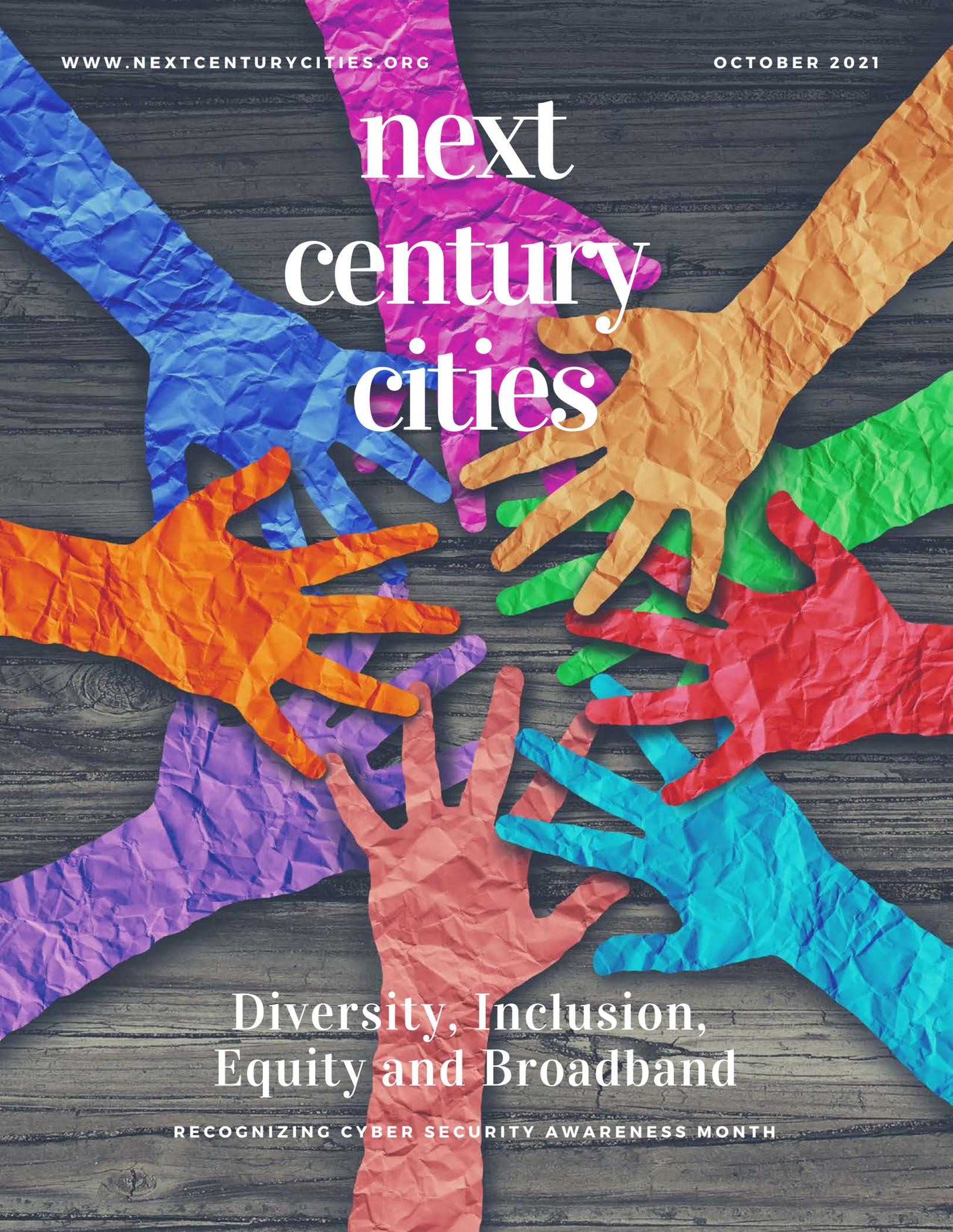


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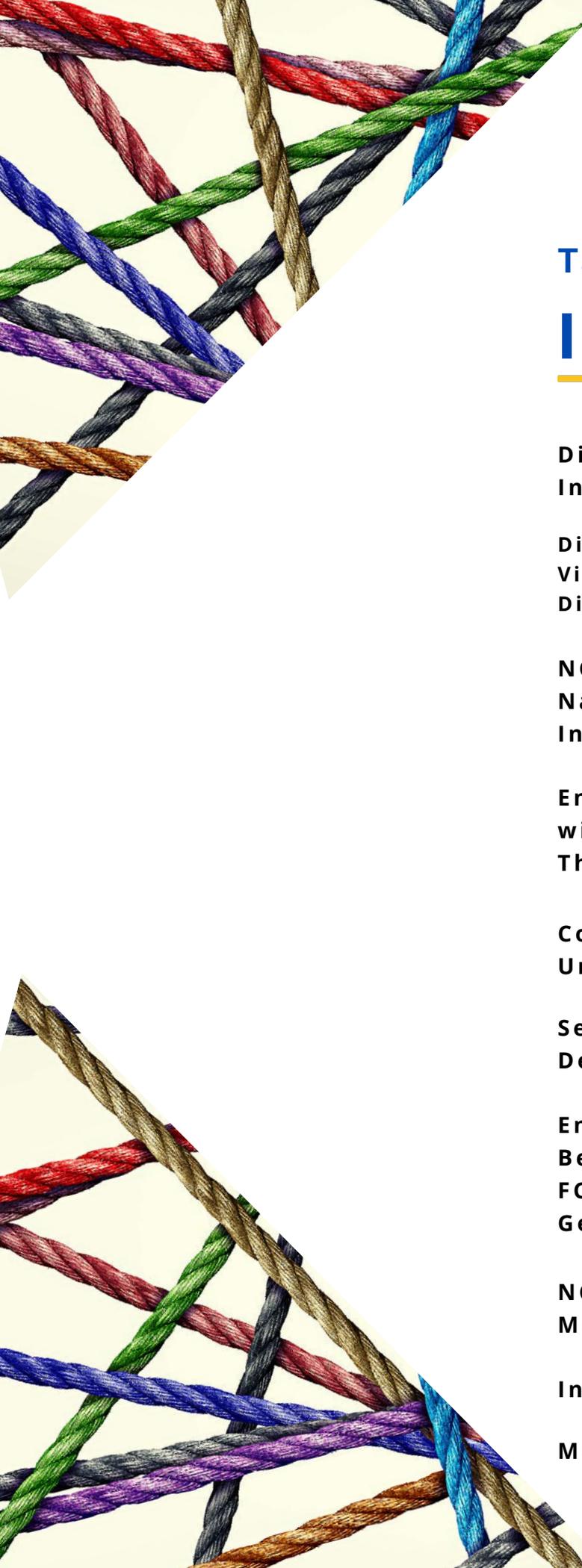
OCTOBER 2021



# next century cities

Diversity, Inclusion,  
Equity and Broadband

RECOGNIZING CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS MONTH



## Take a Look at What's **INSIDE**

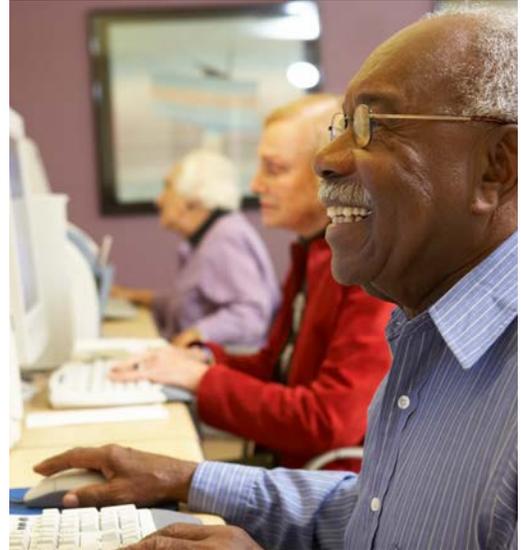
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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Digital Access is Vital for the Disabled Community</b>                        | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>NCC Members and National Digital Inclusion Week</b>                           | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Empowering People with Disabilities Through Digital Inclusion</b>             | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Connecting the Unhoused</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Secure Network Deployments</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Emergency Broadband Benefit Meeting with FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>NCC is Advocating for Members</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <b>In Case You Missed It</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Member Opportunities</b>  | <b>14</b> |

