

Definition of Digital Inclusion*

**Based on work conducted by Community Partners and CCTPG.*

To truly pursue a comprehensive Digital Inclusion strategy, consideration must be given to the following key components:

- ═ **Stakeholder Engagement.** The involvement of community, government and industry stakeholders is essential to ensure that the broadband deployment strategies selected accurately reflect the needs and the day-to-day realities of the communities being served. It is particularly important to have community representation, because this sector has been traditionally less engaged. The engagement process also serves as a means to inform potential users of why they should be online.
- ═ **Adoption.** This is the number of people who have some form of broadband service. While improvements have been made in the U.S. in the area of adoption, disparities remain within certain geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic groups.
 - **Availability.** Availability means whether broadband is physically accessible in a geographic area. This availability, often called deployment, is a key barrier to Digital Inclusion in some geographic regions.
 - **Applications.** Online content and software applications must be available and relevant. Technology adoption is powerfully driven by applications that are linked to specific needs within a community. These applications allow people to write, make their voices heard, and publish local content. Currently, applications that don't reflect the language needs of the community may discourage people from using services online.
 - **Affordability.** Price is a barrier to both adoption of Internet services and ownership of computer technology.
 - **Accessibility.** Disparities in levels of access are evident among people with disabilities. People with disabilities are less likely to have computers and use the Internet. Digital Inclusion also assumes a commitment to enable people to have the knowledge and any necessary tools (often called assistive technology) that allow them to make use of digital resources.
 - **Assistance.** Availability and connectivity must be married with the knowledge to fully access digital technologies. Affordable technical assistance is important in helping users learn to use and maintain their equipment. Without assistance, the use of the equipment and the Internet would be short-lived.