Whately Digital Equity Plan

2024

This page was intentionally left blank.

Whately Digital Equity Plan

2024

Prepared by:

Franklin Regional Council of Governments
12 Olive Street, Suite 2
Greenfield, MA 01301
Main Telephone: 413-774-3167

https://frcog.org

FRCOG Staff:

Jessica Atwood, Director of Planning
Ted Harvey, Sr. Economic Development Planner
Nicole Krantz, Planning & Digital Equity Intern
Mark Maloni, Communications Manager

This page was intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

While many Franklin County residents have effortlessly accessed the internet at home, work, school and throughout our communities, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the digital divide that continues to exist. As schools closed for in-person instruction and businesses moved employees to work-at-home models in March 2020, the awareness and consequences of this long-time disparity became evident.

The Whately Digital Equity Plan will help guide municipal decision-making and investments related to increasing access, adoption and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan will help prepare the Town to submit grant proposals to existing or forthcoming state or federal programs to support digital equity activities.

What is "digital equity?"

The **digital divide** is the gap between individuals and households who have access to connected devices with reliable and affordable high-speed internet, along with the skills to use them, and those who do not. [1]

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) defines **digital equity** as a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

The following are determining factors for digital access as described by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI). *Connection* (the internet connection is fast, affordable, and reliable); *Access to Devices* (do households have the computers, tablets, etc. to meet their needs); and *Digital Literacy* (do residents know how to safely and effectively use technology; are they receiving quality information, and can they assess their privacy risks)

Digital inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology.

---

[1] National Digital Inclusion Alliance (www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/)

Overview of Planning Process:

This project is funded by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) at the Mass Tech Collaborative under the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. Funding was provided by the Massachusetts ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds.

The Town of Whately applied to the MBI to receive technical assistance to create a Digital Equity Plan in 2022. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) applied to, and was approved by the MBI to be a prequalified consultant for this program and was selected by Whately as the consultant for this project.

FRCOG developed a draft plan, based on input from surveys, meetings, and public engagement, then presented the Plan to the Steering Committee. Following a public comment period, the Plan was finalized and presented to the Select Board at a Public Meeting on June 25th, 2024. The final, approved plan was submitted to the MBI on June 26th, 2024.

Digital Equity Steering Committee

The Whately Digital Equity Plan is part of the Whately Comprehensive Plan.[2] The planning process consisted of working closely with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Group to provide oversight and input into the development of the Plan. There were two (2) Steering Committee meetings that included digital equity plan discussions.

Community Outreach and Engagement

Community outreach and engagement is vital in understanding the both the needs of residents and the current available digital equity assets. The consultant pursued multiple avenues of outreach and engagement to better understand the current conditions relating to digital equity. There was one (1) focus group with ten attendees predominately made up of aging individuals, and a Community Meeting on March 20, 2024 with five attendees. In addition, staff met individually key stakeholders to gather additional information, such as with the Director of IT for the Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District, the Director of the S. White Dickinson Memorial Library, and the Director of the South County Senior Center, as well as the Town Community Development Administrator, to gather insights on specific issues of digital equity, current projects, and ideas for future projects.

---

[2] Whately Comprehensive Plan (https://whatelyplans.org/)

Digital Equity and Comprehensive Plan Surveys

The MBI created a statewide Digital Equity Survey to gather information about needs, barriers, and opportunities from Massachusetts residents. The survey was available online and in print, provided in 9 languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, and Khmer). Copies of the survey were brought to the S. White Dickinson Memorial Library and South County Senior Center. The online survey was promoted on the Franklin Regional Council of Governments' website & social media, and sent out via the Franklin County Resource Network. There were **12 responses** from Whately residents.

In addition to the statewide survey, a Whately Digital Equity Survey was created using the state survey as a model. It was distributed to the focus group attendees with **2 responses**. The purpose of this supplemental survey was to better understand the digital experience of the covered population represented in the focus group (aging individuals), so a wider distribution of this survey was not considered.

It is important acknowledge that the low response rates for the digital equity surveys may not be representative of Whately as a whole, which may affect the reliability of the survey findings presented in this plan. Survey results were analyzed to understand barriers to internet access, affordability, and adoption to help close the digital divide. Please interpret the survey results with caution due to potential biases in the sample.

Finally, a Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey was distributed town-wide that included two digital equity related questions with **168 respondents**.

II. Vision & Goals

The Committee established a town-wide vision for digital equity in Whately and three overarching goals to guide the town. Both the Vision and the Goals were developed through Committee meetings and feedback during the Community meeting and focus group.

Vision

> *Our vision is for all residents in Whately to be able to access affordable, high-speed internet, with the appropriate devices. Internet access, which includes cost, speed, devices, and knowledge, is not a privilege for those who can afford it, but a right for all of our residents.*
>
> *The Whately Digital Equity Plan will lay the groundwork for long-term investments so that our community may reach digital equity for its all residents. With this plan, the Town will be well-positioned to compete for broadband funds that may become available through federal, state, and private sector broadband infrastructure and digital equity funding opportunities.*

Goals

Goal 1: Fast Reliable Connectivity

Ensure residents' have access to the internet connectivity they need and can afford that is consistent with adequate and reliable speeds.

Goal 2: Selection of Service

Work to increase Internet Service Provider (ISP) competition so that residents have more choice in their internet plan and are better informed about their options.

Goal 3: Digital Resource Navigation

Support Whately residents' access to public digital equity assets, resources, and skills training, especially those who need more support navigating digital systems.

Recommendations Summary

Goal 1: Fast Reliable Connectivity
1-1 Maintain, promote, and improve free public Wi-Fi locations.
1-2 Develop and maintain partnerships across sectors (public, private, nonprofit) to support digital equity for residents of Whately.
1-3 Promote and support BEAD Challenge Program to address dead zones and inconsistent connection.
1-4 Distribute digital devices to covered populations.
1-5 Establish a mobile hotspot lending program.
1-6 Explore and promote options for affordable, quality data plans for mobile phones and more robust and reliable cell service.

| Goal 2: Selection of Service |
|---|
| **2-1** Consider alternatives to major ISPs, such as partnering with other communities in the region to create a publicly owned regional ISP. |
| **2-2** Negotiate lower internet subscription rates with current local ISP or investigate the possibilities of direct subsidies. |
| **2-3** Track major ISPs to understand coverage, rates, bundles, and discounts. |
| **2-4** Advocate for greater transparency and higher quality customer service among current local ISP to reduce monthly internet costs for residents and ensure they only pay for the services they need. |
| **2-5** Develop a transparent relationship with Comcast representatives, using contract to hold Comcast accountable for communication and transparency on the costs of service. |
| **2-6** Create partnerships with other ISPs and broadband infrastructure experts to investigate the expansion of last mile network connections. |
| **2-7** Improve and promote transportation to community anchor institutions by working with local transit authorities and transportation providers. |

Goal 3: Digital Resource Navigation	
3-1 Improve town public outreach methods to increase the rate of resident participation in the planning process.	**3-8** Support current digital literacy programs (through the Library, Senior Center, etc.).
3-2 Library coordination with Whately schools for internet safety education.	**3-9** Expand general digital literacy assistance.
3-3 Explore cybersecurity programming and partnership opportunities to educate residents about topics like scam prevention (ex. MassTech Collaborative's MassCyberCenter online safety initiatives).	**3-10** Consider a fund to create a digital education curriculum to provide professional pathways for high school students. Connect high school students with aging populations to focus on digital literacy learning.
3-4 Establish easily accessible information promoting digital equity resources so that residents are aware of the support available to them.	**3-11** Establish library device lending program and modernize existing on-site devices.
3-5 Develop and maintain a map of Whately internet assets (cable networks, public or free Wi-Fi locations, skills training locations, etc.).	**3-12** Establish a local device reuse and recycling program. Explore the possibility of refurbishing old school Chromebooks for back-up lending purposes at the library.
3-6 Partner with local organizations that provide regular in-person digital literacy support and training	**3-13** Provide educational tools to assist with use of telehealth software, including accessing medical records, paying bills, making appointments, etc.
3-7 Promote and consider expanding librarian walk-in tech help.	

