ARIZONA'S DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

- FOR DISCUSSION ONLY-

The Digital Equity Act focuses on addressing the needs of "covered populations" as defined by the statute

Covered Populations

Identity groups and communities disproportionally impacted by digital inequity

- Low-income households
- Aging populations
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans

- People with disabilities
- People with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants

State Digital Equity Plan components (I/II)

1. The **identification of the barriers to digital equity** faced by covered populations

2. **Measurable objectives for documenting & promoting** broadband technology; the online accessibility of public resources and services; digital literacy; secure online privacy / cybersecurity; consumer devices and tech support

3. An assessment of how the **objectives will impact and interact** with the State's economic and workforce goals; health, education and civic engagement outcomes; and delivery of other essential services

4. A description of how the State **plans to collaborate with key stakeholders** (e.g., anchor institutions, municipal government, educational agencies, non-profits) to achieve objectives

5. A list of organizations with which the administering entity for the State **collaborated in developing and implementing the Plan**

6. A stated **vision for digital equity**

7. A **digital equity needs assessment**, including an assessment of the baseline and the State's identification of the barriers to digital equity

State Digital Equity Plan components (II/II)

8. An **asset inventory**, including current resources and strategies that promote digital equity and existing digital equity plans and programs

9. A **coordination and outreach strategy**, including opportunities for public comment by, collaboration with, and ongoing engagement with the covered populations and the full range of stakeholders

10. Description of how **municipal, regional, and/or tribal digital plans will be incorporated**

11. An **implementation strategy** (1) establishing measurable goals, objectives, proposed core activities, (2) setting out measures ensuring the plan's sustainability, and (3) adopting mechanisms to ensure that the plan is regularly evaluated and updated

12. Explanation of how the strategy **addresses gaps in existing efforts** to address barriers to digital equity

13. Description of how the State intends to accomplish the implementation strategy by **partnering with workforce organizations and institutions of higher learning**
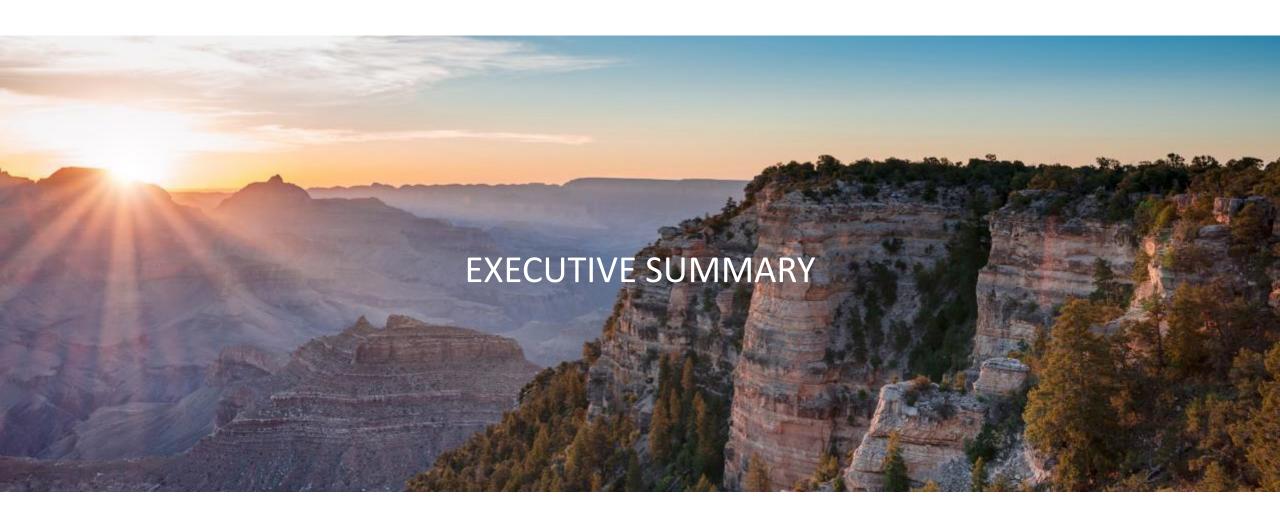
14. A **timeline** for implementation of the Plan

