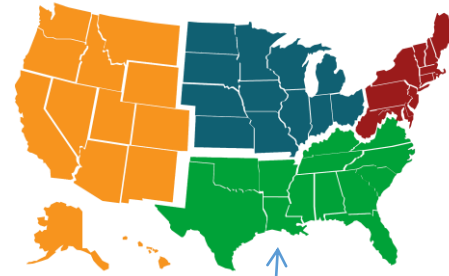




National Digital Education Extension Team & ECOP Broadband & Digital Access Program Action Team

Rachel Welborn, Southern Rural Development Center
Kenny Sherin, North Carolina State University

Forerunners:





Broadband & Digital Access
Program Action Team

Joining Hands

- National Digital Education Extension Team
- ECOP Broadband & Digital Access Program Action Team

Leadership

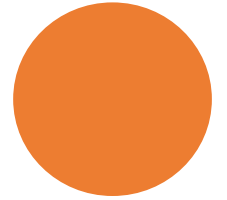
Co-Chairs:

Laura Perry Johnson, University of Georgia

Rachel Welborn, Southern Rural Development Center

Fellow: Kenneth Sherin, North Carolina State University

NIFA Liaison: Sarah Rucker





Seeds of the Current Efforts

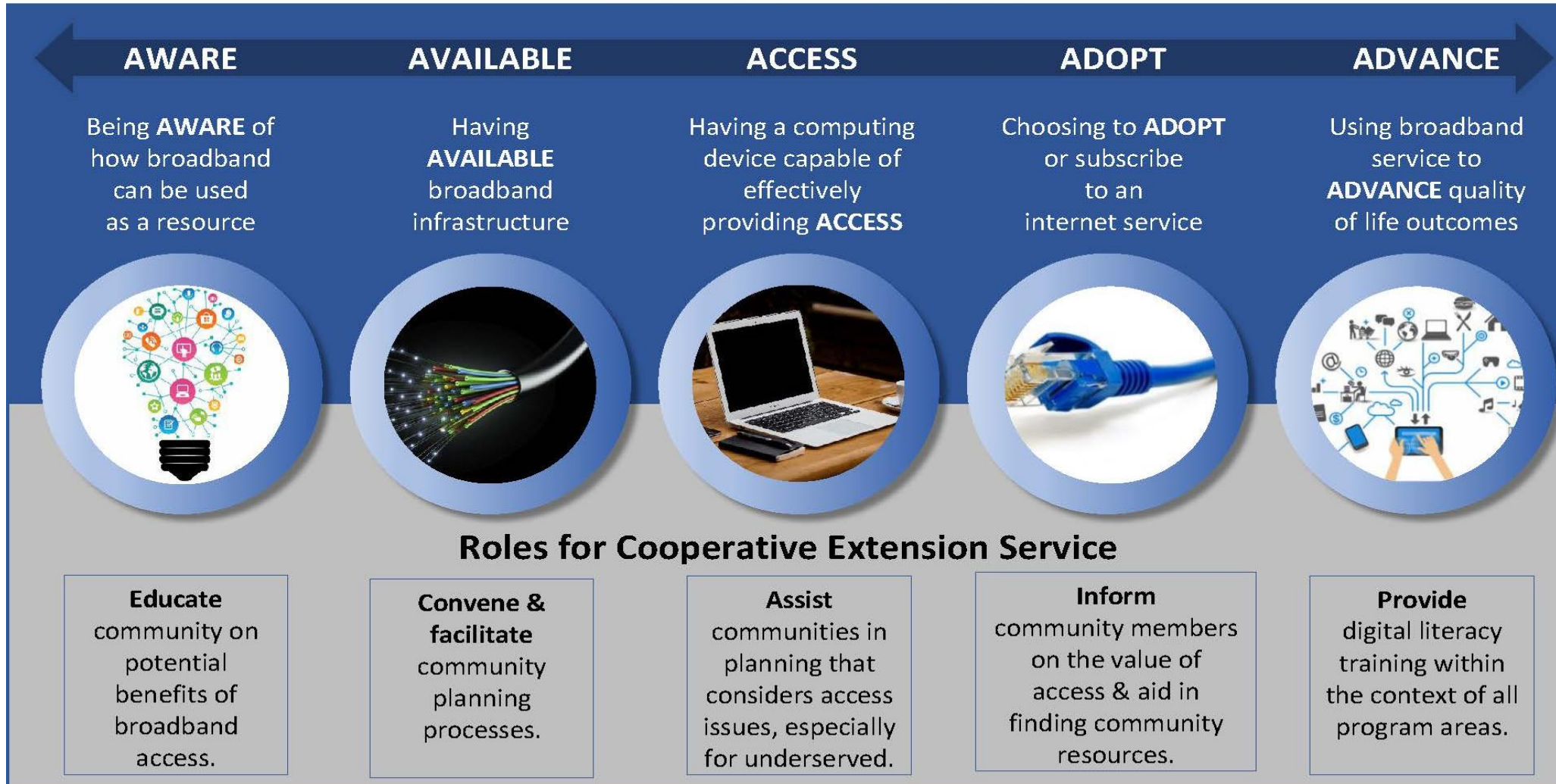
Over a decade of support for eCommerce
<https://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/>

2019: 4-H Tech Changemakers

<https://4-h.org/programs/tech-changemakers/>

DIGITAL ACCESS CONTINUUM

A
Framework
for
Extension's
Place in
this Work





Reach of Cooperative Extension Service Program Areas

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Digital Ag
Markets
Supply Chains
Conservation

Family & Consumer Science

Online Banking
Parent/Teacher Connections
Healthcare
Social/Emotional Care

Community Development

Citizen Engagement
Access to Gov't Services
Grant Writing
Entrepreneurship
Workforce Development
Economic Development

4-H & Youth Development

Education
Job Seeking
College Preparation
Social Connections
Leadership Development

Two Working Groups:

Extension/Outreach:

Community Planning
Digital Literacy

Research:

Issue Briefs
Metrics

Objectives



  Launch a Community Digital Access Toolkit to aid Extension professionals in facilitating community efforts on broadband access.