III. Existing Conditions[3]

Whately's Demographics

The Town of Whately is located along the Connecticut River in southern Franklin County. A rural community[4], Whately has a population of 1,736 with 715 households[5]. The Town is comprised of 3 distinct areas (Whately Center, East Whately, and West Whately).

A common measure of income for an area is the median household income.[6] The median household income for Whately is $98,015. This figure is consistent with the median household income of Massachusetts, while both are significantly higher than the County median household income.
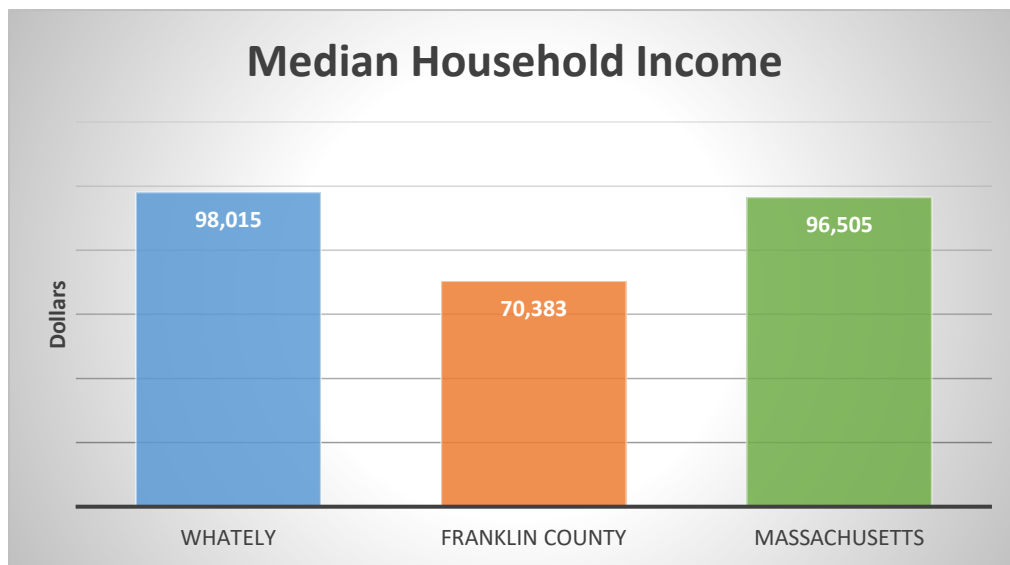
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

---

[3] See Appendix for full list of sources

[4] This Plan uses the MBI definition of Rural, based on the Massachusetts State Office of Rural Health definition, which considers a municipality to be rural if it meets one of the following criteria: Meets at least one of three federal rural definitions at the sub-county level (Census Bureau, Office of Management and Budget, or Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes), and/or has a population less than 10,000 people and a population density below 500 people per square mile, and/or has an acute care hospital in the town that meets the state hospital licensure definition of a small rural hospital, or is a certified Critical Access Hospital.

[5] U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

[6] For this purpose, this includes income in households that have families, people living alone as well as unrelated people living together. The median is the middle statistic in a data set, which makes the measurement relatively unaffected by extreme numbers (either the very wealthy or very poor) from influencing the overall figure.

Compared with the State, both Whately and Franklin County have a significantly fewer percentage of residents who speak a language besides English at home or are People of Color. Whately has a higher percentage of both civilian veterans and residents with a disability compared to the State.

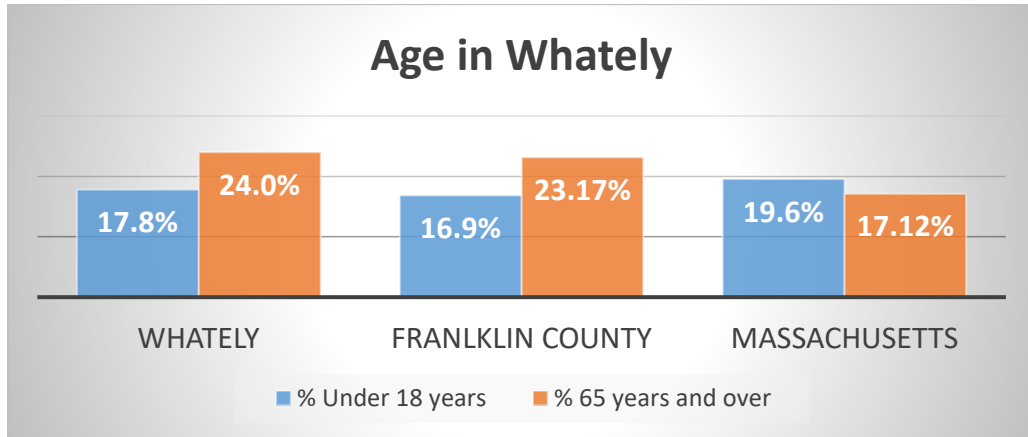| Town/Region	Civilian Veterans	Population with a Disability	Speak a Language Besides English at Home	% People of Color
Whately	9.5%	14.2%	5.0%	5.8%
Franklin County	7.5%	16.8%	6.54%	11.1%
Massachusetts	4.7%	11.9%	24.54%	31.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Digital Equity Plans should focus on "**covered populations**." These are defined by the Digital Equity Act Sec. 60302(8), National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) as groups within a populations who have a higher likelihood to experience digital inequity.

Covered Populations:
- Individuals who live in low-income households.
- Aging individuals (60 and above)
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

Similarly to Franklin County, Whately has an aging population with 24% of residents over the age of 65 and almost 18% under the age of 18. This is the opposite of the State where 17% are over 65 and almost 20% of Massachusetts residents are under 20.

Age in Whately

	WHATELY	FRANLKLIN COUNTY	MASSACHUSETTS
% Under 18 years	17.8%	16.9%	19.6%
% 65 years and over	24.0%	23.17%	17.12%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Labor Force & Economy

Inability to connect to high-speed internet, lack of access to digital devices, and lack of digital literacy, negatively impact the economic vitality of a municipality. Having accessible broadband is necessary for local businesses to thrive and grow. It also allows for residents to work remotely, an important component of today's workforce options.

Region	Unemployment Rate	Labor force Participation Rate	Working from home
Franklin County	5.7%	63.1%	13.7%
Massachusetts	5.3%	67.1%	14.6%
Whately	8.0%	67.1%	14.9%

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Whately's unemployment rate is higher than both the State and the county, while the labor force participation rate is in-line with the State. The percentage of employees working from home is also higher than the rest of the county. Continued and improved access to affordable internet and devices likely play a role in residents' ability to work remotely, or at least have the option to do so. According to a recent report from the National Skills Coalition (NSC) in

> **Lack of digital literacy skills negatively impacts residents' ability to obtain or hold a job.**
>
> *Source: National Skills Coalition (NSC)*

partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 92% of jobs analyzed require digital skills.[7]

Digital Equity

The factors in determining digital equity include:

1. *Connection* (ability to reliably connect to affordable broadband[8] service)
2. *Access to Devices* (i.e. computers or tablets)
3. *Digital Literacy* (ability to navigate the internet safely and effectively).

