



BROADBAND AND NETWORK

What's New in Digital Equity: 92 Percent of Jobs Require Digital Skills

Plus, the Rural Broadband Association submits a list of priorities to the new Congress; the Department of Defense and NTIA host a 5G challenge; the Texas Library Commission is collecting data about Internet speeds; and more!

February 09, 2023 • Julia Edinger, Zack Quaintance



This week in “What's New in Digital Equity” — our weekly look at government digital equity and broadband news — we have a number of interesting items, which you can jump to with the links below:

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REPORT: 92 PERCENT OF JOBS NOW REQUIRE DIGITAL SKILLS

This week, the National Skills Coalition released a report titled Closing the Digital Skill Divide: The Payoff for Workers, Business and the Economy in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. The report states that 92 percent of jobs now require definitely digital or likely digital skills.

The report was created using empirical data from 43 million online job postings listed in 2021. Findings show that digital skills are now required in jobs across industries and at all skill levels. In addition, the report reveals a direct correlation between jobs that require digital skills and higher wages.

Industries that have not always been thought to require digital skills, such as retail and construction, now have a growing demand for digital skills. Even for businesses hiring entry-level workers, 95 percent required digital skills or skills that are likely to be digital.

As state and local government agencies look to take advantage of tech talent available following private-sector layoffs, the report recommends that organizations invest in skill-building programs, which is something many industry tech leaders are already working to accomplish.

“We cannot afford to not invest in anybody’s skills here, because there’s no job in our labor market that does not now — or soon will — require digital skills,” co-author Amanda Bergson-Shilcock told Government Technology.

She underlined that there are two types of skill sets needed: foundational and industry-specific. For this reason, agencies should continue to offer skills training programs for those who are currently employed to help them better respond to changing job needs in the ever-evolving public-sector workforce. (Julia Edinger)

RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION GIVES PRIORITIES TO CONGRESS

Promoting universal service, ensuring effective use of funding and offering tax incentives for broadband investment should be Congress’ top priorities for high-speed Internet. So says a list delivered to lawmakers this week by the NTCA - Rural Broadband Association.

The group represents nearly 850 broadband providers, describing its membership as “independent, family-owned and community-based broadband companies.” As noted in the priority list, the group says its membership has “made substantial investments to deliver world-class broadband to rural America.” And now with getting all of America connected to reliable Internet a priority for the federal government, the group has notes.

The first priority on the list is “promote universal service programs and related initiatives to ensure sustainable and affordable connectivity.” This is a big one among most corners of digital inclusion work. Essentially, it means making sure the growing number of programs helping people get connected are actually reaching people and bringing Internet to their homes. The

list, of course, goes into greater detail about this and how Congress can make it happen.

And that's just one example. All told, there are four priority areas listed. Read the full list here.

(Zack Quaintance)

USDA LAUNCHES RURAL DATA GATEWAY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a new Rural Data Gateway, which is a public-facing data portal that has all of the departments' information about rural projects.

In a press release, officials said they expect the new gateway to help the USDA "better target resources to the people who need them most in rural places." They noted that rural residents, entrepreneurs, government officials and others will likely benefit from having easier access to this information.

This new gateway has investment dashboards that show how the USDA's Rural Development program has spent money in rural America over the past 11 years. It features 69 total programs, and lets users browse with different data and analysis about them. (Zack Quaintance)

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT, NTIA HOST 5G CHALLENGE

Last week, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced the launch of the 2023 5G Challenge in collaboration with the Department of Defense, which is a \$7 million prize competition run by NTIA's Institute for Telecommunication Sciences.

The goal of the program is to speed development and adoption of an open and secure 5G ecosystem. Contestants will create 5G equipment prototypes and test connections to the equipment that other contestants create.

Applications opened last week and will be open until 7 p.m. Eastern time on March 1, 2023. The top performing contestants will receive a \$3 million prize. (Julia Edinger)

REPORT DETAILS DIGITAL DIVIDE WORK IN CALIFORNIA

The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) recently released a report, the CETF Progress Report 2023, to assess progress made on closing the digital divide in California.

The organization's three primary goals are ubiquitous deployment, universal adoption and deep institutionalization. The report provides an overview, strategies and accomplishments, and successful examples within each of these goals. The report highlights the role of partnerships like the San José Digital Inclusion Partnership and Southern California Transformation in closing the digital divide.

To achieve the California Broadband Council's goal of getting 90 percent of low-income

households online by 2024, CETF President and CEO Sunne Wright McPeak wrote that “the challenge now is to overcome bureaucratic inertia and break through organizational silos with commitment and urgency” to realize digital equity goals. (Julia Edinger)

TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION COLLECTING INTERNET SPEED DATA

Finally, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission is collecting data about Internet speeds from all the libraries in the state, both branches and mains.

The group is doing this with a new speed test, noting that “the data will be invaluable in our planning and help us determine further statewide needs for broadband.”

Email invitations went out this week to all of Texas’ public broadband directors. Organizers are asking for these tests to be completed by the end of the month.

Librarians — and anyone else, really — can find more info here. (Zack Quaintance)

<https://www.govtech.com/network/whats-new-in-digital-equity-92-percent-of-jobs-require-digital-skills>