  Develop a Digital Literacy Toolkit and host a training event for Extension professionals.

 Organize a resource bank for Extension resources to support the digital access continuum.

 Establish a community of practice for Extension professionals to share ideas and questions.

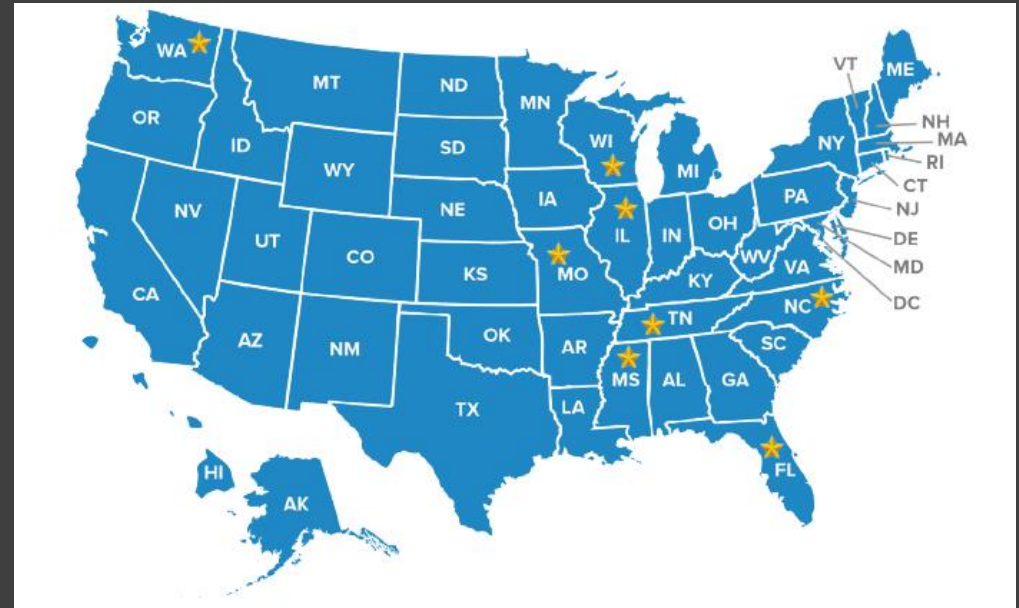
 Research the impacts of broadband adoption on advancing quality of life.

ADVANCING DIGITAL ACCESS:

Extension Capacity Building
Train the Trainer Workshop



8 Participating States



May 3-5, 2022

8:00 - 5:00



<https://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/advancing-digital-access.html>

Objectives



Launch a Co
on broadba

Broadband Access & Digital Skills

ng community efforts



Develop a l

<https://connect.extension.org/g/broadband-access-and-digital-skills>

ls.



Organize a resource bank for Extension resources to support the digital access continuum.



Establish a community of practice for Extension professionals to share ideas and questions.



Research the impacts of broadband adoption on advancing quality of life.

Objectives



Launch a Community Digital Access Toolkit to aid Extension professionals in facilitating community efforts on broadband access.



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Organize a resource bank for Extension resources to support the digital access continuum.



Establish a community of practice for Extension professionals to share ideas and questions.



Research the impacts of broadband adoption on advancing quality of life.

Five Published

Digital Access Briefs & Webinars

- A Granular Look at Internet Speeds and Demographic Groups: Implications for Digital Equity
- State Policies that Impact Rural Broadband Availability
- Broadband Impact on Education and Workforce during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Broadband Availability vs. Adoption: Which Matters More for Economic Development?
- Report: Individual Digital Capacity Survey Results



<https://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/special-topics/digital-access>
<https://srdc.msstate.edu/programs/digital-divide>

Examples from the Field:

Washington State University

Received funding to develop Broadband Action Teams in each county to help guide planning efforts.