Each of these three components contribute to overall digital equity. The Town of Whately has taken strides to provide all three elements to their residents. Based on responses to the Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey, when asked how access to internet affects their life in Whately, 54% of respondents answered "very positively affect" and 27% answered "somewhat positively affect." However, the data shows there remains work to do in all three facets.

Very positively affect	Somewhat positively affect	Do not affect	Somewhat negatively affect	Very negatively affect	I do not know
54%	27%	9%	5%	5%	1%
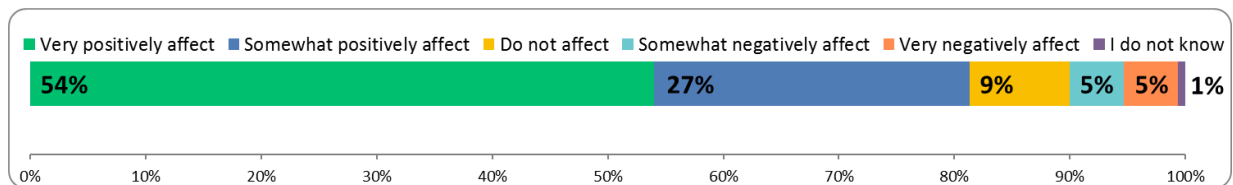
Source: Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey - How does access to internet affect your life in the Town of Whately?
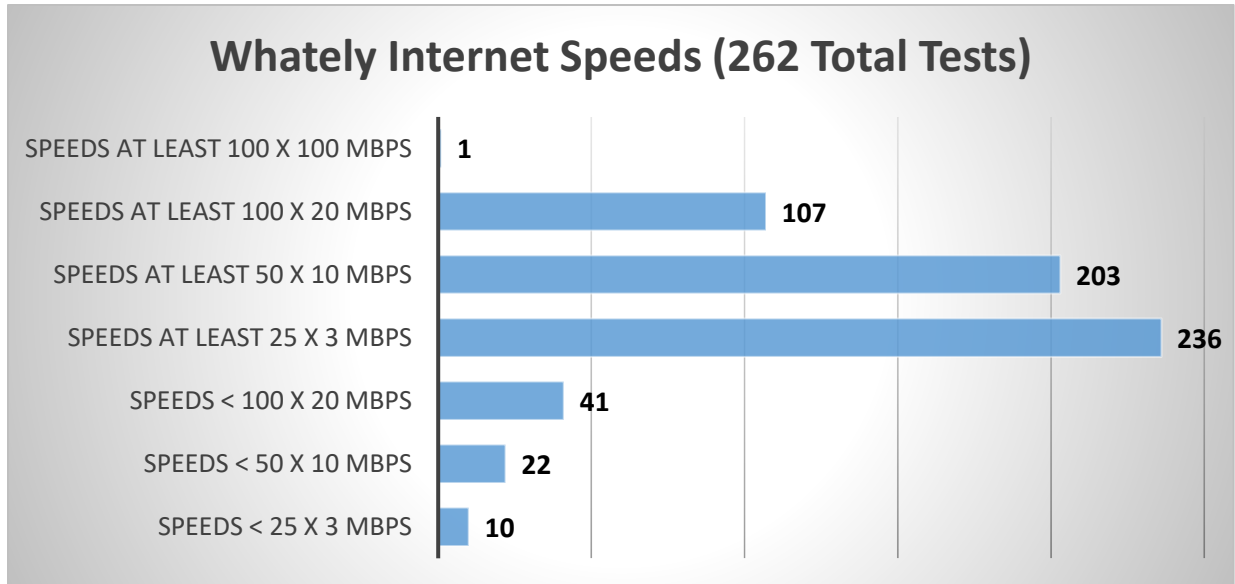
Connection

Having a reliable, broadband internet connection is necessary for many vital activities in the 21st century, from filling out medical forms to interviewing for a new job to talking with grandchildren.[9] According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), "broadband," while used generally to mean "high-speed internet", has a specific definition of a minimum of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 20 megabits per second (Mbps) upload speed. This definition was recently updated by the FCC from 25/3 Mbps.

---

[7] "Closing the Digital Skill Divide" (https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/closing-the-digital-skill-divide/)
[8] FCC Definition of Broadband: 25 Mbps download x 3 Mbps upload
[9] https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-398168A1.pdf

Measuring internet speeds, particularly in residences, can be difficult to measure due to various factors (time of day, how many users are currently on-line, how close a user is to a router, etc.). However, speed-test data provides a general understanding of how well a community is reaching broadband speeds. Overall, the available data suggests that less than half of Whately's speed tests meet broadband speed of 100/20 Mbps.

Whately Internet Speeds (262 Total Tests)

Speed Category	Count
SPEEDS AT LEAST 100 X 100 MBPS	1
SPEEDS AT LEAST 100 X 20 MBPS	107
SPEEDS AT LEAST 50 X 10 MBPS	203
SPEEDS AT LEAST 25 X 3 MBPS	236
SPEEDS < 100 X 20 MBPS	41
SPEEDS < 50 X 10 MBPS	22
SPEEDS < 25 X 3 MBPS	10

Source: Speed Tests in Whately (collected by Mass Broadband Institute February 2022)

The data does not differentiate between types of internet or different service providers. This is important information to ascertain, as there are issues both with receiving advertised "up to" speeds by the coax providers (especially at certain times of day, such as when school is let out or during prime time), and sections of the town where the internet service drops daily.

The FCC does allow a Challenge process.[10] As part of the upcoming Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, Massachusetts will be coordinating a challenge process to help better ensure the accuracy of the coverage data.[11] This will allow municipalities, like Whately, to better understand where there is limited or poor broadband connection within town. The BEAD Challenge Process will begin June 20, 2024.

---

[10] To learn about the FCC map and how to file challenges, see: https://help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/sections/10467243210651-Consumers-Individuals
[11] More information on the Massachusetts BEAD Challenge is available on the MBI website (https://broadband.masstech.org/bead-challenge-process)

Based on responses to the Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey, 49% of the 136 respondents identified "internet speed" as one of their household's top three issues regarding internet access. The top issue identified, at 65%, was "cost of internet plan."

Broadband costs are difficult to comprehensively measure due to various factors, including levels of speed, discounts, and bundling options. However, nationwide, one study found that the median cost of high-speed internet was $74.99 per month.[12] Furthermore, the study found that around half of households were paying between $60 and $90 per month. This is, however, not representative of the more cost-burdened residents located in more remote areas.

Comcast/Xfinity (a cable provider) is the only major wireline broadband service provider in Whately. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) is also an option for residents but does not qualify as broadband and does not meet the needs of residents. Comcast did not provide us with coverage or subscriber information. The table below lists the internet plan options that Comcast offers.

