two percent of all respondents provided this information. Among this segment, 54 percent are White or Caucasian, 28 percent are Black or African American, and 14 percent are Asian or Asian American.

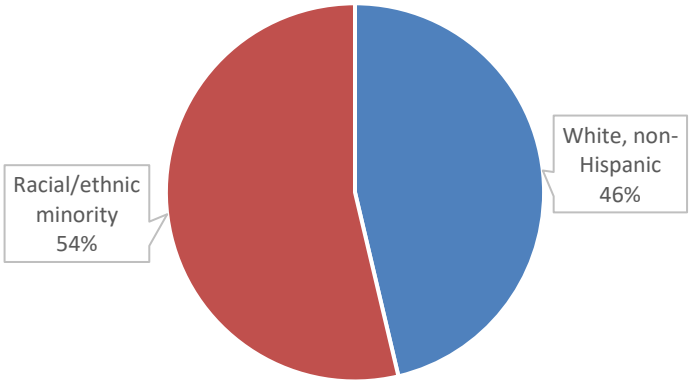
Figure 36: Race/ethnicity grouped



Respondents were also asked to indicate their ethnicity and if they belonged to a North American Indigenous, Native, or Tribal Group. Fourteen percent of respondents said they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Four percent of respondents belong to a North American Indigenous, Native, or Tribal Group. Among those who responded to the race and ethnicity questions, 46 percent are White, non-Hispanic, and 54 percent belong to a racial or ethnic minority group (see Figure 37).

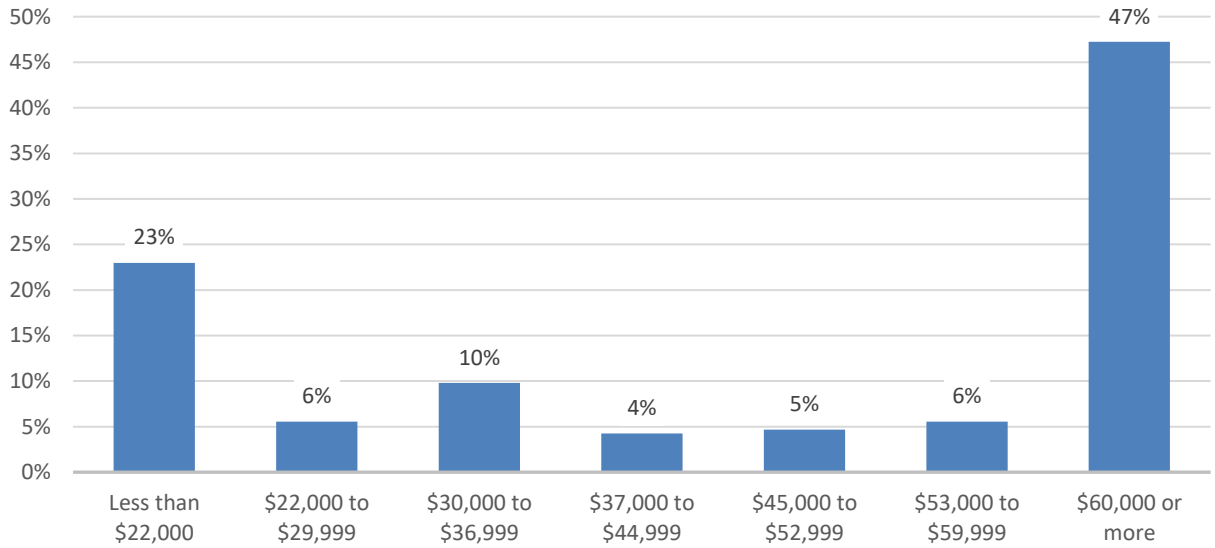
Keep in mind that approximately one-fourth of respondents cannot be classified (i.e., did not respond to race and ethnicity questions).

Figure 37: Race and ethnicity



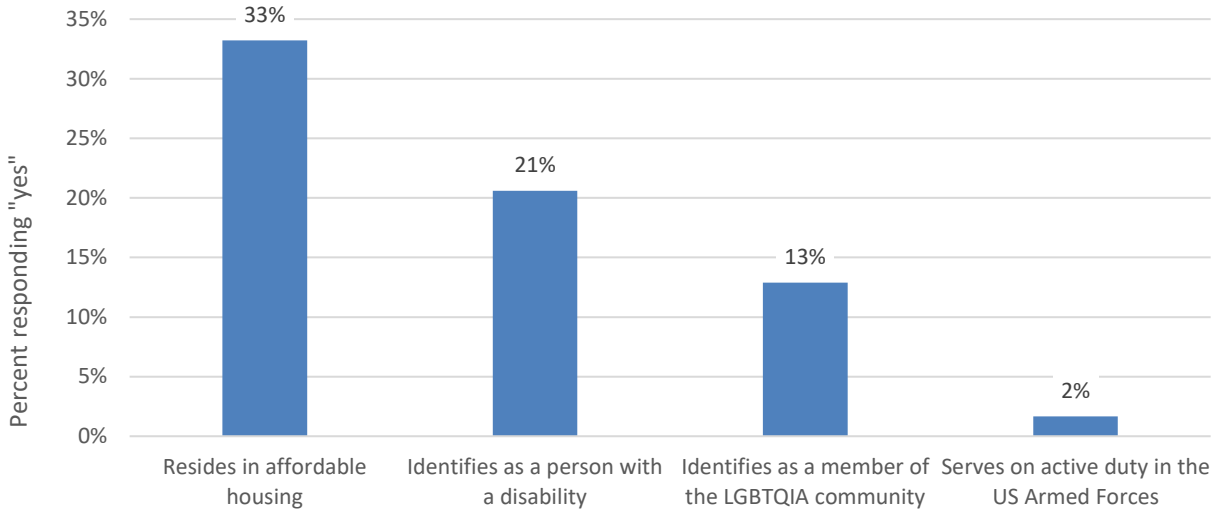
As illustrated in Figure 38, 53 percent of respondents have an annual household income of less than $60,000, and 47 percent earn $60,000 or more per year.