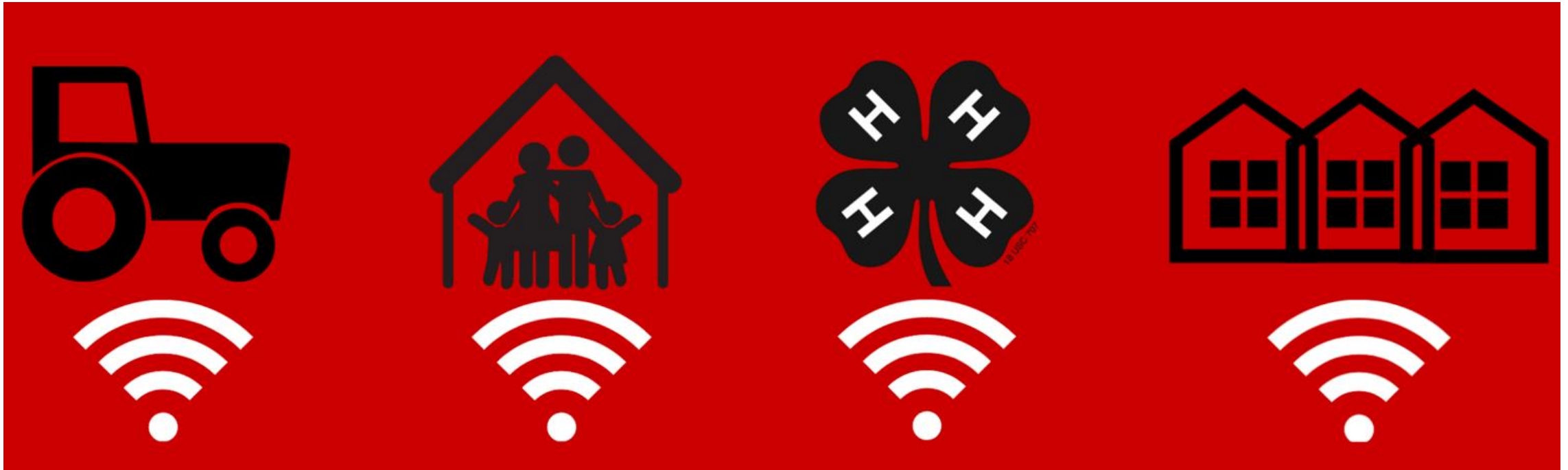
University of Missouri System

Developed an online course for community-based planning efforts.

North Carolina State University

Received \$1.33M to establish 15 Extension Agents as Digital Skills Educators

NC State and Broadband Access and Education

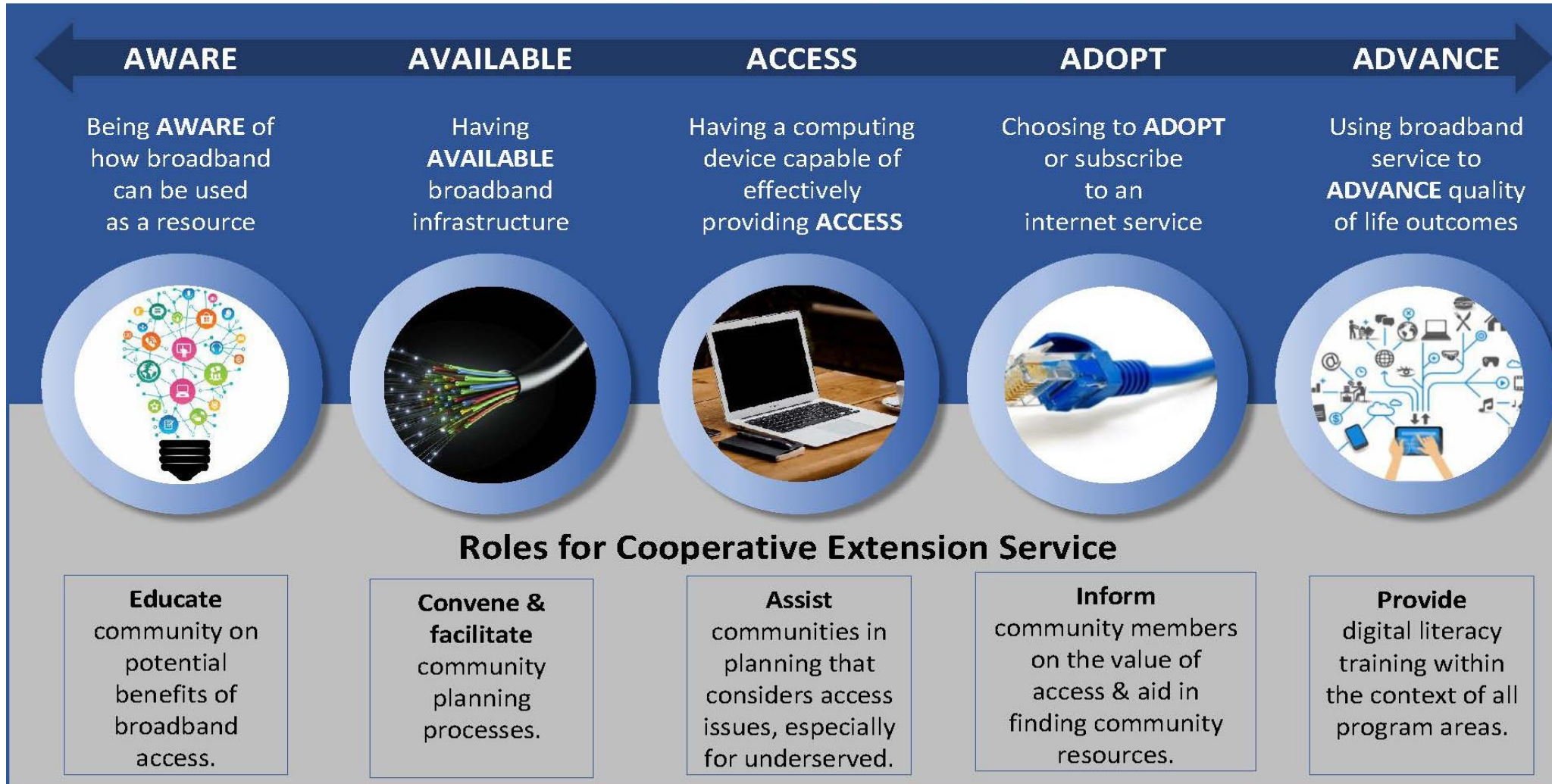


"Empowering every North Carolinian with digital skills for success in work, health, and life."