15. Material indicating how the State will coordinate its use of Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding and **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arizona's 6th C:
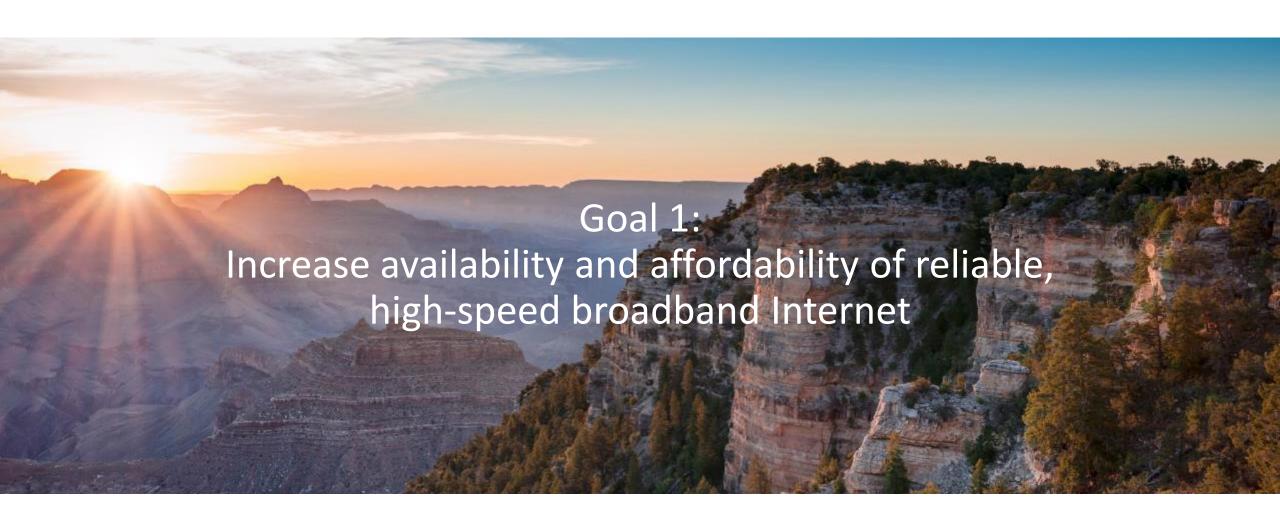Connectivity!

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Main Goal "Buckets"

- Internet Cost and Stability
- Concerns about Online Safety/Privacy, Distrust of the Government or the Internet
- Access to Support Services, Digital Literacy Upskilling Opportunities
- Device Access
- Physical Limitations of a User

Goal 1:
Increase availability and affordability of reliable, high-speed broadband Internet

Objective 1: Increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program

- Implementation Strategies
  - Increase support for digital navigators, and leverage them to support enrollment
  - Increase collaboration with ISPs providing ACP
  - Increase awareness of ACP through targeted campaigns and collaborations

Objective 2: Launch and increase enrollment in BEAD low-cost plan

- Implementation Strategies
  - Increase awareness of low-cost plan
  - Train local and Tribal Digital Navigators training on low-cost plan
  - Prioritize outreach in areas with high volume of covered populations

Goal 2:
Increase Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Resources and Services

Objective 1: Make online spaces and content more accessible to a wider range of persons

- Implementation Strategy
  - Collaborate with Experts and Advocacy Groups: Form a task force with accessibility experts and disability advocates to identify and integrate best practices for digital accessibility.
  - Partner with ADOA-ASET: Develop guidelines and training programs in partnership with ADOA-ASET to improve accessibility understanding and implementation in public state offices and organizations receiving state funding.
  - Engage with State Agency Teams: Work with state agency content creators, designers, and developers to ensure compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and enhance website accessibility.

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Objective 2: Establish Local and Tribal designated Digital Equity Specialists

- Implementation Strategies
  - Identify and train Digital Equity Specialists
  - Create cohorts of Digital Equity Specialists and create regular cadence of meetings to coordinate with State Broadband Office
  - Support Digital Equity Specialists completing certification or formal training

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Objective 3: Support Local and Tribal capacity for Digital Equity Planning and Activities

- Implementation Strategies
  - Determine core needs of how Tribes can view language and cultural preservation with digital equity lens
  - Create dashboard that depicts local and Tribal digital equity resources

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Objective 4: Increase Telehealth Access Points and Support Health Navigator Services

- Implementation Strategies
  - Provide outreach and education campaigns in tribal and local communities to increase awareness of TAPs and digital health navigators
  - Provide support to local partners to establish TAPs and health digital navigators and ensure health navigators and TAP staff are reflective of local and tribal community demographics

Goal 3:
Provide Relevant Digital Literacy and Skills Training Tailored to the Needs of Covered Populations

Objective 1: Increase Digital Literacy and Skills

Increasing digital literacy skills in alignment with learners' personal objectives is critical for encouraging adoption and meaningful use of the internet. Individuals are more inclined to maintain and expand their skills when they perceive a relevance to their daily lives and interests.