Figure 38: Annual household income



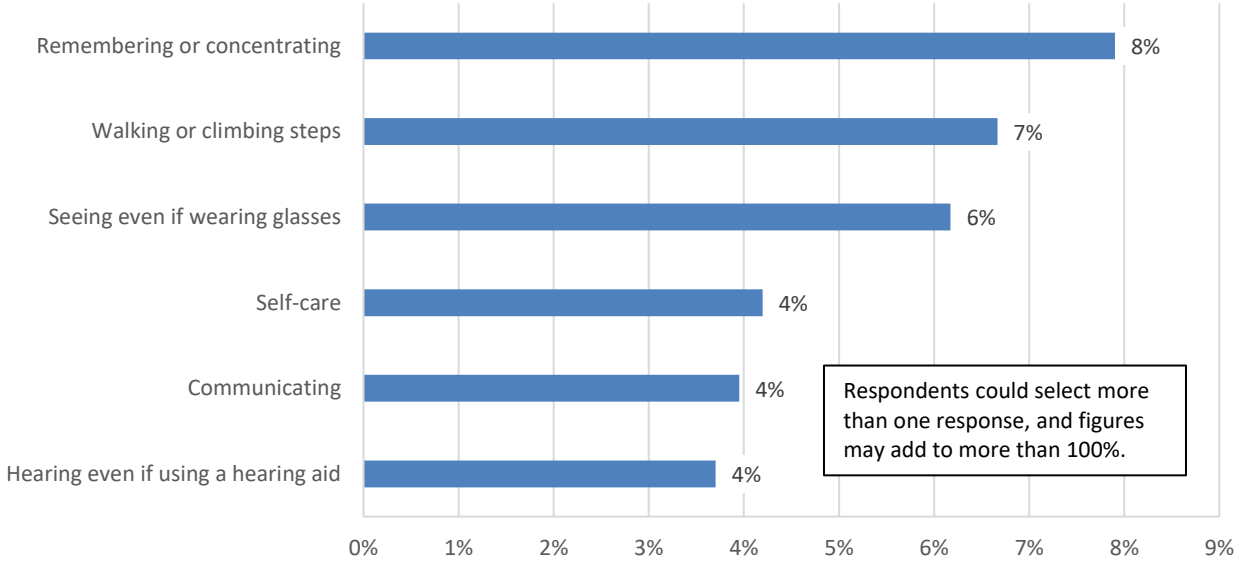
Respondents were asked if they belonged to certain other demographic groups. One-third of those who responded reside in affordable housing, and 21 percent said they identify as a person with a disability (see Figure 39). Additionally, 13 percent identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community, and two percent serve on active duty in the US Armed Forces.

Figure 39: Respondent belongs to particular demographic groups



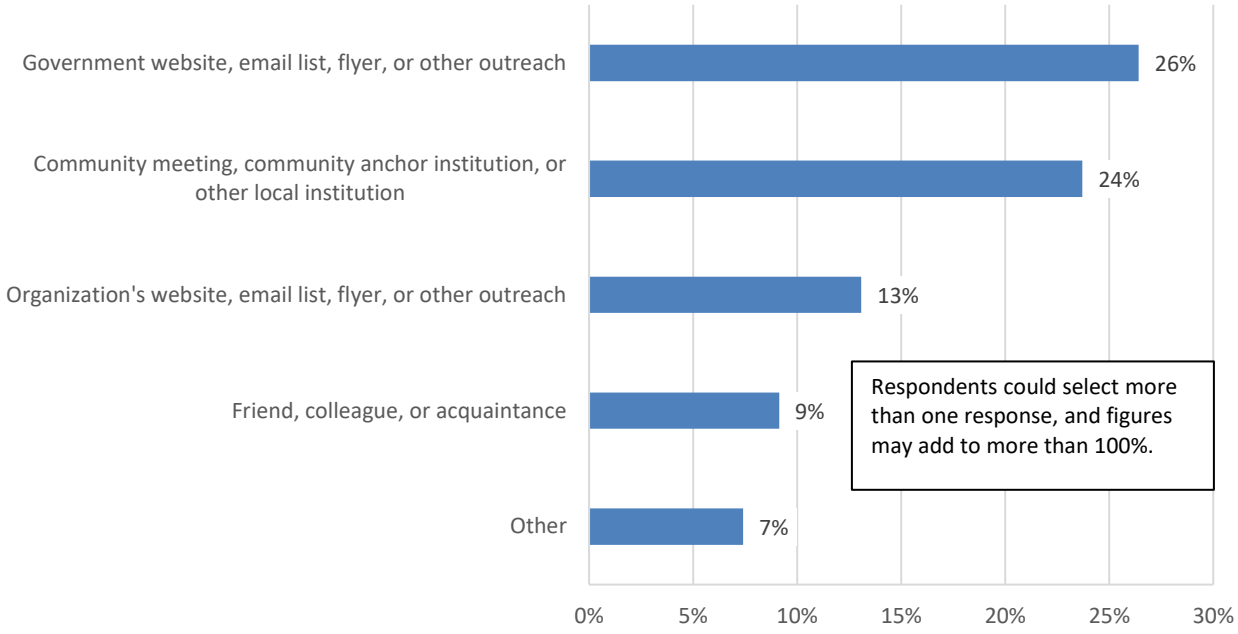
Additionally, respondents were asked if they faced difficulty in a variety of areas, as shown in Figure 40. Most respondents (81 percent) did not indicate any areas of difficulty. A small segment of respondents does face difficulties, such as with remembering or concentrating (eight percent), walking or climbing steps (seven percent), and seeing even if wearing glasses (six percent).

Figure 40: Respondent has difficulty in various areas



Respondents learned about the survey through a variety of sources, including 26 percent who heard about it from a government website, email list, flyer, or other outreach and 24 percent from a community meeting, community anchor institution, or other local institution. Other sources include an organization's website, email list, flyer, or other outreach (13 percent), and a friend, colleague, or acquaintance (nine percent; see Figure 41).

Figure 41: Where respondents heard about survey



8 Digital equity funding landscape

To implement strategies recommended in this report, the City and its stakeholders can potentially leverage certain funding sources.

8.1 MBI's Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program is available to municipalities for amounts up to $100,000

MBI launched its direct grant program, the Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program (MDEIP)—for municipalities to access funds to implement programs proposed through this and similar reports.[55] The City of Cambridge can start its application for these funds immediately, using this report and ongoing conversations with local organizations as a guide.

The one-time grant of up to $100,000 is intended to help municipalities make local digital equity investments and execute projects that will increase access, adoption, and usage of the internet.[56] Applications are reviewed by MBI on a rolling basis (see Appendix C for examples of implementation projects in other municipalities).