DIGITAL ACCESS CONTINUUM

A Framework for Extension's Place in this Work



Why

Vision Statement

In North Carolina, everyone on a farm, in a household and in business will have the digital skills needed to **EARN, LEARN, BE WELL** and **LIVE WELL**.

Mission Statement

N.C. Cooperative Extension will work within counties to eliminate the digital divide by helping improve broadband access, adoption, and utilization of digital resources by teaching digital skills.



Why Cooperative Extension?

Given the 100+ years of success of Cooperative Extension and its mission to help society adopt and to adapt new ways to **EARN, LEARN, BE WELL, and LIVE WELL**

Cooperative Extension is a natural place for the educators who would help meet this next great NEED in our society...a digital transformation!



ACHIEVING DIGITAL EQUITY



Households with broadband internet access



Households with broadband internet subscriptions



Households with children with broadband internet subscriptions



Subscription rates across racial subgroups

- Native American
- Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- White

N.C. Today

N.C. 2025

"95.5%"	98%
73%	80%
81%	100%
57%	80%
64%	80%
68%	80%
76%	80%

THE FUNDING: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN



INFRASTRUCTURE

\$971M

\$380M

\$400M

\$90M

\$100M

\$1M

Ensure availability of internet service at speeds of at least

100/20 Mbps for more than 98% of North Carolina households

- GREAT Grant (\$350M American Rescue Plan Act; \$30M State CIF)
- Completing Access to Broadband (CAB)
- Stop Gap Solutions
- Broadband Make Ready Accelerator (Pole Replacement Fund)
- Broadband Mapping



AWARENESS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

\$50M

Improve awareness and enable North Carolinians to realize the benefits of high-speed internet through digital literacy and upskilling aimed at accessing the digital economy.

- Increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program
- Increase access to devices for households
- Increase access to high quality digital literacy and skills training
- Build local digital equity capacity

USDA/NIFA Helped Along the way

- **Southern Rural Development Center**
 - National Digital Education Extension Team / ECOP Program Action Team
(Sarah Rucker is the NIFA Liaison)
- **2X National Broadband Fellowship (\$50,000)**
- **NTAE- Building Capacity to Address Broadband Access and Digital Skills Education in N.C. Cooperative Extension (\$5,000)**
- **Digital Skills Educators in 16 counties NC DIT (\$1.33Million)**



The Opportunity

\$1.33 Million in Funding from NC Office of Digital Equity and Literacy
(April 1, 2023 – March 30, 2025)

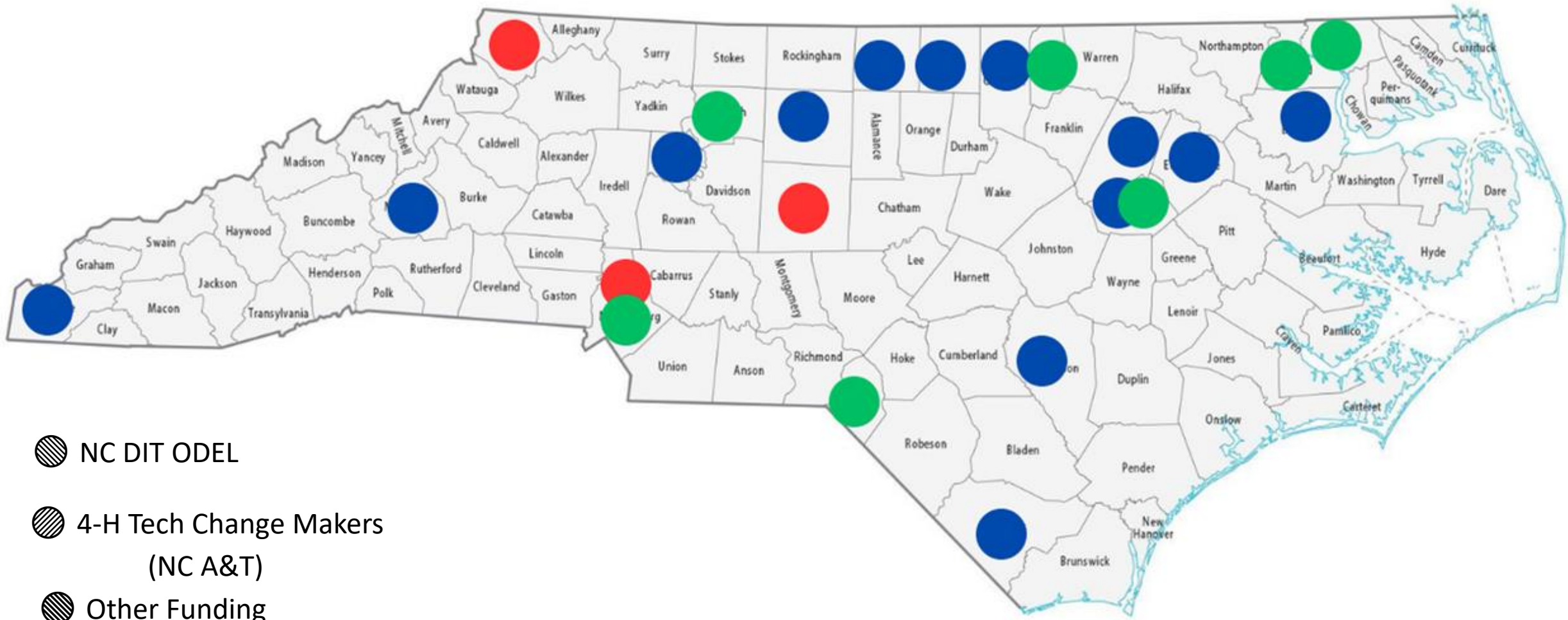
N.C. Cooperative Extension Digital Skills Agents will play an essential role in broadband adoption and utilization across North Carolina. As our economy becomes more dependent on the digital delivery of services and digitally reliant means of production and commerce, new skills will be needed for social, civil, economic participation, and health maintenance.