# Diversity and Inclusion

Economic, educational, and social opportunities are now inherently linked to broadband. Still, each day, millions of people across the US are unable to benefit from high-speed Internet connectivity.

Whether that is due to the absence of digital infrastructure or insurmountably high cost, insufficient tools or the lack of digital skills, not being able to get online is too often rooted in exclusionary practices that perpetuate other inequities.



Socioeconomic factors, structural discrimination, and geographic challenges contribute to the digital divide nationwide. Accordingly, broadband strategies must reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, a vital step towards achieving ubiquitous connectivity. Without prioritizing digital inclusion at the outset, policymakers risk excluding entire segments of the population from crucial services that are pivotal for livelihood and well-being.

To build awareness, Next Century Cities participated in the National Digital Inclusion Alliance's Digital Inclusion Week. The annual public education campaign calls on nonprofit organizations; local, state, and federal leaders; and community organizers to promote digital inclusion and equity.

This newsletter captures some of this year's highlights, the urgent need to increase broadband access and adoption, and NCC's commitment to supporting digital inclusion in every community.

# DIGITAL ACCESS IS VITAL

By Francella Ochillo and Brittany-Rae Gregory



Lydia X. Z. Brown is an advocate who is changing the way that people think about equity for people with disabilities. In several capacities, as [Policy Counsel with Center for Democracy & Technology](#), a [Georgetown University lecturer](#), and an [impassioned disability justice advocate](#), Lydia is working to address the ways in which algorithmic injustice furthers, exacerbates, and accelerates the oppression of disabled people and multiply marginalized communities.

**NCC: Can you tell us about the difference between digital access and digital justice for people living with disabilities?**

**Lydia X.Z. Brown:** Many people think about disability solely as a question of accessibility. For example, is this building physically accessible to somebody in a wheelchair? Has this book been made accessible to somebody who reads Braille, or who listens to text to speech? Is this website, program, or software usable by somebody who does not use their fingers to type, somebody who uses their voice to navigate, or somebody who cannot see a screen?

Digital access, like other forms of access, is necessary and vitally important for disabled people. Because if we do not have access, then we cannot participate in the same parts of society and culture as everyone else. At the same time, access is insufficient because merely having access to a space does not necessarily mean that we are wanted, welcomed, or valued in that space. We may not have the means necessary to even know that it exists or to avail ourselves of the opportunities that are associated with that space. [Continue reading here.](#)

**"... access is insufficient because merely having access to a space does not necessarily mean that we are wanted, welcomed, or valued in that space."**