CTC is ready to assist the City in the process of applying for an implementation grant at no cost to the City; MBI has already pre-approved covering the cost of this assistance.

8.2 MBI Launchpad program was paused following a Trump administration announcement

Massachusetts was allocated $14.1 million under the Digital Equity Act Capacity Grant Program, of which $9.44 million was intended to supply grants under MBI's Launchpad Program[57]. The City had submitted a concept paper for this effort, but the state's Capacity Grant award was terminated by the federal administration on May 9, 2025, meaning that the Launchpad Program is suspended until further notice.

8.3 MBI's Digital Equity Partnerships Program supports nine organizations across the state, which can potentially assist the City of Cambridge

MBI's Broadband Innovation Fund addresses immediate and ongoing digital equity needs and has awarded nine organizations across the state with funding necessary to implement various initiatives. Some of these efforts can indirectly benefit the City of Cambridge, as noted below.

In 2023, MBI announced it was awarding funds through the Broadband Innovation Fund to nine partners to facilitate the implementation of programs that address six key areas of digital equity:

1. digital literacy,
2. Wi-Fi access,

---

[55] Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program, MBI Massachusetts Broadband Institute, https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation.

[56] "Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program", MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation.

[57] "Launchpad Program," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/launchpad-program.

3. public space modernization,
4. connectivity for economic hardship,
5. device distribution and refurbishment, and
6. education, outreach, and adoption.

The nine grant awardees are AgeSpan, Tech Goes Home, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Metro North Workforce Investment Board, UMass Lowell, Vinfen, City of Boston, and Baystate Health. Each partner has a defined scope of services, and their programs will be in operation through June 30, 2026. To varying degrees, the City of Cambridge or its residents can benefit from some of the programs, as noted in the following subsections.

8.3.1 Tech Goes Home

Tech Goes Home's goal is to support residents in Massachusetts to receive access to the digital tools, skills, and connectivity they need to thrive. In April 2023 it was announced that Tech Goes Home would be receiving a grant of $4.5 million to address four critical areas to close the digital divide:

1. Connectivity for economic hardship,
2. Digital literacy,
3. Device distribution and refurbishment, and
4. Education, outreach, and engagement.

Through MBI's Partnership Program, 16 local entities in Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Springfield, and Worcester have partnered with Tech Goes Home to advance digital education and device gaps by providing digital tools, skills, and connectivity necessary to thrive.[58] Although Cambridge is not included in this list, a number of entities in the City have partnered with, or are currently partnering with, Tech Goes Home including Cambridge Housing Authority and Cambridge Public Library (see Section 5.5 and Section 0 for details).

Local entities that are interested in offering digital literacy education and device distribution programs can still partner with Tech Goes Home directly. To get started on this process, interested local entities can complete this partnership inquiry form.[59]

[58] "Massachusetts Awards $14 Million to Address Digital Divide," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/news/massachusetts-awards-14-million-address-digital-divide.
[59] "Partnerships," Tech Goes Home, https://www.techgoeshome.org/becoming-a-tgh-site.

8.3.2 Metropolitan Area Planning Council

MBI has partnered with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), to award $5.6 million for the Apartment Wi-Fi program.

This program allows MAPC to provide procurement support, capital expense funding, and funding for the first year of operating expenses to provide free Wi-Fi internet access to residents living in roughly 2,400 public and affordable housing units in Massachusetts. The effort targets residents most likely to face barriers to connectivity—those experiencing housing insecurity who have access to broadband but cannot afford it.[60]

If the Cambridge Housing Authority or other affordable housing providers in the City wish to consider applying for this program they can expressing interest at this link.

8.3.3 Mass League of Community Health Centers

The Mass League is a recipient of MBI's Digital Equity Partnership grant, using its funding to help hire and staff a digital navigator at 12 community health centers across the Commonwealth. The navigators assist the health center patients with low-cost internet enrollment. Each health center also chose what digital health tools they would focus on, which could be telehealth, remote patient monitoring, or enrollment in patient portals with the goal that if patients are digitally engaged in their care, they will have healthier outcomes.

Mass League has an established digital navigation program under the FQHC (federally-qualified health center) Telehealth Consortium (FQHC Telehealth Consortium – Bridging the Health Equity Divide), which was founded during the pandemic as a partnership between C3 ACO and the Mass League. Community Health Centers serve the most underserved and diverse populations in healthcare, so the services are provided by and at the health centers for their patients in need.

No Cambridge health centers participate in this Partnership Program.

8.3.4 AgeSpan

AgeSpan is a statewide organization supporting more than 230 age- and dementia-friendly communities, including Cambridge. (Age-and dementia friendly communities are municipalities that have infrastructure, programs, and policies geared to assist older people or people with dementia. Cambridge is included on the state's list of 230 such municipalities.[61])

AgeSpan supports MBI as part of the Statewide Digital Equity Plan Working Group and collaborates with various partners, including Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, to promote the inclusion of older adults in state and local digital equity planning and programs, working to connect aging services (councils on aging, affordable senior housing, aging service access points) to other partners doing this work including colleges, libraries, and housing partners.[62]

---

[60] "Smart Growth and Regional Collaboration: Apartment Wi-Fi," MAPC, https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/digital-equity/apartment-wi-fi/.
[61] "Examples of age- and dementia friendly community characteristics," Mass.gov, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/examples-of-age-and-dementia-friendly-community-characteristics.
[62] "About Us," AgeSpan, https://agespan.org/about-us/.

Areas of focus for this program include providing tablets, offering training to help blind and visually impaired individuals, offering educational programs to protect against online fraud online, and helping boost enrollment in low-cost broadband programs.[63] More details on this program, which is offered on the North Shore, can be found at this link.

Under this Partnerships Grant, Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services operates the Technology Access Program (TAP), which provides seniors with both drop-in and home visit-based digital skills building and training assistance, where participating seniors can receive support with enrolling in home internet, learn how to access health services and resources, and learn how to connect with family and friends online using participants phones, computers and tablets.[64] For more details on TAP and to view a calendar outlining dates for drop-in sessions and workshops, follow this link.