Digital Skills Education in N.C. Cooperative Extension County Centers

<p> NC DIT ODEL Grant Funded (\$1,333,333)</p>	<p>Bertie, Caswell, Cherokee, Granville, Person, Guilford, Nash, Edgecombe, Columbus, Davie, McDowell, Sampson, and Wilson</p>
<p> 4-H Tech Change Makers (NC A&T)</p>	<p>Forsyth, Gates, Hertford, Mecklenburg, Scotland, Vance, and Wilson</p>
<p> Other Funding</p>	<p>Ashe, Mecklenburg, and Randolph</p>





- NC DIT ODEL
- 4-H Tech Change Makers (NC A&T)
- Other Funding



Cooperative Extension is well placed to deliver digital skills education



Our Frame: Workforce Development

- Digital Equity sounds “cause” oriented
- Workforce Development sounds “education” oriented

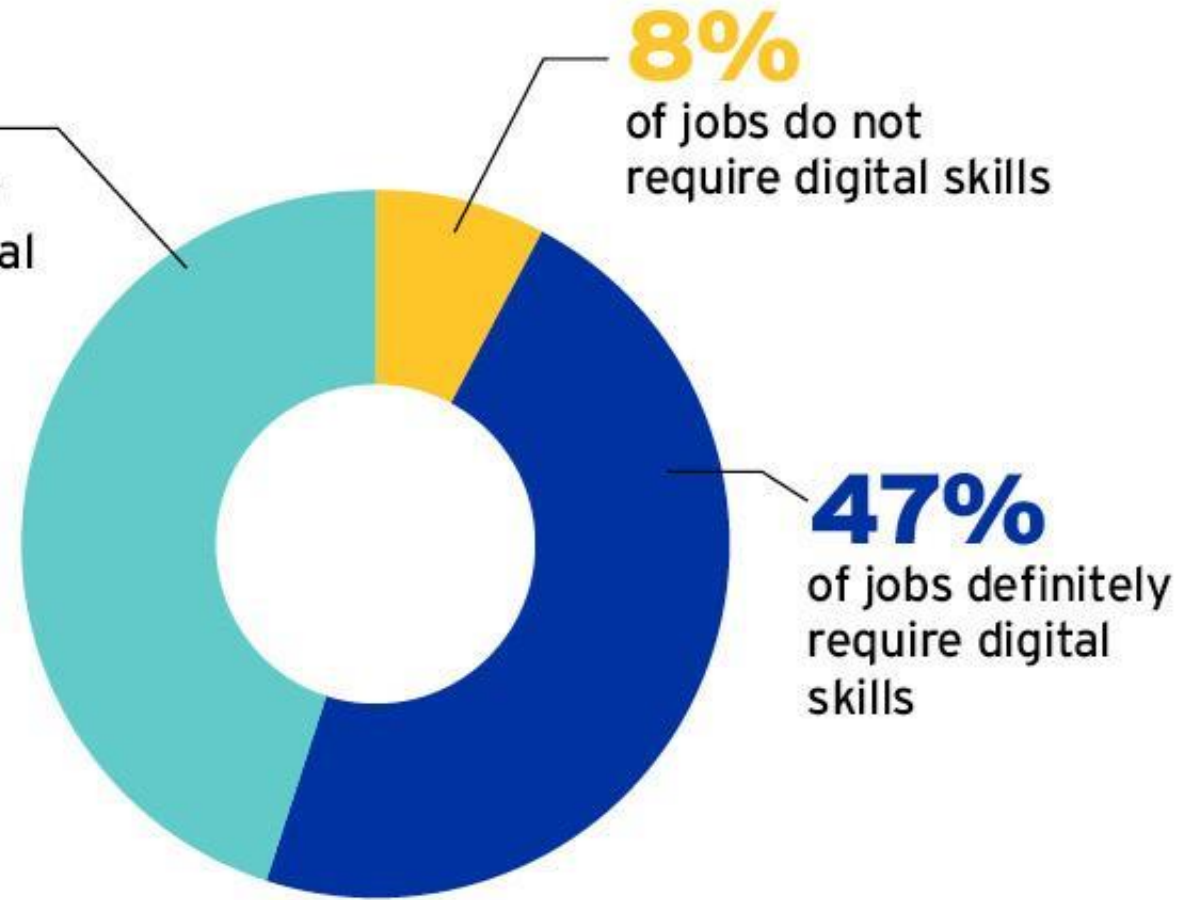
Empowering every North Carolinian with digital skills for success in work, health, and life.