Objective 2: Strengthen Community Support Through Digital Navigation Service Utilization

- Implementation Strategies
  - Increase awareness of digital navigator programs around the state.
  - Increase capacity of Digital Navigator and skill building programs
    - Coordinate with Digital Navigator network to incorporate targeted resources available to people across covered populations
    - Incorporate monitoring into navigator intake forms
  - Increase support to organizations serving individuals across covered populations that provide informal and formal digital skills training
  - Increase awareness of digital skills learning platforms and resources
  - Ensure digital skills learning platforms and resources are available in multiple languages and formats as reflected by individuals across covered populations

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Objective 3: Ensure Workforce Development opportunities to prepare for jobs created by the BEAD program

- Implementation Strategies
  - Provide support to institutions of higher education or organizations with partnerships to implement training
  - Provide workforce development opportunities to individuals who will play a vital role in the implementation of the BEAD program.
  - Coordinate with Arizona@Work and BuilditAZ Apprenticeship initiative
  - Coordinate with local workforce boards and the Workforce Arizona Council, established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

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Goal 4:
Enhance the Privacy and
Security of Arizona's Digital Spaces

Objective 1: Develop a statewide online safety campaign for individuals of all ages.

- Implementation Strategies
  - Increase awareness and use of online safety training and cybersecurity resources
  - Partner with AZDOHS to conduct online safety and cybersecurity training for Community Anchor Institutions and community members.
  - Partner with the Arizona Department of Homeland Security to increase cyber preparedness especially for businesses.
  - Enhance information sharing among stakeholders to reduce risk

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Goal 5:
Ensure Arizonans Have an Affordable Device
That Meets Their Unique Needs

Objective 1: Increase the affordability of digital devices

- Implementation Strategies
  - Launch public awareness campaigns to inform the covered populations about the availability of affordable devices and the benefits of digital inclusion.
  - Use various communication channels, including social media, community events, and local media. Set up community distribution centers in underserved areas where individuals can access affordable devices.
  - Identify the device distribution and affordability programs that have shown the most success in the near term and expand them to cover a broader population.
  - Form partnerships with corporate entities that can donate or subsidize devices for the covered populations.

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Objective 2: Match Devices to the Need of the Individual

- Implementation Strategies
  - Determine criteria around appropriateness of users' devices, and encourage Digital Navigators to gather data regarding appropriateness of devices
  - Coordinate with organizations that provide devices to user
  - Determine minimum requirements for devices
  - Coordinate with Digital Equity Specialists and Digital Navigators to create periodic check-ins with individuals who have received devices

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Objective 3: Create a sustainable device distribution model

- Implementation Strategies
    - Increase support for organizations that provide refurbished devices and outreach to people across covered populations
    - Create state benchmarks and best practices surrounding affordability and accessibility features of devices
    - Conduct gap analysis of impact on environmental sustainability and distribution
    - Collaborate with tech companies to integrate a refresh plan into distribution to ensure that devices are updated as technology evolves.
    - Highlight the benefits of refurbishing devices, emphasizing their affordability, reduced environmental impact, and alignment with various user needs.

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Goal 6:
Monitor and Evaluate Impact and
Progress towards Achieving Digital Equity

Objective 1: Assess Impact and Communicate Findings

Digital equity initiatives, while noble in their intent, can only succeed if we continually assess impact and tailor strategies to meet the evolving needs of our communities. By including impact and efficacy evaluation in the Goals, we ensure we remain proactive in improving and effectively communicating status and progress of initiatives. Moreover, by regularly evaluating our efforts and listening to the voices of our communities, we can adapt and refine our strategies, making them more inclusive, resilient, and ultimately more successful.