8.3.5 Vinfen

In April 2023, Vinfen, on behalf of a group of Boston hospitals and other entities comprising the Human Services Alliance for Digital Equity,[65] received $4.3 million to increase digital inclusion among low-income people with physical disabilities, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and serious mental health conditions. The alliance deploys 15 technology navigators to help people obtain digital devices, develop digital skills, and enroll in low-cost broadband programs. The technology navigators collaborate with people served in their homes and in service settings. Individuals are primarily served through a closed referral system. Still, the alliance can offer materials and resources to interested municipalities seeking information for digital inclusion in telehealth for individuals with disabilities. In addition, the City of Cambridge can contact the MBI Partnerships Program lead at Vinfen, Jessie Wolfe, for more information on how Cambridge residents with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities can begin receiving telehealth services from participating organizations of the Alliance.

8.3.6 Metro North Workforce Investment Board

The Metro North Workforce Investment Board was formed to set and oversee workforce policy in the Metro North region of Massachusetts. The goal of the board is to ensure federal and state funds are efficiently and appropriately applied to workforce development programs and initiatives that serve the needs of the region and its residents.[66] In 2023, the Board received an award of $4.1 million to expand its digital equity initiatives by hiring and training 32 digital navigators and provide employment and career counseling, provide 1,500 refurbished laptops, 300 hotspots, and provide

---

[63] "Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards $20 Million to Boost Digital Equity," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/news/healey-driscoll-administration-awards-20-million-boost-digital-equity.

[64] "Technology Access Program Events," Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, https://eldercare.org/find-what-you-need/advice-info/tap-events/

[65] Organizations that comprise the Alliance are: Advocates, Behavioral Health Network, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston Center for Independent Living, Clinical Support Options, Open Sky, Riverside Community Care, and Vinfen.

[66] "Home," Metro North Workforce Investment Board, https://masshiremetronorth.org/.

internet access and IT support to recipients.[67] These digital navigators are stationed at 16 local and regional partner organizations and serve 39 Cities and Towns in and around Metro North.

In Cambridge, Cambridge Community Television and Just-A-Start Corporation are participating in this Partnerships Program. See Section 5.3 and 5.10 for more information on these entities digital navigation efforts.

8.3.7 UMass Lowell

A $4 million grant was awarded to UMass Lowell to lead a digital equity initiative serving Leominster, Fitchburg, Lowell, Haverhill, and Lawrence, and communities in Merrimack Valley, Northern Worcester County, and the North Shore. Partnering with 13 other higher education community entities, UMass Lowell provides technical skills, support and training for student digital navigators, and project management resources. Through this grant, UMass Lowell will also be improving multiple public facilities with broadband service, creating a multi-tiered digital literacy and navigation initiative that establishes a regional help desk at UMass Lowell and advances new digital literacy programs, distributing 1,200 new or refurbished devices, and expanding low-cost broadband outreach and adoption programs at six community-based organizations.[68]

8.3.8 City of Boston

The City of Boston was awarded $5 million in grant funding directed to the Boston Housing Authority to support residents seeking affordable and dependable internet connectivity, and to other community organizations that support telehealth programs in Boston and establish workforce development programs through refurbishing distributed devices. A portion of this grant will also go toward the expansion of the City's publicly accessible Wicked Free Wi-Fi network, and to expand the City's Digital Equity Fund.[69]

8.4 Three other funding opportunities are potentially available to the City of Cambridge

8.4.1 MBI's Residential Retrofit Program

The Residential Retrofit program deploys fiber at public and affordable housing properties to replace deficient wiring and infrastructure through grants to qualified ISPs who will install, own, and maintain equipment.[70] This program is operated by MBI using Capital Projects Fund money.

Similar to MAPC's Apartment Wi-Fi program application, Cambridge's housing authority can apply for this program online by expressing interest at this link.

---

[67] "Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards $20 Million to Boost Digital Equity," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/news/healey-driscoll-administration-awards-20-million-boost-digital-equity.

[68] "Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards $20 Million to Boost Digital Equity," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/news/healey-driscoll-administration-awards-20-million-boost-digital-equity.

[69] "$5 Million in New Grant Funding to Expand Digital Equity," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/news/5-million-new-grant-funding-expand-digital-equity.

[70] "Residential Retrofit Program," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/retrofit.

8.4.2 Municipal Fiber Grant

The Massachusetts Division of Local Services is offering municipalities with the opportunity to apply for the Municipal Fiber Grant program, which offers assistance for the construction of municipally-owned fiber networks. Through this grant, the state hopes for municipalities to achieve certain goals of improving operations or improving disaster recovery and resiliency. Examples of this may include prevention of cyber security risks in local government, providing room for growth in internet bandwidth as municipalities grow, and supporting various infrastructure that rely on dependable technology for municipal needs including public safety, radio, and emergency operations centers.[71]

All fiber built must be owned by the municipality, and awards are up to $250,000 per individual municipality, or $500,000 for multi-jurisdictional municipalities.[72]

8.4.3 The Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate program can bring discounted services to schools and libraries in the area

The Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate program was created in 1996 to enhance access to advanced telecommunications and information services for all public and nonprofit elementary and secondary school classrooms and libraries.[73] E-Rate is one of four programs comprising the Universal Service Fund (USF) and is funded by fees paid by telecommunications companies to fulfill the Congressional goals of universal service.

E-Rate is a $4.27 billion federal funding program managed by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) that approves and provides subsidy discounts for telecommunications and information services for schools and libraries. In late 2023, the FCC made the latest addition to the list of eligible services by approving subsidies for Wi-Fi services on school buses as an eligible program expense to help close the "homework gap" for students with limited broadband access at home.

Eligible schools and libraries identify goods or services they need and submit a request for competitive bids to USAC, which then posts these requests on its website for vendors to bid on. After reviewing the vendors' bids, the school or library selects the most cost-effective eligible products and services using price as the primary factor. It then applies to USAC for approval of the desired purchases.

Funds are awarded as discounts ranging from 20 to 90 percent of the eligible costs and discount levels are based on the poverty level of the schools. Rural schools and libraries may also receive a higher discount. Recipients must pay a portion of the service costs. Often, schools and libraries will form consortia to centralize and manage the E-Rate application, reporting, and budgeting processes with a central point of contact.[74]

---

[71] "About the Municipal Fiber Grant Program," Mass.gov, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-the-municipal-fiber-grant-program.
[72] "Municipal Fiber Grant Program FAQ," Mass.gov, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-fiber-grant-program-faq#what-kind-of-projects-are-eligible?-.
[73] Universal Service Administrative Co., E-Rate, https://www.usac.org/e-rate/.
[74] Universal Service Administrative Co., E-Rate, Consortia, https://www.usac.org/e-rate/applicant-process/before-you-begin/consortia/.