**ACROSS
INDUSTRIES,
92%
OF JOBS
REQUIRE
DIGITAL
SKILLS**

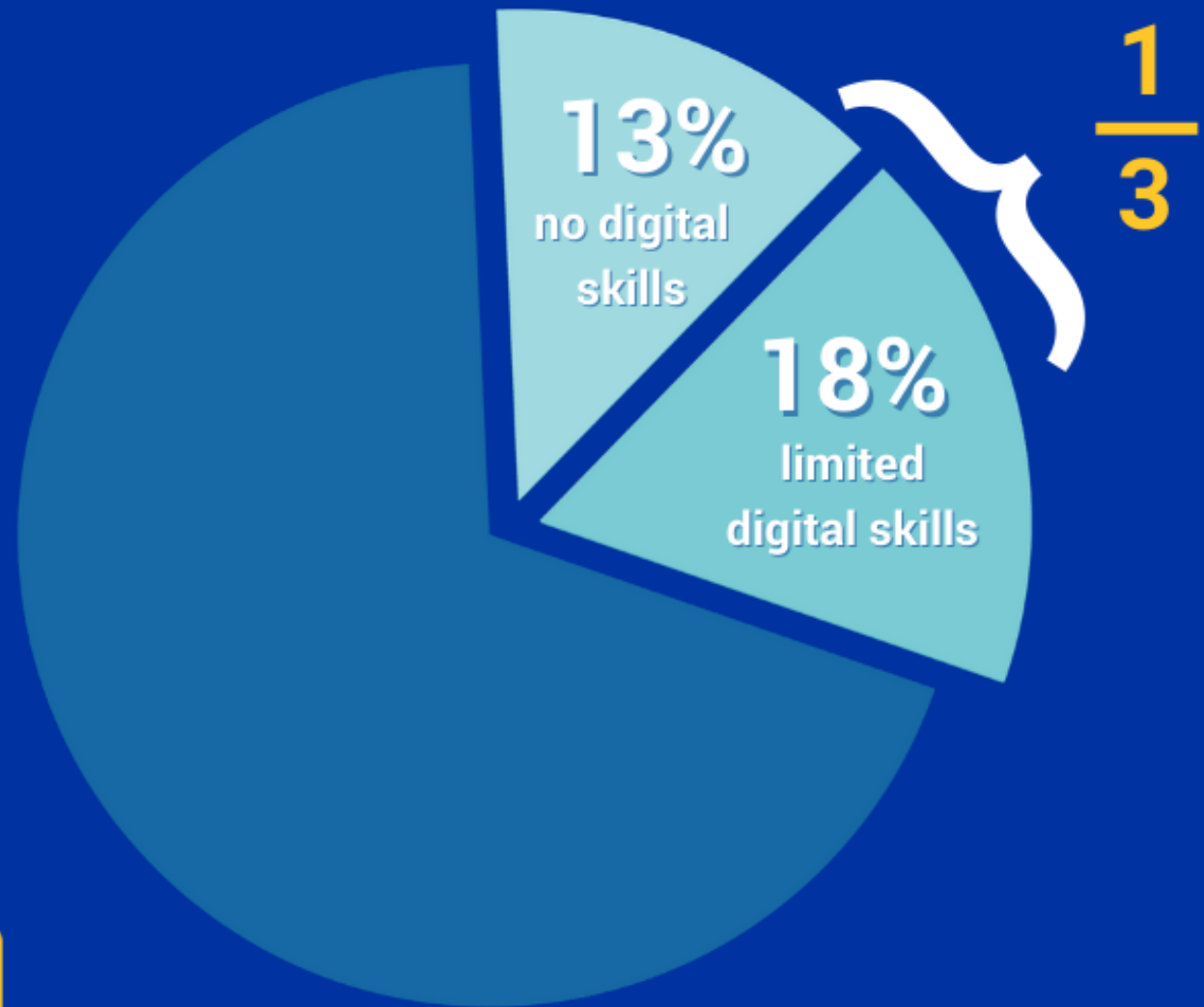
45%
of jobs likely
require digital
skills



Source: NSC/Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta analysis of 2021 job postings. Full report: *Closing the Digital Skill Divide*.

Nearly one-third of the U.S. workforce doesn't possess foundational digital skills.