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# DIGITAL INCLUSION WEEK



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## California

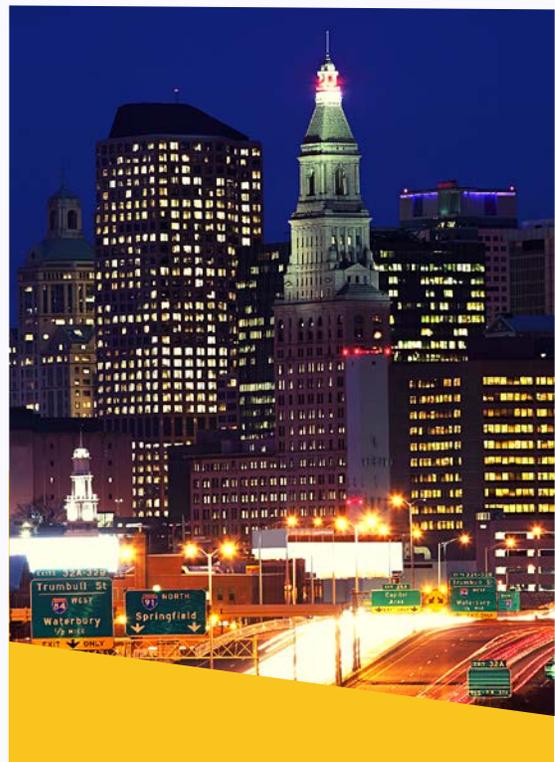
Public libraries in the Los Angeles area hosted a series of events in recognition of Digital Inclusion Week including a [hotspot distribution drive](#), a [workshop on using Google Documents](#), and [preserving photos digitally](#).

Nishal Mohan, Founder of [Mohuman](#) and a 2020 Next Century Cities Change Maker, was featured in the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#) for his work to close the digital divide.

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## Connecticut

On October 5, 2021, Governor Ned Lamont [joined local officials at the Willimantic Public Library](#) in Willimantic, Connecticut to recognize National Digital Inclusion Week. During the gathering, Governor Lamont discussed the importance of the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit. State and local leaders also highlighted the significance of [Public Act 21-159](#) and why access to affordable, reliable Internet services is vital in the COVID-19 era. **Bristol, Cornwall, East Hartford, Hartford, Stamford, and West Hartford** are all located in Connecticut.



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# DIGITAL INCLUSION WEEK



## *Hawaii*

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Governor David Ige issued a [proclamation](#) for Digital Inclusion Week to be recognized annually in Hawaii. The Workforce Development Council also held a free computer skills class for residents.

## *Idaho*

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries hosted a [webpage](#) detailing digital inclusion, equity, and literacy. The webpage includes hyperlinks to relevant information such as a [statewide public wi-fi map](#) and various sites to help residents with digital skills.

**Ammon, Boise, and Emmett** are three NCC municipalities located in Idaho.



# DIGITAL INCLUSION WEEK



## *Indiana*

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The Indianapolis Public Library held several events regarding online [privacy](#) and [security](#) as well as [coding](#) and other [computer skills](#) during Digital Inclusion Week. Auburn, **Bloomington**, **Chesterton**, and **South Bend** are all Indiana NCC member municipalities.

## *Maryland*

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Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott recognized National Digital Inclusion Week through a [recently-issued proclamation](#). Mayor Scott encouraged residents to use the week to raise awareness of digital equity and broadband access issues.



# EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH DIGITAL INCLUSION

BY CORIAN ZACHER

An increasing number of jobs, schoolwork, information, and government services have permanently migrated online as a result of the pandemic. While technological advancement makes [a wealth of tools available](#) that improve quality of life and enable aging in place, too often people with disabilities lack the requisite Internet service and devices to meet the demand of high-bandwidth applications.

With more funding than ever directed at state and local governments to increase connectivity nationwide, centering the ongoing needs of people with disabilities must remain a top priority.



## **People with disabilities face significant barriers to broadband adoption.**

The California Emerging Technology Fund's [2021 Statewide Broadband Adoption Survey](#) found that only 83% of adult Californians with a disability have high-speed home Internet through a computer or smartphone compared to the 90% average. In September 2021, [Pew Research revealed](#) that while 81% of adults without a disability say they own a desktop or laptop computer, only 62% of adults with a disability could say the same. People with disabilities similarly lag behind in smartphone adoption and are far less likely than those without a disability to have a high-speed home Internet subscription, smartphone, computer, and tablet.

Continue reading [here](#).

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## AS AMERICA'S UNHOUSED POPULATION CONTINUES TO RISE, SO DOES THE NEED TO DEVELOP TARGETED BROADBAND STRATEGIES

*By Lukas Pietrzak*



Americans share a common experience when moving into a new home: searching for and subscribing to home Internet. However, many people in the United States lack a prerequisite for this experience – a home address.