Objective 2: Continuous Engagement with Communities to Assess Needs and Progress

- Implementation Strategies
  - Communicate with local and state government to encourage participation
  - Identify and meaningfully engaged trusted members of the community
  - Regularly connect with communities through town halls, focus groups, and surveys to understand their experiences and gauge the effectiveness of digital equity initiatives.
  - Create feedback loops for individuals to provide ad-hoc and regular feedback to the ACA.
  - Establish clear channels for communicating the outcomes of digital equity initiatives to all stakeholders.
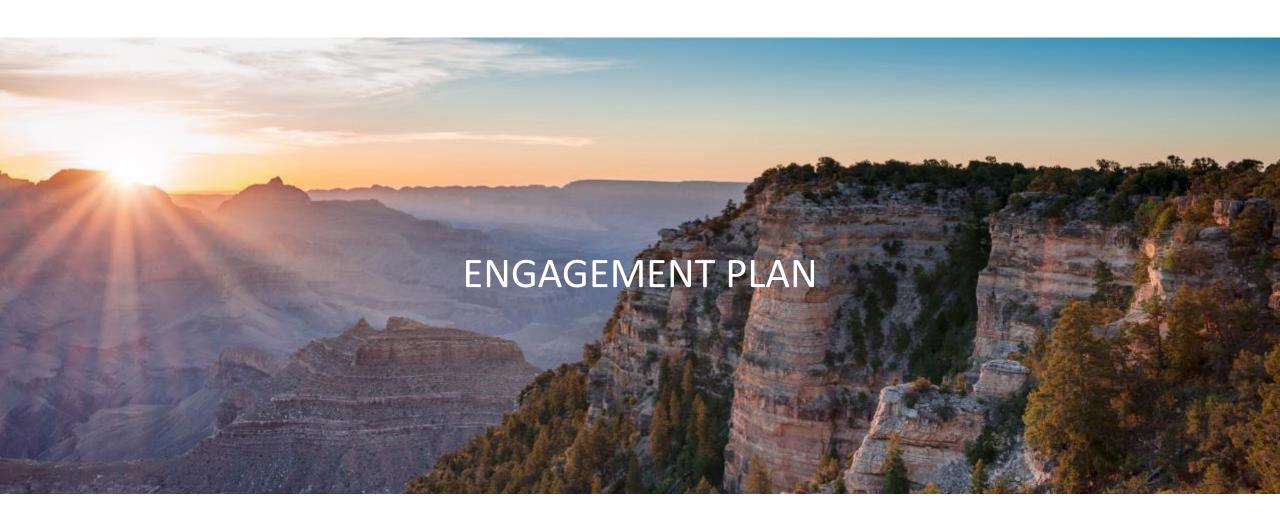
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DATA COLLECTION
AND PLANNING PROCESS

- Listening Sessions
- Community Roundtable Conversations
- Surveying the Community

➡ Public Comment Phase

ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Statewide In-Person Outreach

Quarter 1	*North-East Region* – Apache County and Navajo County Northern Region – Coconino County
Quarter 2	*Eastern Region* - Gila County, Graham County, Greenlee County South-East Region – Cochise County and Santa Cruz County
Quarter 3	*South-West Region* – Pima County and Yuma County *Central Region* – Maricopa County and Pinal County
Quarter 4	*Western Region* – La Paz County, Mohave County and Yavapai County

Quarter 1	*North-East Region* – Navajo Nation Shiprock Agency, Chinle Agency, and the Fort Defiance Agency *Northern Region* – Navajo Nation Western Agency, Hopi Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute, and Havasupai Tribe
Quarter 2	*Eastern Region* – White Mountain Apache Tribe, Tonto Apache Tribe, and San Carlos Apache Tribe
Quarter 3	*South-West Region* – Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Tohono O'odham Nation, San Xavier District, Fort Yuma – Quechan Tribe, and Cocopah Tribe *Central Region* – Ak-Chin Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and Fort McDowell Nation
Quarter 4	*Western Region* – Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, and Kaibab-Paiute Tribe

DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN - TIMELINE

Public Comment period is open now through February 1, 2024

➡️ Submit your feedback via website, email, or voicemail

ACA will address public comments, and make changes to the Plan (as needed) and submit to NTIA mid-February 2024 for the "curing period"

Final submission near the end of March 2024

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