Eligible schools and libraries in Massachusetts received $10.1 million in E-rate disbursements in 2023.[75] The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners[76] tracks E-Rate participation by libraries and library networks and provides information and resources about the program. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Digital Learning provides similar outreach and education for schools.[77] While Massachusetts does not manage a state-wide consortium, several of the state's library networks and school districts participate in E-Rate.

Interested entities should monitor USAC's E-Rate webpage for the upcoming application window announcement.

[75] Universal Service Administrative Co., E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+, https://opendata.usac.org/E-Rate/E-Rate-FRN-Status-Tool-FY2016-/8xzh-ytkh.
[76] E-rate in Massachusetts Libraries, https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/e-rate/index.php.
[77] Technology Planning and Sustainability, E-Rate, https://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/planning-funding/E-rate/.

Appendix A: JEDI Digital Navigators Spotlight slide deck

Digital JEDI Consortium

Digital Navigators Spotlight

May 20, 2025

Digital JEDI Consortium

Justice • Equity • Diversity • Inclusion

05/20/2025

Agenda

- **Digital JEDI Consortium Overview** (5 mins)
- **Stories from the Digital Navigators Panel Discussion** (30 mins)
- **Impact Data** (10 mins)
- **How to Get Involved** (5 mins)

Digital JEDI Consortium Overview:

Goal/Mission:

Reduce the digital inequities in workforce/career development that **Black, Indigenous, POC (BIPOC), Immigrant, and Low-Income** communities experience in the Metro North and Northshore regions.

Desired Long-Term Impact:

Increase upward-economic mobility **among BIPOC, Immigrant, and Low-Income communities** in the Metro North and North Shore regions.

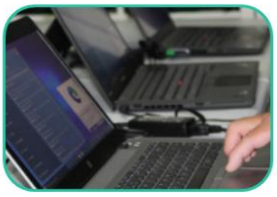
Program Initiatives:

Digital Navigator (DN) Cohort

- Individualized support for digital needs
- Professional Development Opportunities

Digital Literacy Courses

- Intermediate
- Advanced



Device Distribution

- Laptops
- Hotspots

Education, Outreach and Adoption

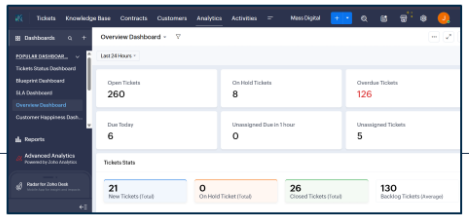
- Print and Digital Advertising
- Community-organizing and in-person outreach

Digital Navigator Cohort:

18 DNs at partner sites across Metro North and North Shore assist community members with 5 Digital Service Areas:

Tech Support	Device Distribution	Digital Literacy	Community Care Resources	Internet Access
• Assistance with Online Activities • Assistance with Software • Assistance with Hardware	• Refurbished Windows Laptops • Hotspots	• Entry Level Courses • Intermediate/Advanced Courses	• Information on community resources and social services • Information on educational and training opportunities	• Subsidized Internet Plans • Assistance with Wi-Fi Issues

Service Requests are stored as Tickets via the **JEDI Integrated services HUB:**



DN Professional Development

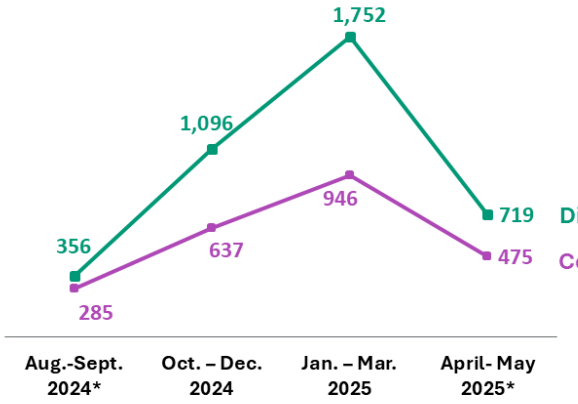
- Experience with ticketing systems and IT Support with MACIR (Massachusetts Association of Computer and Internet Resources)
- Professional Certifications: Google IT Certification
- Supplementary Trainings with NDIA (National Digital Inclusion Alliance)
- Direct Service and Case Management experience

DN Panel Discussion

- Samara Murrell, Moderator-Cambridge
- Dana Grotenstein, Cambridge
- Destiny Martinez, Everett
- Andres Martinez Chavez, Lynn
- Nelson Montesinos, Chelsea

Community Members and Digital Service Requests Overview

8/01/2024-5/13/2025



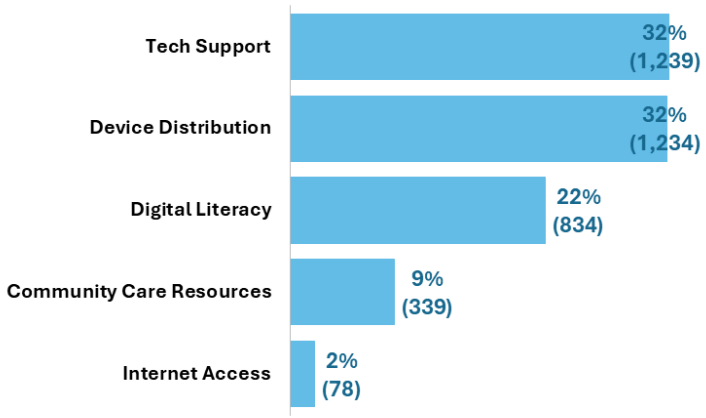
3,983
Digital service requests (tickets) received since August 2024

1,869
Unique community members supported since August 2024

*DN services officially went live in August
*Currently in the April-June quarter

Digital Service Request Categories

8/01/2024-5/13/2025



Jan.-Mar. 2025
First Quarter that Tech Support Exceeded Device Distribution Requests

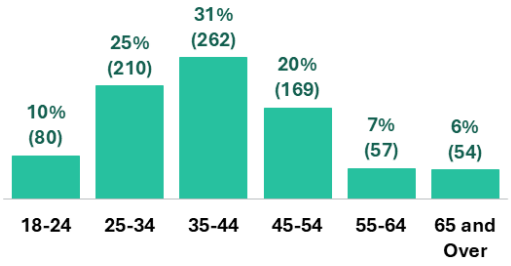
Tech Support
Top Request-Device Use, Software & Applications, Device Troubleshooting, Job Search & Online Applications