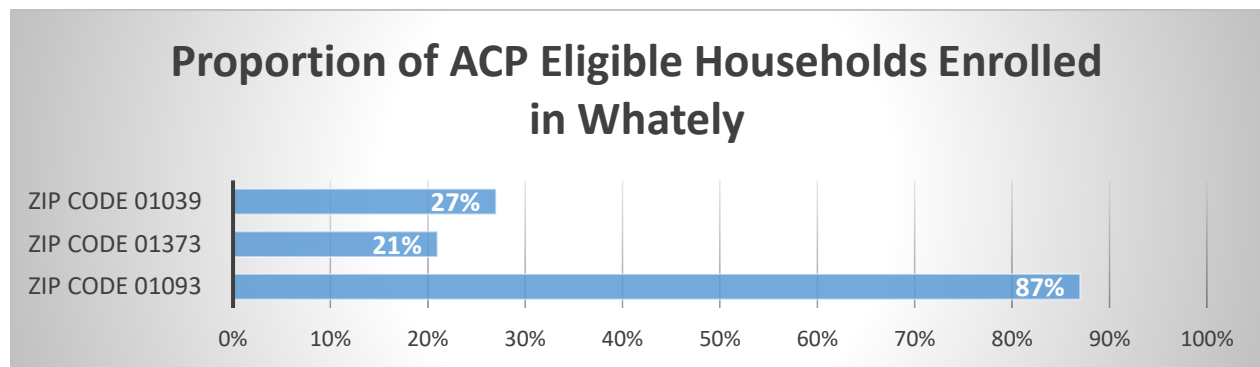| Comcast Plans*	Max Advertised Speeds (Mbps)	Monthly Cost**
Connect	150/10	$68.00
Connect More	300/10	$90.00
Fast	500/10	$105.00
Super Fast	800/15	$110.00
Gigabit	1000/20	$115.00
Gigabit Extra	1200/35	$120.00
Gigabit Pro	10,000/10,000	$300.00
** Comcast also offers Internet Essentials (50/10 Mbps) and Internet Essentials Plus (100/10 Mbps) for $9.95 and $29.95 per month respectively. To enroll in either of these plans, consumers must qualify for programs like the like the National School Lunch Program, housing assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, or show proof of ACP enrollment since September 2023 within 60 days, or they will be moved to the Connect plan. **Standard rate after promotional period. Does not include costs from bundling with TV or other services; does not include setup or installation fees, or fees for purchase of any needed equipment		
Source: Comcast rate sheet; https://www.cnet.com/home/internet/xfinity-internet-review/		

---

[12] Broadband Pricing: What Consumer Reports Learned from 22,000 Internet Bills (https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL.report-broadband.november-17-2022-2.pdf)

Some Whately residents are not included in the Comcast contract and only have access to DSL or have to pay for satellite services which are not as reliable. Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with Comcast in favor of developing municipal internet, reporting that Comcast is unreliable and costly.

> Whately needs "internet for those 'outside' or in rural areas that isn't a monthly mortgage payment!"
> -Survey Respondent, 2024

There are few programs available to assist with broadband affordability. One program is the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a benefit program run by the Federal Communications Commission. The goal of the program is to help make broadband affordable for all households. The ACP provides a discount of up to $30 per month for internet services of eligible households. The FCC collects data on which households are eligible and how many are enrolled in the program.

Proportion of ACP Eligible Households Enrolled in Whately

ZIP CODE 01039	27%
ZIP CODE 01373	21%
ZIP CODE 01093	87%

Source: ACP Enrollment & Claims Tracker (https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/), April 2023

As of April 2023, 87% of eligible households with zip code 01093 were enrolled in the ACP, indicating this program was adequately utilized in the center of Town.[13] Zip code 01039, which includes some of West Whately, only had 27% of eligible households enrolled. Zip code 01373, which spans the largest area of Whately, only had 21% of eligible households enrolled, despite having more than triple the amount of eligible households compared to the other two zip codes. This data indicates that, overall, Whately did not adequately utilize the ACP program and residents could benefit from additional resource promotion. As of February 2024, there were 159 total participants
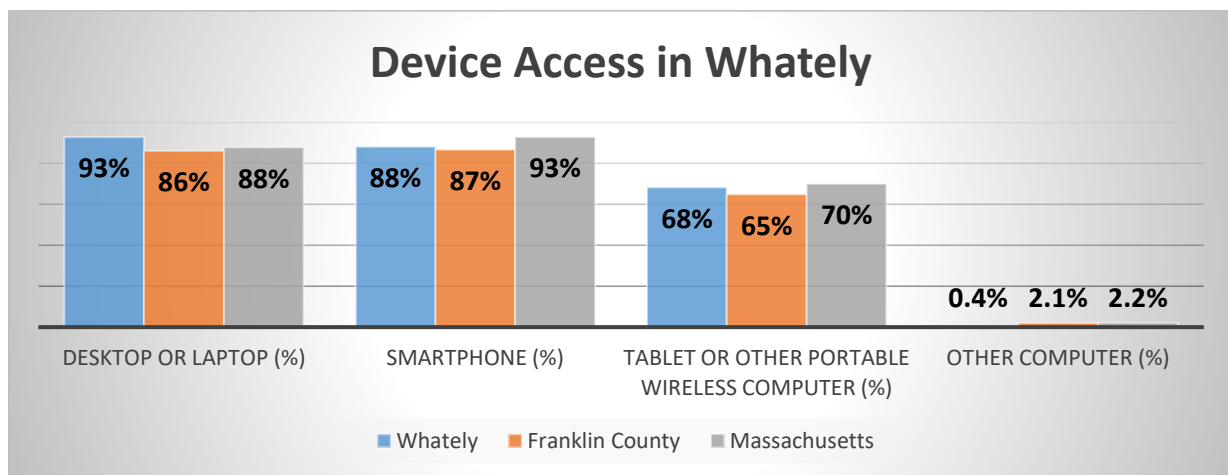
---

[13] ACP Enrollment Visualization (https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=66eba10020da467781f3a6b022f6f202&extent=-139.0663,14.607,-38.1678,60.066)

across all three zip codes, which is an increase of 10 participants since November 2023. These 10 new participants enrolled from zip code 01373.[14]

As of June 2024, the federal government had not renewed the funding for the ACP. Although there is currently a bi-partisan bill to renew funding, the Program has now ended. To help with this transition, the FCC encourages ACP participants to enroll in their federal Lifeline program which provides a service discount of up to $9.25 per month for phone and/or internet service. Comcast offers two plans for low-income households, Internet Essentials (50/10 Mbps) and Internet Essentials Plus (100/10 Mbps) for $9.95 and $29.95 per month respectively. To enroll in either of these plans, consumers must qualify for programs like the like the National School Lunch Program, housing assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, or show proof of ACP enrollment since September 2023 within 60 days, or they will be moved to the Connect plan.
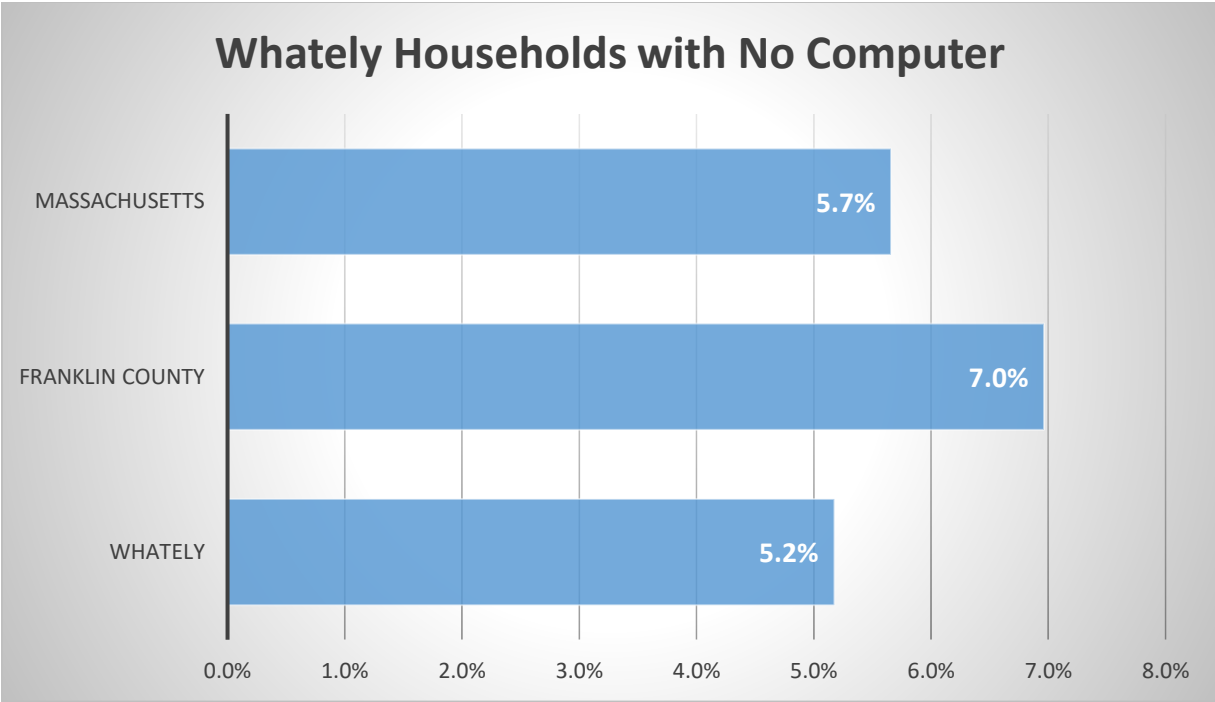
Access to Devices