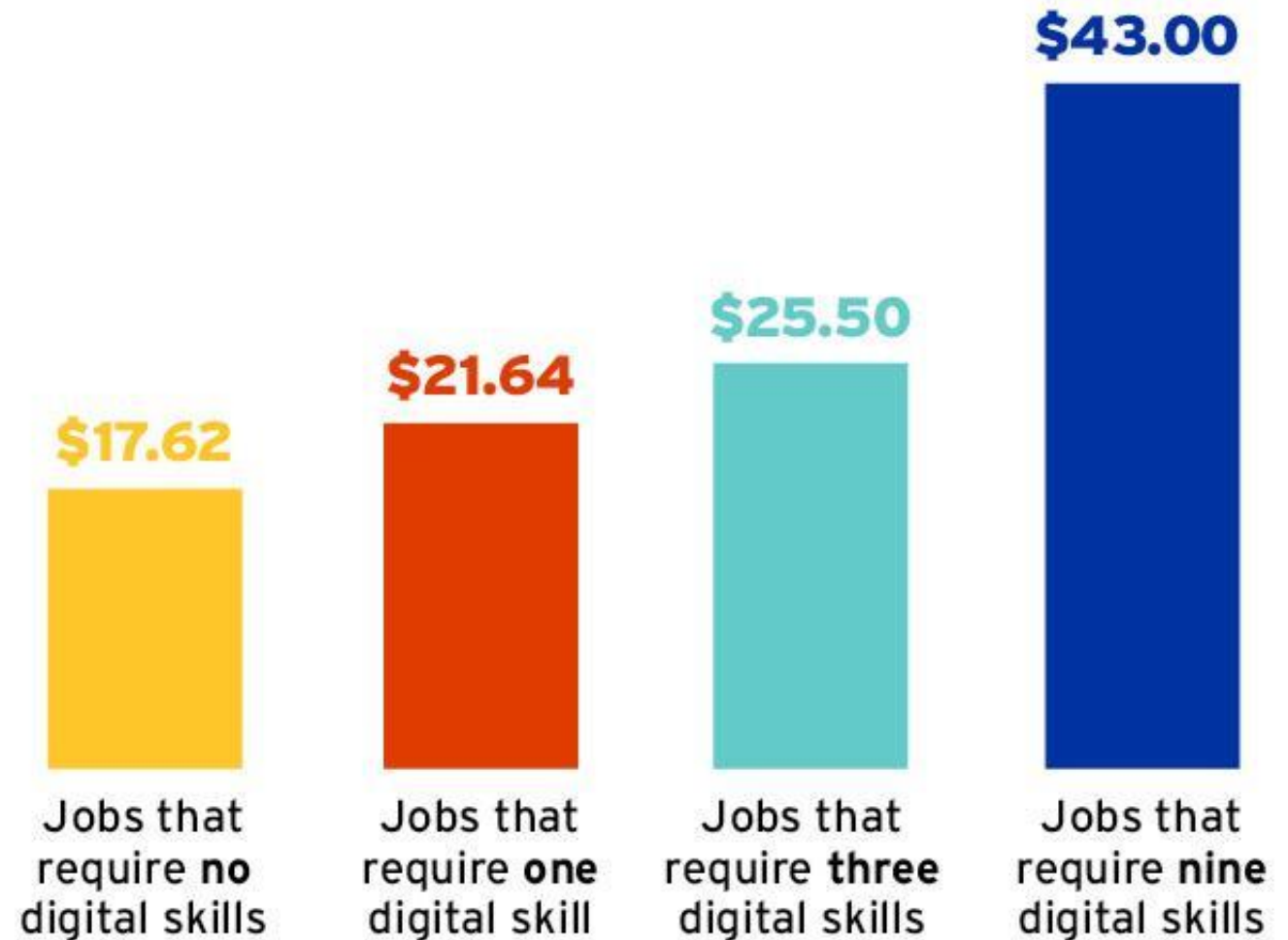
Specifically, **13 percent** have no digital skills and **18 percent** have very limited skills.





Jobs that
require
**DIGITAL
SKILLS
PAY MORE**

MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE



Source: NSC/Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta analysis of 2021 job postings. Full report: *Closing the Digital Skill Divide*.

**DIGITAL SKILLS CAN
HELP WORKERS EARN
23% MORE...**



**...WHICH INCREASES
THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS
TO STATE AND LOCAL
ECONOMIES.**





North Carolina's most in-demand *foundational* digital skills

- Typing
- Data entry
- Barcode scanning
- Word processing
- “Computer literacy”
- “Basic internet skills”
- Microsoft Office

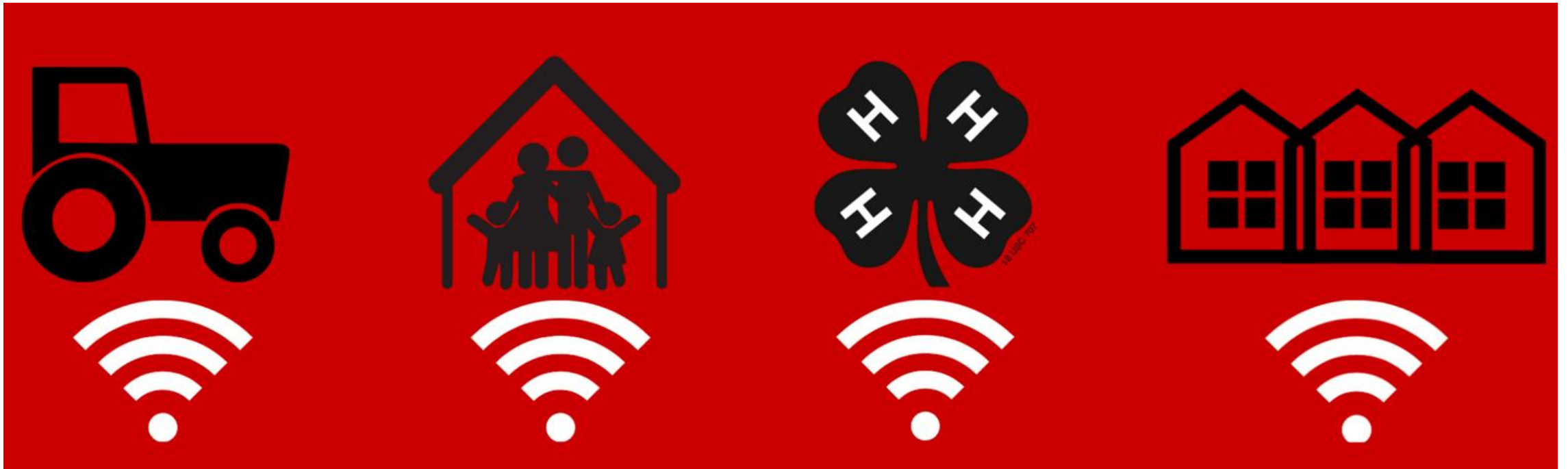
*Not in rank order. North Carolina-specific data from unpublished NSC analysis conducted as part of **Closing the Digital Skill Divide** report.*

Great Expectations

- Connect with County Administration/Department Heads
 - What is the most underutilized digital service in the county...
then design a workshop around that service
- Prepare Digital Navigation Resources
- 2 Digital Skills Educational Events per month (at least)
- Reporting Quantitative and Qualitative
- Recruiting Digital Skills Training Volunteers
- Ambassadors for the cause



NC State Extension Broadband [Webpage](#) Broadband [News Articles](#)



Thank you!!! Contact me!
I am here to serve!