811
Laptops Distributed

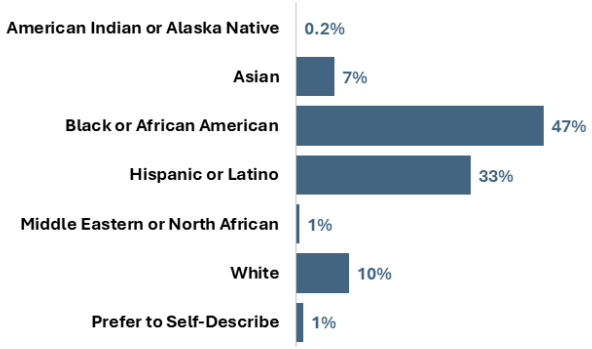
Demographics of Community Members

8/01/2024-5/13/2025

Over half of the community members are between the **ages of 25-44 years old**.



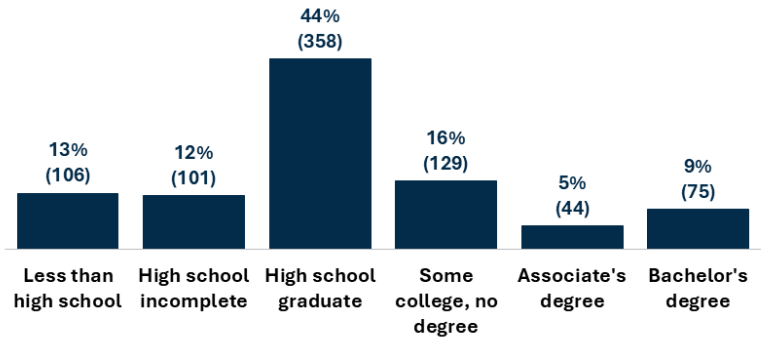
DNs are **reaching JEDI's priority communities**, with almost 90% identifying as Black, Indigenous, POC (BIPOC).



Education/Workforce Demographics

8/01/2024-5/13/2025

69% of community members supported have a high school diploma or less than high school education.



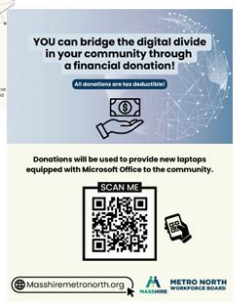
54%
Of community members reported they were looking for a job or to improve skills for career development.

This question is only asked for device distribution, digital literacy classes, and internet access.

Ways to Support the Digital JEDI Consortium

Support fundraising efforts to purchase more laptops.

Donation Form Link



Find new funding opportunities to sustain program.

Appendix B: MBI survey

MBI
MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE
at the MassTech Collaborative

Massachusetts Statewide Digital Equity Survey

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

Section 1: Please answer the following questions.

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

Do you have internet service in your home?

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

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

3. Who is your internet service provider? _____
4. What kind of internet service do you have at home? Please check all that apply.
   - ☐ A data plan for a smartphone, hotspot, or tablet
   - ☐ Home wireline connection (cable, fiber, DSL, etc.)
   - ☐ Dial-up internet
   - ☐ Satellite internet
5. How well does your home internet service work?
   - ☐ Good enough to meet my household's needs
   - ☐ Not good enough to meet my household's needs
   - ☐ I don't know
6. Is your home internet service bundled with other services such as telephone or TV?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
7. How much do you pay for the internet every month? $_____
8. How hard is it for you to pay your internet bill?
   - ☐ Very hard
   - ☐ Somewhat hard
   - ☐ Not too hard
   - ☐ Not at all hard
9. Have you heard about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) that provides discounted internet service for low-income households?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ I don't know

   For more information and to find out if you qualify for ACP, call the Federal Communication Commission's ACP Support Center: 877-384-2575.

When complete, skip to section 4 below.

Section 3: Please answer the following questions only if you CANNOT connect to the internet at home.

10. If you do not have internet service in your home, what is the reason?
    - ☐ Service is not available in my area
    - ☐ Service is too expensive
    - ☐ I am concerned about online privacy or safety
    - ☐ I don't feel confident navigating the internet or using online tools
    - ☐ I can't afford or access a device to use the internet
    - ☐ I don't want / don't use the internet.
    - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

11. If you do not have internet at home, where do you go to use the internet? Please check all that apply.
    - ☐ A workplace
    - ☐ A friend or family member's home
    - ☐ School, college, or university
    - ☐ A library or community center
    - ☐ A business such as a restaurant, cafe, or bookstore (e.g., McDonald's, Taco Bell, Starbucks, etc.)
    - ☐ A public space such as a park or government building
    - ☐ On public transit
    - ☐ I do not regularly access internet in these or any other spaces
    - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

When complete, proceed to section 4 below.

Section 4: All respondents should answer these questions.

12. Does everyone in your household have access to the computer devices they need to meet their everyday needs for internet use? (Computers, smartphones, tablets, or other internet enabled devices)?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

13. Which of the following devices do you use most of the time to connect to the internet? (Check all that apply)
    - ☐ Cellphone
    - ☐ Desktop computer
    - ☐ Laptop computer
    - ☐ Tablet (or similar device)
    - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

14. How much would you be able to pay for a laptop or desktop computer?
    - ☐ $0-50
    - ☐ $50-100
    - ☐ $100-150
    - ☐ $150-250
    - ☐ $250-500
    - ☐ More than $1,000

15. Are you able to regularly use the internet for online activities?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

16. Please rank the level of difficulty for what you use the internet for. (Easy, Not easy, Hard)

	Easy	*Not easy*	*Hard*
Searching and applying for a job	☐	☐	☐
Health care or telehealth services	☐	☐	☐
Participating in your local community	☐	☐	☐
General internet searching	☐	☐	☐
Transportation information	☐	☐	☐
Searching and/or applying for benefits or resources for you or your family	☐	☐	☐

17. If you do not have regular access to the internet, what would most like to use it for if you could?
    - ☐ Searching and applying for a job
    - ☐ Health care or telehealth services
    - ☐ Participating in your local community
    - ☐ General internet searching
    - ☐ Transportation information
    - ☐ Searching and/or applying for benefits or resources for you and your family
    - ☐ Something else
    - ☐ I don't want to use the internet regularly