**Homelessness is on the rise.** According to the most recent report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), “580,466 people experienced homelessness in the United States on a single night in 2020.” That number revealed an increase of over 12,000 people, likely a result in part of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn.

The population of unhoused people in the United States can vary widely depending on the day. Often those most at risk of experiencing homelessness face financial hardship, employment instability, or a variety of other personal factors. HUD’s report found three statistics that should inform connectivity strategies nationwide:

1. After six years of decline, homelessness has been on the rise with year-over-year increases since 2017.
2. Homelessness for “family households” did not decline for the first time in 10 years
3. The number of people experiencing chronic homelessness surpassed 100,000 for the first time since 2011.

Continue reading about broadband strategies for unhoused populations [here](#).

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# DESIGNING NEW NETWORK DEPLOYMENTS WITH SECURITY IN MIND

*By Ryan Johnston*



## CYBER THREATS TO MUNICIPALITIES

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, a time for us to consider why it is crucial for new broadband network deployments to keep security in mind from the outset.

The proposed bipartisan infrastructure bill could potentially give communities an unprecedented amount of funding to expand connectivity in cities, towns, and counties nationwide. For many unconnected communities, this provides an opportunity to develop and deploy a municipally run network or develop new public-private partnerships.

Now more than ever, municipal officials face a growing number of challenges from bad actors. Meanwhile, many cities, towns, and villages may not have dedicated information security staff to help officials become security experts.

When undertaking a new broadband deployment, municipal and local officials should start by assessing cyber threats. It is impossible for municipalities to eliminate cyber risk. However, it is imperative that when developing new networks, or expanding existing ones, communities are able to identify potential threats. Understanding the gaps in a community's cyber defenses is critical to determining how new budget items should be allocated. This will also inform what new tools or training a city government needs.

Read more about what localities should consider [here](#).

# EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT LOCAL LEARNING AND SUCCESS STORIES

## Meeting with Commissioner Geoffrey Starks November 4th at 2:00pm ET/11:00am PT

RSVP Required: Email [Ryan Johnston](mailto:ryan.johnston@ncc.gov), Policy Counsel for Federal Programs

Objective: This is a platform for local leaders to share their community's stories.

**No press is allowed.**

Local officials helped the Federal Communication Commission develop the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. They are working to ensure that every eligible household finds out about it nationwide.

NCC continues to elevate the importance of [helping low-income households maintain broadband Internet services](#) and [ways to improve the EBB program](#). We also created a [webpage](#) to ensure that local and state and officials could learn from one another.

Today, over six million residents are receiving much-needed assistance with their broadband bills but we still have work to do. On **Thursday, November 4th, at 2:00pm ET/11:00am PT**, local leaders are invited to share local insights and success stories with Commissioner Geoffrey Starks. RSVP via email to [Ryan Johnston](mailto:ryan.johnston@ncc.gov), Policy Counsel for Federal Programs.

Local officials are also encouraged to share Emergency Broadband Benefit testimonials, articles, press releases, social media posts, etc. with us via [info@nextcenturycities.org](mailto:info@nextcenturycities.org).

# NCC IS ADVOCATING FOR MEMBERS

**Next Century Cities'** Ryan Johnston and Lukas Pietrzak sat down with the Broadband Bunch to discuss the critical role that residents and local leaders should play in broadband decision making. Listen to the conversation in its entirety [here](#).

**The City of Detroit Continues to Set the Bar for Digital Equity and Inclusion** | Leaders from Detroit convened for the city's annual Digital Inclusion Week, held from October 4-7, 2021. The week kicked off with a [fireside chat](#) with Francella Ochillo and Joshua Edmonds, Detroit's Director of Digital Inclusion. To learn about the role model digital inclusion efforts underway in the City of Detroit, view the 30-minute Emmy award-winning documentary, [Detroit Is Limitless](#), one of the Digital Inclusion Week conference highlights.