88% of households in Whately have a smartphone and almost 93% of households have a desktop or laptop. About 5% of households in Whately do not have a computer. Not having a reliable desktop or laptop computer can negatively impact a household, preventing the ability to work remotely, access government services, and access educational material for students of all ages. Based on conversations with residents, some device-owning Whately residents experience access challenges because their devices are outdated.

Device Access in Whately

	Whately	Franklin County	Massachusetts
DESKTOP OR LAPTOP (%)	93%	86%	88%
SMARTPHONE (%)	88%	87%	93%
TABLET OR OTHER PORTABLE WIRELESS COMPUTER (%)	68%	65%	70%
OTHER COMPUTER (%)	0.4%	2.1%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

---

[14] ACP Enrollment & Claims Tracker (https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/)

Whately Households with No Computer

MASSACHUSETTS — 5.7%

FRANKLIN COUNTY — 7.0%

WHATELY — 5.2%

0.0% 1.0% 2.0% 3.0% 4.0% 5.0% 6.0% 7.0% 8.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is more difficult to quantify than either broadband connection or access to devices. While there are different needs for both level of internet speed needed and type of device needed, the range of digital literacy is vast – from knowing how to turn on a computer to learning how to code. Digital literacy needs are often age-dependent as well as language dependent.

When Whately residents were asked in the statewide MBI Digital Equity Survey to rank the difficulty of using the internet for various tasks (i.e. job search, healthcare or telehealth services, etc.) most respondents indicated 'Easy.' However, 33% said it was 'Not Easy' to use the internet for Health Care or Telehealth Services and to Search or Apply for Benefits for You or Your Family.

Education

In response to COVID-19, classroom technology use has become more extensive in the Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District, which serves Whately Elementary School. The district offers digital resources through their Family Tech Center. Frontier Regional and Union 38 Schools support 1:1 Chromebook for all students in grades PreK-12. All students have access to their own issued device to ensure appropriate and equitable

access to any form of remote learning. In some circumstances, iPads are issued to students. The supplied devices come with learning software and cloud storage. The Family Tech Center also offers online troubleshooting guides and other digital literacy resources. The district provides employees with Windows laptops. Every classroom is equipped with Wi-Fi, including public guest access that is available through vouchers during the day and openly available after hours and on weekends. The Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District has a Technology Plan that is updated every three years.

The Whately Elementary Library Media Center offers links to Internet Safety & Digital Citizenship online educational materials. They also provide a tools library and links keyboard skills games and learning modules.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity has been noted as a continuing and growing issue. Based on the Whately Comprehensive Plan Survey, 42% of respondents identified cybersecurity as one of their household's top three issues regarding internet access. For the Whately schools, internet security is a very big concern related to students, but also for parents, who need to have the tools and education around effective cybersecurity. Based on discussions with the library director, there is a need for coordination with Whately schools to educate about internet safety.

MBI's State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) states that a future action to address online safety will include the development of a statewide cybersecurity curriculum. Additional actions will include training existing digital navigators, so they support, protect, and inform clients about their online safety, and embedding cybersecurity awareness into youth digital literacy programming. Whately could leverage the resources of MassTech Collaborative's MassCyberSecurity online safety initiatives. As part of this, there is also a timely opportunity to apply for a state grant to enhance cybersecurity awareness grant for anyone using City or other government networks.

Digital Assets[15]

Although there are areas of digital inequity in Whately, the town and surrounding region provide numerous assets that promote and implement digital equity.

Public libraries are an important source for digital equity. The Whately Public Library, S. White Dickinson Memorial Library, offers public Wi-Fi access, an on-site computer, and

---

[15] See Appendix for list of local and regional assets

printer/copier/scanner services. The Wi-Fi is available during off hours and extends to the parking lot.

The South County Senior Center (SCSC) serves Whately, Deerfield, and Sunderland. Its locations are in Deerfield and Sunderland. In 2023, the senior center was awarded a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs used to provide technology training for members and purchase 131 iPads and 3 MacBook Air Laptops. The SCSC uses two of the iPads and the three laptops to provide public devices on-demand at the Sunderland location and by request at the Deerfield location. The remaining 129 iPads are distributed through a lottery to local seniors along with mandatory training sessions. Grant funds were also used to provide monthly stipends for up to 52 older adults by lottery. The SCSC is also working with local schools to implement technology support. They partner with Valley Neighbors to offer occasional scam prevention presentations.

> Serving Western Massachusetts, The **Alliance for Digital Equity** is a coalition of community-focused organizations working toward digital equity for all people. The goal of the Alliance is to get people the access they need—to the equipment, infrastructure, and knowledge and skills—that will allow them to fully participate in the digital world.
>
> https://sites.google.com/view/alliancefordigitalequity/home

Digital Equity Assets and Services in Whately and Franklin County

Assets and Strengths	Needs and Challenges
- Local services like free Wi-Fi available at the library that extends out to the parking lot, including off hours. - Regional services like the on-demand devices available at the South County Senior Center - Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District's Technology Plan which is updated every three years - Regional networks and support services like the Franklin County Resource Network, administered by Community Action Pioneer Valley. - Regional services through the 413Cares.org/Digital Equity (working with the Alliance for Digital Equity) - Digital literacy programs for seniors, including the Cyber Senior Program through the Greenfield Community College (GCC). - Availability of broadband in most communities in Franklin County through the MBI Last Mile program. - MBI, as the State Broadband Office, works with state agencies and departments to optimize funding sources and statewide coordination (for example, coordinating digital literacy programs between libraries). - Regional organizations that provide opportunity for coordination like the Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CW MARS) library consortium.	- Staff and programs are heavily grant dependent. Lack staff and resources to provide services or other programs - One time funding - Reliance on volunteers - Difference in bandwidth quality - Internet cost disparity for more remote residents - Gaps in cell service due to varied geography - Reliance on federal and state funding due to the COVID pandemic to purchase devices and provide digital equity services. - Reliance on external funding sources - Need for staff/capacity - Need for an asset map so people know where to go for services (ex. Seattle-King County Digital Equity Asset Map) - Need for an individual or organization to coordinate between organizations
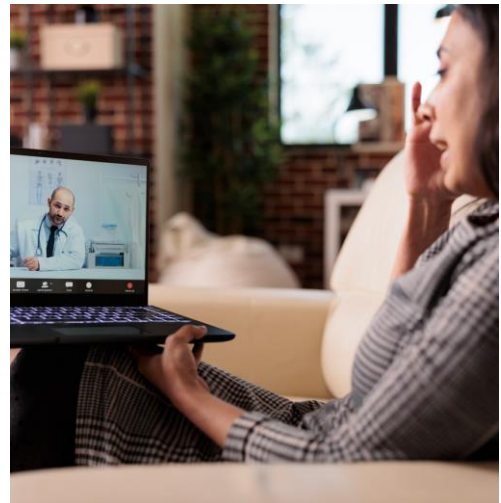
IV. Recommendations

This section provides a plan of action for the Town of Whately to work towards addressing the digital divide in town, and achieving the digital equity goals outlined above. These recommendations, and accompanying actions, were developed based on community input/feedback, best practices, and evolving technology trends.