18. What kind of digital skills support would you be most interested in?
    - ☐ In person classes
    - ☐ Online classes
    - ☐ In person support from a friend or instructor
    - ☐ A do-it-yourself training module

19. How concerned are you, if at all, about internet safety?
    - ☐ Very concerned
    - ☐ Somewhat concerned
    - ☐ Not very concerned
    - ☐ Not at all concerned

20. What are you most concerned about? (Select all that apply)
    - ☐ That my data could get stolen or used without my consent
    - ☐ That I or a loved one could get scammed or tricked
    - ☐ That I could be tracked or surveilled
    - ☐ That I or a loved one could be harassed or abused online

21. Are you aware of tools or resources you can use to stay safe online?
    - ☐ Yes, I have tools and resources I use stay safe online
    - ☐ No, I don't know of any tools or resources to stay safe online
    - ☐ I know of tools or resources to stay safe online, but they don't work for me
    - ☐ Other (please specify) : _____

22. How accessible are online government services like benefits portals, RMV services, or paying for permits or tickets to you?
    - ☐ Very accessible
    - ☐ Somewhat accessible
    - ☐ Not very accessible
    - ☐ Not at all accessible

23. When you have used online government services like benefits portals, RMV services, or paying for permits or tickets, how well did they work for you?
    - ☐ Very well
    - ☐ Somewhat well
    - ☐ Not too well
    - ☐ Not well at all

When complete, proceed to section 5 below.

Section 5: All respondents should answer these questions. *We collect demographic information so that we can make sure we are representing all neighborhoods, towns, cities and groups across the Commonwealth.*

24. What is your age?
- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 59
- ☐ 60 to 74
- ☐ 75 and older
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

25. What is your gender identity?
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Gender fluid
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

26. How many people, including yourself, currently live in your household? *(Note: A household is defined as all the people who currently occupy the housing unit where you live).*
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8 or more
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

27. How many children under age 18, currently live in your household? *(Note: A household is defined as all the people who currently occupy the housing unit where you live).*
- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

28. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- ☐ Less than high school, or high school incomplete (Up to grades 9-11 or Grade 12 with NO diploma)
- ☐ High school graduate (Grade 12 with diploma or GED certificate)
- ☐ Two-year associate degree from a college or university
- ☐ Four-year college or university degree/Bachelor's degree (e.g., BS, BA, AB)
- ☐ Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, MD, JD)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

29. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

30. Which of the following best describes your race? (Select all that apply)
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Asian or Asian-American
- ☐ Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
- ☐ Some other race (please specify) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

31. Do you belong to a North American Indigenous, Native, or Tribal group?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer

32. What is your total annual household income from all sources, and before taxes?
    - ☐ Less than $22,000
    - ☐ $22,000 to $29,999
    - ☐ $30,000 to $36,999
    - ☐ $37,000 to $44,999
    - ☐ $45,000 to $52,999
    - ☐ $53,000 to $59,999
    - ☐ $60,000 or more
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer

33. Do you identify as a person with a disability? *(Note: Disability is defined as physical, emotional, or mental health conditions that result in limitations of activities or restrictions to full participation at school, at work, at home, or in the community).*
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer

34. If you identify as a person with a disability, do you have difficulty in any of the following areas? Please check all that apply.
    - ☐ Seeing even if wearing glasses
    - ☐ Hearing even if using a hearing aid
    - ☐ Walking or climbing steps
    - ☐ Remembering or concentrating
    - ☐ Self-care
    - ☐ Communicating, for example understanding or being understood
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer
    - ☐ I do not identify as a person with a disability

35. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer

36. Did you serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer

37. Do you live in affordable housing? *(Note: Affordable housing is defined as housing subsidized by a housing authority, paid for through a voucher, or in a building run by a private developer.)*
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Prefer not to answer

38. Where did you hear about this survey? Please check all that apply.
    - ☐ From a government website, email list, flyer, or other outreach
    - ☐ From a friend, colleague, or acquaintance
    - ☐ From a community meeting, community anchor such as a library or school, or other local institution
    - ☐ From an organization's website, email list, flyer, or other outreach
    - ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

Thank you for taking the survey!

Your response will help shape Massachusetts's policies and future funding allocations to close the digital divide for all its residents. If you would like to learn more, please visit **https://broadband.masstech.org/.**

5

Appendix C: Examples of MBI implementation grant projects

MBI launched its direct grant program, the Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program (MDEIP)—for municipalities to access implementation funds to initiate local programs. This is a $6 million grant fund that provides participating municipalities with up to $100,000 to make local digital equity investments and execute projects that will increase access, adoption, and usage of the internet.[78] This funding can go toward five areas of digital equity:

1. Digital literacy
2. Devices
3. Education, outreach, and adoption
4. Public space improvements
5. Apartment Wi-Fi

Municipalities interested in applying for this digital equity implementation opportunity must complete a two-step application process after submitting a digital equity study to MBI. [79] Applications will be reviewed by MBI on a rolling basis, and the final deadline for submissions is July 31, 2025. The City of Cambridge can start its application for these funds immediately, using this report and ongoing conversations with local organizations as a guide.

The total award amount in the first round of MBI's implementation grant was $1,270,258, which was split between 18 municipalities and will be put toward the five initiative areas (digital literacy; devices; education, outreach, and adoption; public space improvements; and apartment Wi-Fi).

Examples of funded projects include the following, from CTC's experience serving these municipalities:

Watertown: The City of Watertown has put its funding toward one initiative for the Watertown Housing Authority. With its implementation funds, the City will support up to two years of operating expenses to match against either the apartment Wi-Fi or wiring retrofit programs (see Section 8.3.1 for more information) in Watertown Housing Authority units.

Lynn: The City of Lynn put its funding toward three initiatives:

1. Lynn Community TV received funding for Wi-Fi support and upgrades, and digital literacy training for the community.
2. New American Association of Massachusetts (NAAM)—a nonprofit that primarily serves refugees, political asylees, and migrants—received funds to purchase devices to distribute to its NAAM community that attend its free English as a second language (ESL) class.

[78] "Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program", MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation.
[79] "Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program," MBI, https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation.

3. Pathways—a nonprofit organization that provides adult education, skills training, and English literacy classes—received funds to support the development of an eight-week class curriculum that will serve 15 individuals per cohort.