**Next Century Cities Is Working to Elevate Community-Based Perspectives on the Emergency Broadband Benefit** | On September 10, 2021 Next Century Cities collaborated with the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation to facilitate a meeting with community leaders and local officials from Baltimore, an NCC member municipality. The participants shared personal accounts of Emergency Broadband Benefit outreach with Jessica Rosenworcel, the FCC's Acting Chair.

**Closing the Digital Divide for Early Childhood Education: A Conversation with the National Head Start Association** | NCC's Lukas Pietrzak joined a panel discussion with the National Head Start Association as part of their 2021 Fall Leadership Institute. Moderated by Kent Mitchell, NHSA's Senior Director of State Affairs, the panel featured Jessica Rosenworcel, Acting Chairwoman of the Federal Communications Commission, and Belkis Torres, Vice President of Early Head Start at the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

# NCC IS ADVOCATING FOR MEMBERS

**Next Century Cities Submits Reply Comments Asking the FCC to Mediate 3G Network Shutdowns** | Next Century Cities submitted reply comments highlighting the Federal Communications Commission's responsibility to mediate AT&T's proposed 3G network shutdown.

**A Simple and Easy Mobile Map Challenge Process Will Promote Municipal Participation.** | Next Century Cities submitted reply comments urging the Federal Communications Commission to develop a robust and user-friendly challenge process in response to their recently-released mobile coverage map.

**Planning for California's \$6 Billion Broadband Investment is Underway. What Does Your Community Need?** | The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is currently developing a plan for the state's \$3.25 billion middle-mile network, GoldenStateNet. Comments on the federal funding program are due October 29, 2021 and reply comments are due November 15. Local governments in California interested in filing CPUC comments or learning more about the legislation can reach out to Corian Zacher, NCC's Policy Counsel for State & Local Initiatives, at [corian@nextcenturycities.org](mailto:corian@nextcenturycities.org).

**"It is Time for the Heavy Lifting to Begin." SA Digital Connects Hosts Community Presentation Unveiling Digital Equity Plan and Roadmap** | On September 22, 2021, San Antonio's SA Digital Connects hosted a presentation unveiling the community's Digital Equity Plan and Roadmap. Members of Next Century Cities' team were in attendance. SA Digital Connects identified four main goals for every household in the community: Ensure access to speeds of 100/100 Mbps, expand high-quality Internet options priced below 1% of annual household income, promote access to connected devices that meet technical requirements, support digital literacy, language resources, and other adoption programs that enable everyone to access and use the Internet.

# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

"North Carolina is preparing for a \$1 billion broadband push" ([StateScoop](#)) North Carolina is home to NCC member municipalities **Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Davidson, Raleigh, Salisbury, and Wilson.**

## **U.S. Treasury Announces Capital Projects Fund Guidance**

The American Rescue Plan provides \$10 billion for payments to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the public health emergency. States, territories, and freely associated states can request funding until December 27, 2021, and Tribal governments can request funding until June 1, 2022. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance is hosting a webinar to explain eligibility and requirements on Oct 21st at 03:00 PM ET. Register [here](#) to attend. Fill out [this form](#) to submit any questions about the fund.

**Affordability & Availability: Expanding Broadband in the Black Rural South** | In an October 2021 report, the Joint Center's Dr. Dominique Harrison surveyed 152 rural counties in southern states with populations that are at least 35 percent Black. Her research details various ways in which affordable and reliable broadband could increase economic, educational, and health care opportunities.

### **Key takeaways:**

- In the Black Rural South, 38% of African Americans report that they lack home internet access compared to 23% of their White counterparts.
- When 49% of Black children in the Black Rural South live in poverty compared to 18% of White children in the region and states with Black Rural South counties have to grapple with high rates of rural hospital closures, expanding broadband can have a measurable impact on employment, incomes, education, and healthcare.
- Many households in the Black Rural South lack high-speed broadband because service is either unavailable or unaffordable.

# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

## **James Baller's Testimony Before the Missouri House of Representatives Interim Broadband Development Committee**

The Coalition for Local Internet Choice's Jim Baller testified on barriers to municipal, cooperative, and public-private broadband initiatives. He rightly noted, "At the community level, advanced communications networks, like electric utilities in the last century, have increasingly become platforms, drivers, and enablers of simultaneous progress in just about everything that matters to communities."

## **Honoring "Tech Innovadores"**

Each Hispanic Heritage Month, Hispanic Technology & Telecommunications Partnership recognizes leaders who represent the best and brightest minds in technology and telecommunications policy. Tech Innovadores are visionary, innovative, and collaborative digital inclusion advocates who have exhibited outstanding achievement and leadership in promoting social justice and digital equality. Congratulations to an extraordinary list of **honorees!**

## **Puerto Rico Will Install Free Internet in All Public Housing**

Puerto Rico's government announced that it will offer free, high-speed Internet in more than 300 public housing projects across the U.S. territory.

## **A Broadband Toolkit for Local Governments**

Jarret Skroup, Director of Marketing and Communications at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy weighed in on the best ways for state and local policymakers in Michigan to allocate federal funding for broadband expansion and adoption.

# MEMBER OPPORTUNITIES

**Grant Funding** | Business Oregon CDBG CARES Act [Impact Assistance Program](#) funding is available now for eligible projects and applicants.

**Grant Funding** | [NTIA's Connecting Minority Communities \(CMC\) Pilot Program](#) is a \$268 million grant program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to expand broadband internet access, connectivity, and digital inclusion at the eligible institutions and in their surrounding anchor communities. Applications are due December 1, 2021. The NTIA team can answer questions and help with the application process via email at [CMC@ntia.gov](mailto:CMC@ntia.gov). A recap of previous webinars is available [here](#) and the next webinars are scheduled for [October 20](#) and [21](#), 2021.

**Grant Funding** | The United States Department of Treasury issued guidelines for the [Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#). Awarded funds can be used for “awarded funds must be used for direct financial assistance, including rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses related to housing.”

# MEMBER OPPORTUNITIES

**Request for Proposals** | The Central Texas Council of Governments has issued a request for proposals to support broadband expansion within the region. Additional details about the request can be found [here](#). Proposals are due by **November 1, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. CT.**

**Job Announcement** | The National Digital Inclusion Alliance is looking to fill two vacancies, a Training and Community Engagement Manager and Digital Navigator Senior Project Manager. Additional information about the openings can be found on the [NDIA website](#).

**Job Announcement** | Tech Goes Home is hiring an External Affairs Manager. The position will report to the Chief of External Affairs and support the Director of Development. Learn more about the Tech Goes Home is working with Carolyn O'Brien Consulting, LLC on this search. Learn more about the position and responsibilities [here](#).

**Webinar** | The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) will host an informative webinar on digital redlining with IDRA's Michelle Vega, Christina Quintanilla-Munoz, and Thomas Marshall. The webinar takes place on **October 27, 2021 from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. CT**. Register for the event [here](#).

**Webinar** | The [Open Tech Institute](#) (OTI) and [Public Knowledge](#) are cohosting a virtual conversation titled "Leveraging Underutilized 12 GHz Airwaves for 5G Competition and Digital Equity." NCC's [Ryan Johnston](#) will speak on the panel alongside [Dr. Nicol Turner Lee](#), [Joel Thayer](#), [Kathleen Burke](#), and [Matthew Rantanen](#). Registration for the **November 2, 2021** panel at **noon ET** opens soon, and information will be shared via [NCC's social media channels](#).

# Did you miss Digital Inclusion Week 2021?

Don't worry! Head to [nextcenturycities.org/digitalinclusion](https://nextcenturycities.org/digitalinclusion) to learn more about the week and see how you can promote digital inclusion year-round.



# Next Century Cities