Kenny Sherin kmsherin@ncsu.edu

<https://randolph.ces.ncsu.edu/profile/kenneth-sherin/>



Moving Forward:

- Digital Volunteer Program
- Additional Training Workshops
- Metrics to Gauge Quality of Life Improvement



Digital Skills Survey – 635 Extension Voices

Digital Skills	Percent Ranking in Top Three
Safe and Effective Internet Use	68.4
Computer/Digital Device Basics (hardware and basic software)	63.4
Interacting with Others Online (social media, video-conferencing, file sharing, etc.)	55.8
Personal or Business Finance Online Tools	20.3
Family Health and Communication*	22.4
Career Planning and Job Seeking	22.1
Business & Entrepreneur Management (including ag. businesses)	18.1
Digital Agriculture/Smart Agriculture	17.8
Government/Community Online Interactions	11.7



* Tied for #3 with Family & Consumer Science Respondents



Top Skills: Safe & Effective Internet Use

Most Important Skills for Safe and Effective Internet Use	Percent
Cybersecurity, Attacks, and Scams	60.6
Digital Media Literacy (Accessing, Evaluating, Using & Distributing Information Credibly, Safely, and Ethically)	57.5
Internet Privacy & Security (passwords, sharing information online etc.)	57.5
Accessing and Navigating the Internet	51.2
Using Email	45.9
Downloads and Uploads	39.4
Your Digital Footprint and Online Identity	35.4
Filling and Saving Online Forms	34.1
Setting limits on Digital Exposure (adults and children)	32.0
Cyberbullying	26.5
Digital Citizenship and Netiquette	21.8



Top Skills: Computer & Digital Device Basics

Most Important Skills for Computer/Digital Device Basics	Percent
Using a Smart Phone	61.8
Saving and Recovering Data (File Movement and Management)	53.0
Applications (downloading, installing)	51.0
Security Software (such as anti-virus)	45.3
Office for Windows and Mac	44.8
Operating Systems (OS) (PC, Mac)	42.5
Hardware (Mouse, Wires, Connections, Ports, Drives)	39.7
Microsoft Word (Word Processing)	33.4
Microsoft Excel (Data Analysis)	28.0
Computer Maintenance	27.8
Creating User Profiles and Customization	26.3
Microsoft PowerPoint	17.6



Top Skills: Interacting with Others Online

Select the Five Most Important Skills for Interacting with Others Online	Percent
Social Media Savvy	71.7
Videoconferencing (Teams, Zoom, Webex)	65.6
Sharing Files, Folders, and Attachments	62.4
Social Media for Business & Community Leaders (pros, cons, strategies)	43.1
Connecting to Government and Local Services	36.7
Cloud Storage Strategies	35.7
Instant Messaging /text messaging	33.8
Facebook	31.5
Website Creation and Hosting	27.7
Instagram	19.0
Blog Basics	9.6

Final List of Base Lessons

- Connecting to Government Resources
- Cybersecurity, Attacks, and Scams
- Digital Media Literacy (accessing, evaluating, using information credibly, safely, and ethically)
- Using a Smart Phone
- Saving and Recovering Data; Sharing Files, Folders, and Attachments
- Google Suite Usage and Products
- Social Media Savvy and Interacting with Others Online
- Videoconferencing for Work and Families/Friends
- Soft Skills/ Job Etiquette Training and Online Training
- Internet Safety for Kids
- Device Hardware Basics



Top 5 Federal Digital Inclusion Funding Sources

Click the Icons Below to See Blogs & Information

Tip: For more information on the federal digital inclusion programs below and others, please see [this resource](#) published by [Common Sense](#).

State Funding on the Way...

Are You Ready?



The **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)**, formerly the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB), is a broadband affordability program that provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month on Tribal lands.



The **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program**, established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), is a \$42.45B program to award block grants to states for broadband deployment and adoption. Access NTIA's BEAD information [here](#), and see full legislative text [here](#).



The **Capital Projects Fund (CPF)**, established by the American Rescue Plan Act, is a \$10B program to award block grants to states for a range of broadband and digital inclusion activities. Access U.S. Department of the Treasury CPF resources [here](#) to see eligible uses of funding and the full legislative text [here](#).



The **Digital Equity Act of 2021 (DEA)**, part of the IIJA, establishes 3 programs: (1) State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program: \$60M to develop state digital equity plans. (2) State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program: \$1.44B for implementation of state digital equity plans. (3) Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program: \$1.25B for public and non-public entities. See NTIA's DEA resources [here](#) and full legislative text [here](#).



The **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)**, established by the American Rescue Plan Act, is a \$350B program that awards block grants to state, county, and city governments for COVID-19 relief purposes, including a range of broadband and digital inclusion activities. See Treasury's SLFRF resources [here](#), including the SLFRF Final Rule, and see full legislative text [here](#).

<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/policy/>

How You Can Get Plugged In:

- Engage on the Community of Practice
- Contribute resources to the repository
- Join one of the working groups





For more information:

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Sarah Rucker
Sarah.rocker@usda.gov

National Digital Education Extension Team
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/index.html>