



**Digital Equity Defenders,
ILPF Policy Hackathon , Team #6**

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The Digital Divide disproportionately affects communities of color in urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this pervasive issue. Digital inclusion is critical, and community-based initiatives are essential to help shorten the United States' digital divide.

To achieve this goal, we must create a comprehensive solutions system that incorporates all significant digital inclusion aspects. Based on safe and practical cooperation, efficient and with high social impact. The capacity building frameworks already exist to help facilitate the different aspects of digital inclusion currently being championed by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Community-based organizations such as the Chicago-Connected would help champion affordable and robust broadband internet service, distribute Internet-enabled devices, and provide access to digital literacy training, and quality technical support.

We propose an national awareness campaign to highlight the work of Digital Inclusion organizations in cities and towns across the country. This campaign will have broad messaging to help foster legislative support, and also target underserved communities with relevant inclusion services in their area. We want to coordinate with cities and counties to encourage partnership funds which will identify potential public and private funding sources for digital inclusion investment.

We advocate for legislation that directs federal funds directly to Digital Inclusion Organizations and offers tax (e.g., expensing, capital gains, tax abatement) preference for qualified investment for broadband in low-income areas. These investments can come from existing providers, local municipalities, community-created non-profits, or through public-private partnerships. We support efforts to increase data transparency from internet service providers. There must also be reduced regulatory hurdles for community-based broadband in these “digitally redlined” communities. We also encourage the creation of the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth as specified by the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2) and the Accessible Affordable Internet for All Act (S.4131); to work alongside these community organizations.