New Bedford: The City of New Bedford has put its funding toward two initiatives:

1. The New Bedford Council on Aging (COA) is receiving support from this grant to equip its new computer lab with the necessary devices and staffing to offer digital literacy classes. In total, this grant funds the purchase of 12 desktop computers, 12 monitors, and a smartboard; and hiring of a digital literacy and skills instructor.
2. The Global Learning Charter Public School (GLC) opened a science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) Education building for its high school students, with a Thinkabit Lab. Funding is being dedicated to the growth of the Thinkabit Lab, to support the acquisition of new equipment, software licenses, professional development for staff, and the employment of part-time trainers or stipends for existing GLC employees.

Fairhaven: The Town of Fairhaven has put its funding toward three initiatives:

1. The Millicent Library and Fairhaven Council on Aging are receiving funds to develop their partnerships with Tech Goes Home (TGH). TGH is an organization that partners with schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to provide curated technology-based support through device distribution, internet access, digital literacy, and education. Through its "train-the-trainer" approach to digital literacy education, students are provided with a device for personal use after successful completion of their course at a community partner location.
2. Community Connections—a nonprofit community agency that offers support to adults with disabilities—is receiving funding to purchase 12 new devices to satisfy the demand by residents who participate in the organization's Workplace Readiness Curriculum, which teaches individuals how to write a resume, apply for a job, and learn how to be a positive and helpful employee.
3. Fairhaven TV (FHTV) is receiving funds for the purchase of audio assistant devices that can serve up to eight individuals at one time.

Other municipalities are using their round one grant funds to support various local entities and municipal projects. See Table 19 for a full list of all participating municipalities' initiatives and program plans.

Table 19: List of all round one Implementation Grant awardees and the entities or programs receiving these funds

Initiative area	Municipality	Entities/programs receiving funds
Digital literacy programs	Charlton	Library
	Somerville	Somerville Housing Authority
	Montague	Council on Aging
	Adams	Library and Council on Aging

Initiative area	Municipality	Entities/programs receiving funds
	Lanesborough	Library and Council on Aging
	Worcester	Library
	Peabody	Citizens Inn Shelters
	Easthampton	(E-Media, LFA)
	Fairhaven	Library and Council on Aging
	Lynn	Lynn Community TV and Pathways
	New Bedford	Council on Aging and Thinkabit Lab
Device purchasing and distribution programs	Charlton	Library
	Florida	Florida Public Schools
	Cheshire	Library and Council on Aging
	Adams	Library and Council on Aging
	Lanesborough	Library and Council on Aging
	Worcester	Library
	Greenfield	Library
	Easthampton	E-Media
	Fairhaven	Community Connections and Fairhaven TV
	Lynn	New American Association of Massachusetts
	New Bedford	Council on Aging and Thinkabit Lab
Education, outreach, and adoption programs	Somerville	Somerville Housing Authority
	Pittsfield	Wayfinding and Digital Equity Ambassador
	Greenfield	Accessibility of public resources
	Peabody	Citizens Inn
	Lynn	Lynn Community TV
Public space improvement programs	Pittsfield	Public Park
	Cheshire	Transfer station hotspot
	North Adams	Library
	Adams	Library and outdoor center
	Lanesborough	Library and Council on Aging
	Lynn	Lynn Community TV
Apartment Wi-Fi programs	Greenfield	Greenfield Housing Authority
	Watertown	Watertown Housing Authority
	Peabody	Citizens Inn Shelters

Appendix D: Internet Essentials Partnership Program

internet essentials

A public-private partnership to close the digital divide

The Internet Essentials Partnership Program (IEPP) helps accelerate internet adoption by providing an opportunity for school districts and other community-based organizations to fund and quickly connect large numbers of students and families to home internet. Since 2020, Comcast has established IEPPs with hundreds of schools, school districts, and other organizations across the country.

With IEPP, organizations can sponsor households to participate in the Internet Essentials program, which includes a high-speed internet connection at home; the option to purchase a low-cost computer; and access to free digital skills training.

The IEPP allows organizations to leverage their expertise, enabling households to take on the challenges of today while also preparing for the future by connecting to the internet at home.

Sponsors can choose between two internet speeds for sponsored families, inclusive of equipment rental fees and taxes.

Internet Essentials:

- Up to 75 Mbps download
- Up to 10 Mbps upload
- $14.95/month per household

Internet Essentials Plus:

- Up to 100 Mbps download
- Up to 20 Mbps upload
- $29.95/month per household

About Internet Essentials

Internet Essentials is the nation's largest and most successful private-sector internet adoption program. Since its inception in 2011, it has connected a cumulative total of more than 10 million low-income Americans to the power of the internet at home. In addition, Internet Essentials has either sold at a subsidized price of less than $150 or given away more than 200,000 laptops. Plus, Internet Essentials offers free access to hundreds of hours of digital skills training and is backed by Project UP, Comcast's $1 billion commitment to advance digital equity and help build a future of unlimited possibilities.

COMCAST

xfinity

Enrolling in IEPP

internet essentials

Process for sponsors

To become an IEPP sponsor, an organization must commit to sponsor a minimum of 25 eligible households for at least a six-month term. Organizations can fill out a sponsorship inquiry form to learn more at xfinity.com/learn/internet-service/internet-essentials/sponsor.

Once an inquiry form has been submitted, the organization can expect:

- Xfinity teams will meet with the sponsor to learn more about the households you are hoping to sponsor
- The sponsor and Xfinity will complete a Partnership Program Agreement
- Sponsors will be issued sponsorship codes to distribute to eligible households
- Once sponsored households connect to Internet Essentials, Xfinity will issue monthly invoices for all connected households

Learn more

Scan the code with your phone's camera

Standard data charges apply.

Process for individual households

Once an organization has identified individuals for sponsorship and provided them with a sponsorship code, applying for Internet Essentials is easy and fast even from a mobile device.

- Households can visit apply.InternetEssentials.com to be guided through the online process in multiple languages
- Households will need to enter the sponsorship code provided by their sponsor in order to receive the sponsored service
- After signing up for service, individual Internet Essentials customers, including sponsored households, can choose to purchase either a new Dell Latitude 3140 laptop or a new Dell Chromebook for the subsidized price of $149.99 plus tax

Eligibility

Internet Essentials Partnership Program customers must be eligible for the Internet Essentials program. Individuals may qualify if they:

- Live in an area where Xfinity Internet service is available
- Qualify for programs like SNAP/EBT, Medicaid, or the National School Lunch Program

COMCAST

xfinity