The Recommendations and Action Plan includes the following:

> • Lead organization (in all cases, the Town), as well as the department or board/committee that could be responsible for implementation;
>
> • Supporting partners;
>
> • Potential funding sources;
>
> • Targeted timeframe for completion of a given recommendation, defined as:
>
> > • "Short-term" (less than 2 years)
> >
> > • "Medium-term" (2–5 years)
> >
> > • "Long-term" (more than 5 years).

Goal 1: Fast Reliable Connectivity

Ensure residents' have access to the internet connectivity they need and can afford that is consistent with adequate and reliable speeds.

Recommendation	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Maintain, promote, and improve free public Wi-Fi locations.	Town of Whately	• MBI • Alliance for Digital Equity	• Community Space Public Wi-Fi Program • E-rate: Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries • USDA Community Connect Program	Long Term
Develop and maintain partnerships across sectors (public, private, nonprofit) to support digital equity for residents of Whately.	Town of Whately	• Franklin County towns • FRCOG • MBI • MassCyberCenter	• No new costs anticipated.	Medium Term
Promote and support BEAD Challenge Program to address dead zones and inconsistent connection.	Town of Whately	• FRCOG • MBI • Alliance for Digital Equity	• Connect Humanity	Short-Medium Term
Distribute digital devices to covered populations.	Town of Whately	• Alliance for Digital Equity	• Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program	Short Term
Establish a mobile hotspot lending program.	Town of Whately	• Alliance for Digital Equity • S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	• Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program for initial funds	Medium Term
Explore and promote options for affordable, quality data plans for mobile phones and more robust and reliable cell service.	Town of Whately	• Alliance for Digital Equity	• FCC Lifeline Program • USDA Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans & Loan Guarantees	Long Term

Goal 2: Selection of Service

Work to increase Internet Service Provider (ISP) competition so that residents have more choice in their internet plan and are better informed about their options.

Recommendation	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Consider alternatives to major ISPs, such as partnering with other communities in the region to create a publicly owned regional ISP.	Town of Whately	• MBI • Alliance for Digital Equity • Conway • Deerfield • Sunderland • Westfield WhipCity Fiber (historically successful in helping communities to build 1-gigabit municipal networks)	• Community Compact Municipal Fiber Program • Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) • BEAD Program • Rural Digital Opportunity Fund • USDA ReConnect Program USDA Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans & Loan Guarantees • Efficiency and Regionalization (E&R) Grant Program	Long Term
Negotiate lower internet subscription rates with current local ISP or investigate the possibilities of direct subsidies.	Town of Whately	• Director of the Alliance for Digital Equity	• Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program	Long Term
Track major ISPs to understand coverage, rates, bundles, and discounts.	Town of Whately	• MBI • Alliance for Digital Equity	• Local Planning and Technical Assistance Programs	Short Term
Advocate for greater transparency and higher quality customer service among current local ISP to reduce monthly internet costs for residents and ensure they only pay for the services they need.	Town of Whately	• Alliance for Digital Equity	• Local Planning and Technical Assistance Programs	Medium Term

Recommendation	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Develop a transparent relationship with Comcast representatives, using contract to hold Comcast accountable for communication and transparency on the costs of service.	Town of Whately	• Comcast, including Director of Community Impact	• Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program	Medium Term
Create partnerships with other ISPs and broadband infrastructure experts to investigate the expansion of last mile network connections.	Town of Whately	• Other Franklin County towns • Comcast	• BEAD Challenge Funding • USDA Community Connect Program	Medium Term
Improve and promote transportation to community anchor institutions by working with local transit authorities and transportation providers.	Town of Whately	• Whately Council on Aging • Franklin Regional Transit Authority	• Community Transit Grant Program	Long Term

Goal 3: Digital Resource Navigation

Support Whately residents' access to public digital equity assets, resources, and skills training, especially those who need more support navigating digital systems.

Recommendation	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Improve town public outreach methods to increase the rate of resident participation in the planning process.	Town of Whately	• FRCOG	• No new costs anticipated.	Medium Term
Library coordination with Whately schools for internet safety education.	S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	• Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District	• USDA Community Connect Program.	Medium Term
Explore cybersecurity programming and partnership opportunities to educate residents about topics like scam prevention (ex. MassTech Collaborative's MassCyberCenter online safety initiatives).	Town of Whately	• MBI • Alliance for Digital Equity • GCC Cyber Senior Program	• No new costs anticipated.	Short Term
Establish easily accessible information promoting digital equity resources so that residents are aware of the support available to them.	Town of Whately	• S. White Dickinson Memorial Library • South County Senior Center (SCSC) • Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District	• Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program • State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program	Short Term
Develop and maintain a map of Whately internet assets (cable networks, public or free Wi-Fi locations, skills training locations, etc.).	Town of Whately	• FRCOG	• Connect Humanity	Medium Term
Partner with local organizations that provide regular in-person digital literacy support and training.	Town of Whately	• Valley Neighbors • GCC Cyber Senior Program	• Tech Goes Home	Short Term

Recommendation	Lead Organization	Supporting Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Target
Promote and consider expanding librarian walk-in tech help.	S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	• Town of Whately	• BEAD Program	Short Term
Support current digital literacy programs (through the Library, Senior Center, etc.).	Town of Whately	• S. White Dickinson Memorial Library • SCSC	• Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) • Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program (TIRAP)	Long Term
Expand general digital literacy assistance.	Town of Whately	• S. White Dickinson Memorial Library • SCSC • GCC Cyber Seniors	• Tech Goes Home	Short Term
Consider a fund to create a digital education curriculum to provide professional pathways for high school students. Connect high school students with aging populations to focus on digital literacy learning.	Town of Whately	• NDIA digital navigator designation • Frontier Regional School • SCSC	• CommCorps YouthWorks Funding	Medium Term
Establish library device lending program and modernize existing on-site devices.	S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	• Town of Whately • CWMARS	• Community Compact IT Grant Program	Medium Term
Establish a local device reuse and recycling program. Explore the possibility of refurbishing old school Chromebooks for back-up lending purposes at the library.	Town of Whately	• Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District • S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	• Community Compact IT Grant Program	Medium Term
Provide educational tools to assist with use of telehealth software, including accessing medical records, paying bills, making appointments, etc.	Town of Whately	• Baystate Franklin Medical Center • SCSC	• USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grants • Determination of Need	Short Term

V. Appendices

Appendix A: Acknowledgements

The Whately Digital Equity Plan was made possible with support from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MassTech). This project was funded by MBI at the MassTech Collaborative through the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. Funding was provided by Massachusetts American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds. The Digital Equity Plan will be incorporated into the Whately Comprehensive Plan.

