

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jessica Scadron - jessica@everyoneon.org, 415-713-9150

New Report Gives State & Local Leaders Recommendations for Digital Equity Planning with \$65B in Federal Funds Available to Close the Digital Divide

EveryoneOn releases final report in a three-part series on connectivity in low- and lower-middle income households, finding that prioritizing local communities, and building trust and equity are critical to getting online

Los Angeles, CA, May 12, 2022 – Today, [EveryoneOn](#), a national digital inclusion organization, released the [final report](#) in a three-part series on the digital divide during the pandemic: *The State of Digital Equity*. The findings were informed by a national survey and focus groups on broadband adoption among low- and lower-middle income households conducted by EveryoneOn in collaboration with [Dr. John B. Horrigan](#), an expert digital divide researcher. The survey was funded by the Ballmer Group and Microsoft.

The report examines the digital divide during the pandemic, and links lessons learned from the two prior reports on [affordability](#), and [digital skills and trust](#). It draws on data from those reports while adding new qualitative findings from focus groups of low-income individuals and digital inclusion practitioners. The report includes recommendations for state and local leaders to consider in their digital equity planning, including:

1. *“Equity needs to be at the center.”* With billions of dollars directed to states and local communities in the coming years, it is imperative to ensure funds reach and benefit all communities.
2. *Community-driven messaging is essential.* Reaching target populations who need help getting and staying online happens best when community members connect with one another, where trust is strong.
3. *Localize and centralize digital resources.* The data shows that local nonprofits, public libraries and other community anchor institutions are far more trusted than internet service providers and the government.
4. *Prioritize people over networks.* Closing the digital divide requires people as much (if not more than) networks. The digital divide is not primarily a technological problem, but a social problem.

“We heard directly from the community – individuals as well as digital practitioners – about significant barriers to getting connected,” said Norma Fernandez, CEO, EveryoneOn. “Our research shows how those barriers to meaningful broadband adoption are interrelated, and that increasing access to high-speed internet involves much more than networks and infrastructure.”

The report also explores four lessons learned through the research and what they mean for digital equity planning, which are:

1. *Affordability:* For many low-income households, having broadband service is a financial struggle. However, participants said they were willing to stretch their budgets to pay for quality service.
2. *Digital skills:* Those who need an affordable internet plan and working computer often need assistance getting started online. Spanish-speaking, young people and elderly individuals have varying levels of digital skills needs.

3. *Trust*: Many participants stated concerns about privacy and personal data security. Further, only 10% of survey respondents said internet service providers were highly trustworthy sources of information for discount programs and subsidies – far below the 28% figure for local public libraries.
4. *Device access*: Ensuring access to affordable devices is critical for getting online. 47% of internet non-adopters said the cost of a computer is a reason they do not have service.

At an unprecedented moment when \$65B in federal funding will be distributed as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and with the launch of the Affordable Connectivity Program, this an historic opportunity for states and communities to create more equitable and inclusive approaches to digital equity.

“The recently-approved federal funding presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to narrow the broadband gap, but the digital divide is a deeply multifaceted issue that we know cannot be solved by access to connectivity alone,” said Vickie Robinson, general manager, Microsoft Airband Initiative. “As the findings of this report underscored, we must approach this opportunity with digital equity as the goal and facilitate access to devices, digital skills and connectivity, recognizing affordability and other barriers to increased adoption.”

The *State of Digital Equity* report is available for download on EveryoneOn’s website: [Everyoneon.org/2022-national-research](https://everyoneon.org/2022-national-research).

About EveryoneOn

Since 2012, [EveryoneOn](https://everyoneon.org) has helped people in underserved communities unlock social and economic opportunity by connecting them to low-cost internet and devices, and providing digital skills training. The organization collaborates with government, community organizations, nonprofits, foundations and corporations to deliver services that give individuals and families the power to use the internet. EveryoneOn has helped connect 1,000,000 people to the internet, provided more than 5,000 devices and delivered digital skills trainings to hundreds of participants nationwide. To learn more, visit www.everyoneon.org, and follow on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter @EveryoneOn.

###