The contributions of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Advisory Group and project stakeholders join the comments of residents and stakeholders who participated in meetings and surveys throughout the Digital Equity planning process.

Town Staff
Sylvie Jensen, Community Development Administrator

Comprehensive Plan Steering Advisory Group
Ruth Leahey
John Lukin
Amy Ross
Rebecca Uzdavinis
Catherine Wolkowicz

Focus Group Coordinator
Ruth Leahey, President of Whately Grange

Digital Equity Stakeholders
Lynne Feldman, Director of Community Services, LifePath
Scott Paul, Director of IT, Frontier Regional and Union 38 School District
Jennifer Remillard, Director of South County Senior Center/Whately Council on Aging
Cynthia Steiner, Director of S. White Dickinson Memorial Library

Appendix B: Digital Equity Assets

Organization Name	Area	Website
S. White Dickinson Memorial Library	Municipal	https://www.whately.org/library
Whately Elementary Library Media Center	Municipal	https://sites.google.com/frsu38.org/wes-lmc/home
South County Senior Center	Municipal/ Regional	https://southcountyseniorcenter.org/
Alliance for Digital Equity	Regional	https://sites.google.com/view/alliancefordigitalequity/home
Big Brothers Big Sisters Franklin county	Regional	https://bbbs-fc.org/
Center for New Americans	Regional	https://cnam.org/
Clinical Support Options	Regional	https://www.csoinc.org/
Community Action Pioneer Valley	Regional	https://www.communityaction.us/
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	Regional	https://communityfoundation.org/
Community Health Center of Franklin county	Regional	https://www.chcfc.org/
Franklin County Sheriff's Office	Regional	https://www.fcso-ma.us/
Franklin County Technical School	Regional	https://www.fcts.us/
Franklin Regional Council of Governments	Regional	https://frcog.org/
Greenfield Community College	Regional	https://www.gcc.mass.edu/
LifePath	Regional	https://lifepathma.org/
Salasin Project	Regional	https://salasinproject.org/
The Literacy Project	Regional	https://www.literacyproject.org/
Three County Continuum of Care (a project of Community Action Pioneer Valley via HUD)	Regional	https://www.threecountycoc.communityaction.us/
United Way of the Franklin and Hampshire Region	Regional	https://uw-fh.org/
Whip City Fiber	Regional	https://www.whipcityfiber.com/
Community Compact Cabinet	State	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/community-compact-cabinet
CSforMA, Inc.	State	https://www.csforma.org/
Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)	State	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-elder-affairs
MA Healthy Aging Collaborative	State	https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/
MA Association for Community Action	State	https://www.masscap.org/
MA Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	State	https://www.mabvi.org/
MA Board of Library Commissioners	State	https://mblc.state.ma.us/
MA Business Alliance for Education	State	https://www.mbae.org/
MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	State	https://www.doe.mass.edu/
MA Education and Career Opportunities, Inc. (MassEdCO)	State	https://www.massedco.org/
MA League of Community Health Centers (CHC)	State	https://www.massleague.org/
Mass Computer Using Educators (MassCUE)	State	https://www.masscue.org/
New England Cable & Telecommunications Association	State	https://connectingne.com/
Black Economic Alliance Foundation	National	https://foundation.blackeconomicalliance.org/
Verizon	National	https://www.verizon.com/
Xfinity/Comcast	National	https://www.xfinity.com/overview
T-Mobile	National	https://www.t-mobile.com/

Appendix C: Funding Resources

Program	Type of Assistance
State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program https://www.internetforall.gov/program/digital-equity-act-programs#	A $1.44 billion formula grant program for states, territories, and tribal governments. Funds an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans: 1. Develop, implement, and oversee DE plans + make awards to other entities help develop DE plans. 2. Improve online accessibility & inclusivity of public resources. 3. Implement DE plans and digital inclusion activities. 4. Provide digital literacy and skills education to covered populations. 5. Facilitate adoption of high-speed internet by covered populations. 6. Fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects.
State Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program https://www.internetforall.gov/program/digital-equity-act-programs#	A $1.25 billion competitive grant program to fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects. Several types of entities can apply for these funds.
Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Program https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation	Funding to mobilize, start-up, and implement digital equity activities locally to access a one-time grant up to $100,000 per municipality to execute a project (or projects) defined in their local digital equity plan or related document that MBI deems of sufficient standard. Project implementation will increase access and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program	Expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment and adoption programs. This program builds high-speed Internet infrastructure where needed. It also supports efforts to teach the skills and provide the equipment needed so everyone can use the Internet.
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Apartment Wi-Fi Program https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/digital-equity/apartment-wi-fi/	Statewide program that aims to increase access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet for residents in communities that face barriers to connectivity and to increase sustainable internet access for individuals and families. Funded by a grant from the MBI's Digital Equity Partnerships program.

Program	Type of Assistance
Community Compact Municipal Fiber Program https://www.mass.gov/municipal-fiber-grant-program	1. Implementation of fiber optic networks that connect remote municipal assets to improve municipal operations and/or improve disaster recovery and resiliency. 2. One time capital needs- fiber optic cabling, hardware, software and implementation services. 3. (Centralized management of IT infrastructure, enterprise approach to network monitoring, cybersecurity, records management, and backup and recovery.)
GAP Networks Grant Program https://broadband.masstech.org/gap-networks-grant-program	The $145 million Gap Networks Grant Program will fund the deployment of broadband infrastructure in areas that currently lack broadband service. The Program aims to expand access and connectivity in unserved and underserved locations throughout the Commonwealth to bridge the digital divide.
E-rate: Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries https://www.fcc.gov/general/e-rate-schools-libraries-usf-program	The schools and libraries universal service support program, commonly known as the E-rate program, helps schools and libraries to obtain affordable broadband.
Lifeline program for Low-income consumers https://www.fcc.gov/lifeline-consumers	1. Discount on phone or broadband service for qualifying low-income consumers. 2. Promote access to Wi-Fi enabled devices and hotspot functionality to close the homework gap Note: A family that qualifies for Lifeline also qualifies to receive EBB
Community Compact IT Grant Program https://www.mass.gov/community-compact-it-grant-program	1. This is a competitive grant program focused on driving innovation and transformation at the local level via investments in technology. 2. Grant to support implementation of innovative and transformative IT projects by funding one-time capital needs-tech infrastructure and/or purchases of equipment/ software.
Efficiency and Regionalization (E&R) Grant Program https://www.mass.gov/efficiency-regionalization-grant-program	Provide financial support for governmental entities (planning and implementation activities are eligible).
Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program (TIRAP) https://www.tirap.org/	A competency-based apprenticeship aimed at growing the productivity of the workforce as directly as possible. 1. Career development of telecommunications workforce through cash and in-kind support. 2. Funding to design curricula and deliver training to develop qualified applicants for placement in middle- to high-skilled jobs
Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant https://www.eda.gov/economic-adjustment-assistance	EAA provides a wide range of technical, planning, and public works and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time.

Program	Type of Assistance
Local Planning and Technical Assistance Programs https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/filebase/files/programs/eda-programs/FY21-23-Planning-and-LTA-NOFO_FINAL.pdf	Planning and local technical assistance investments to support economic development, foster job creation, and attract private investment in economically distressed areas.
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-development-block-grant-cdbg#how-to-apply-	1. Conduct broadband needs assessment. 2. Install wiring, fiber optic cables, and permanently affixed equipment. 3. Provide digital literacy classes.
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/grants/apply	Digital literacy- use of technology to improve teaching, learning, professional development, skill development and abilities, career guidance, supportive services, job search workshop, referral to jobs or training, workers' rights and complaint system information.
English Language Acquisition State Grants https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oss/technicalassistance/elstar-user-guide-state-support-network.pdf	Enhance instruction for English learners with digital resources
CommCorps YouthWorks Funding https://commcorp.org/program/youthworks/	YouthWorks is a state-funded youth employment program that helps teens and young adults develop the skills and experience needed to find and keep jobs. YouthWorks supports skills training for youth up to age 25 from households earning less than 200% of the federal poverty rate.
Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities https://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/award/idea/index.html	Assist with implementation of statewide systems of coordinated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency programs and extending early intervention programs.
Determination of Need (DoN) https://www.mass.gov/determination-of-need-don	The goal of DoN and the framework for analysis by the Department of Public Health is to promote population health and increased public health value.
USDA Community Connect Program https://www.rd.usda.gov/community-connect	The purpose of the Community Connect Program is to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible applicants that will provide, on a "community -oriented connectivity" basis, broad-band service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care, and public safety benefits. Rural communities- extend access where broadband service is least likely commercially available
USDA Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans & Loan Guarantees https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/telecommunications-infrastructure-loans-loan-guarantees	This program provides financing for the construction, maintenance, improvement and expansion of telephone service and broadband in rural areas.

Program	Type of Assistance
High Cost Program (including Connect America Fund, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and 5G Fund) https://www.usac.org/high-cost/	The federal universal service high-cost program is designed to ensure that consumers in rural, insular, and high-cost areas have access to modern communications networks capable of providing voice and broadband service, both fixed and mobile, at rates that are reasonably comparable to those in urban areas.
USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grants https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/distance-learning-telemedicine-grants	DLT program helps fund distance learning and telemedicine services in rural areas to increase access to education, training, and health care resources that are otherwise limited or unavailable.
Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds - Determination of Need (DoN) https://mahealthfunds.org/	This program aims to enhance the capacity of multi-sector collaboratives to authentically engage residents and work together to remove barriers to health. Funding can establish training opportunities for local consumers regarding tracking medical records
Residential Internet Retrofit Program https://broadband.masstech.org/retrofit	Initiative to equip public and affordable-housing units across the state with high-speed internet for current and future residents by upgrading in-building telecommunications wiring, equipment, and infrastructure within older housing developments.
Lead for America - America Connection Corps https://www.americanconnectioncorps.org/	The nation's premier AmeriCorps service experience, advancing economic prosperity in rural and emerging communities. 15 American Connection Core Members are being recruited and placed in full-time, year-long fellowships to serve as Massachusetts-based, "boots on the ground"
Connect Humanity https://connecthumanity.fund/	Digital equity connectivity plan 1. Community engagement, survey work and mapping, technical design, and financial modeling. 2. Support community connectivity providers to get "investment ready".
Centri-Tech Foundation Digital Integrators Pilot Program https://www.digitalintegrators.org/	CBOs can use the funding to apply the Community Development Framework for Digital Advancement to local digital equity and inclusion efforts. Organizations can use the tool for program design, implementation, and evaluation.
AARP Community Challenge Grants https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/	The AARP Community Challenge provides small grants to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages.
Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) Service Incentive Grant https://mcoaonline.org/fy25-fdp-grants/	Provides direct funds to local Councils on Aging under various categories such as Capacity Building, Innovations, Improving Access and Inclusion, and more.

Program	Type of Assistance
Point 32Health Foundation Grants https://www.point32healthfoundation.org/funding-grants/how-we-fund/	Point32Health Foundation supports work to advance equity in aging. Grants are available to nonprofits doing work in aging that addresses equity, especially in communities most affected by systemic barriers.
Bank foundations https://www.digitalequity.us/resources/cra-funding-guide-for-digital-equity/	Bank foundations can provide funding for the following digital equity-related programs and services: broadband, hardware/ devices, tech support, librarian assistance, digital skills.
Patrick J. McGovern Foundation https://www.mcgovern.org/grants/?exposed_mf_search&exposed_taxonomy_focusarea%5B0%5D=22&exposed_grant_approval_date_sort=date_desc&FZEWGNafiqRBuoy=0dfbn.rMQwW&iwNIhrR=VSjdZGI9sn5FUH&mb_nJCugrtsAIHc=%5BG3iIlaOL0vuBdj	This foundation has awarded new grants for innovative data- and AI-driven approaches that support digital transformation of health systems and healthcare across the globe.
Project UP by Comcast https://corporate.comcast.com/impact/project-up	Connectivity & adoption: Connecting people to the internet, technology, and resources needed to succeed in a digital world. Skills & creativity: Creating opportunities and new career pathways in media and technology and opening doors for new voices to be heard and stories to be shared. Entrepreneurism: Equipping entrepreneurs and small business owners with the skills, digital resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.
Tech Goes Home https://www.techgoeshome.org/	Programs for adults, families- Partner with social service org to deliver courses focused on fundamental digital skills. Offered in libraries, community centers, public housing, and other nonprofit org. TGH Connect- partner with cities, libraries, CBOs, schools, health care centers, and faith-based org to disseminate critical info and help community access online resources.

Appendix D: MBI Digital Survey Responses

Q5: Do you have internet service in your home?	
Yes	100%
No	0%

Q16: Does everyone in your household have access to the computer devices they need?	
Yes	100%
No	0%

Q9: How well does your home internet service work?	
Not good enough	25%
Good enough	75%
I don't know	0%

Q17: Which of the following devices do you use most of the time to connect to the internet?	
Cellphone	75%
Laptop	75%
Desktop	50%
Tablet	50%
Other	0%

Q10: Is your home internet service bundled with other services such as telephone?	
Yes	67%
No	33%

Q18: How much would you be able to pay for a laptop or desktop computer?	
More than $1,000	17%
$500-$1,000	33%
$250-$500	25%
$150-$250	0%
$100-$150	8%
$50-$100	0%
$0-$50	17%

Q12: How hard is it for you to pay your internet bill?	
Not at all hard	0%
Not too hard	50%
Somewhat hard	42%
Very hard	8%

Q13: Have you heard about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)?	
Yes	20%
No	80%
I don't know	0%

Q19: Are you able to regularly use the internet for online activities?	
Yes	92%
No	8%

Q20: How Hard or Easy is it to Use the Internet for:	Easy	Not Easy	Hard
Searching and applying for a job	88%	12%	0%
Health care or telehealth services	55%	36%	9%
Participating in your local community	80%	20%	0%
General internet searching	91%	9%	0%
Transportation information	67%	33%	0%
Searching and/or applying for benefits or resources for you or your family	56%	44%	0%

Q23: What kind of digital skills support would you be most interested in?	
Do it yourself training module	67%
In person support from friend or instructor	11%
In person classes	0%
Online classes	22%

Q24: How concerned are you about internet safety?	
Not at all concerned	0%
Not very concerned	8%
Somewhat concerned	50%
Very concerned	42%

Q27: How accessible are online government services like benefits portals, RMV services etc.?	
Very Accessible	42%
Somewhat Accessible	50%
Not Very Accessible	8%
Not at All Accessible	0%

Q28: When you have used online government services like benefits portals, RMV services, or paying for permits or tickets, how well did they work for you??	
Very Well	33%
Somewhat Well	42%
Not too Well	25%
Not at All Well	0%