

Beyond the Digital Divide: MA and WI's Path to Digital Equity Across the Lifespan



**2024 Home and Community-Based
Services Conference**

Thank You

For Joining Us!



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of **HEALTH SERVICES**

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Agenda

Overview of the Digital Divide

Wisconsin

Approach

Success Stories

Impact to Date

Massachusetts

Approach

Success Stories

Lessons Learned

Questions and Answers

4–14

15

16–17

18–21

22

25

26–28

29–30

31–33

35





The Digital Divide

Digital Divide

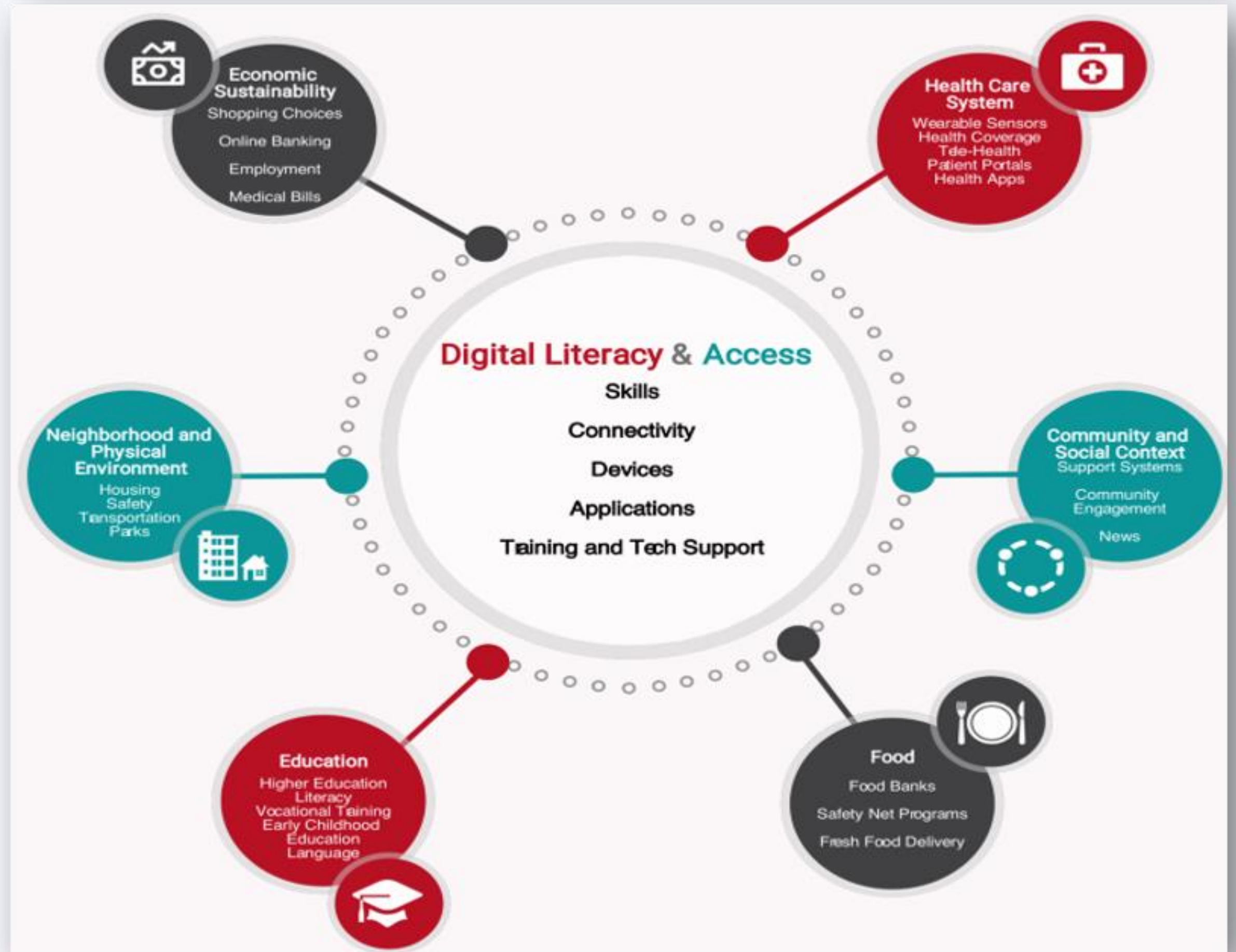
The gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not

VS

Digital Equity

A condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy

Social Determinants and Digital Access



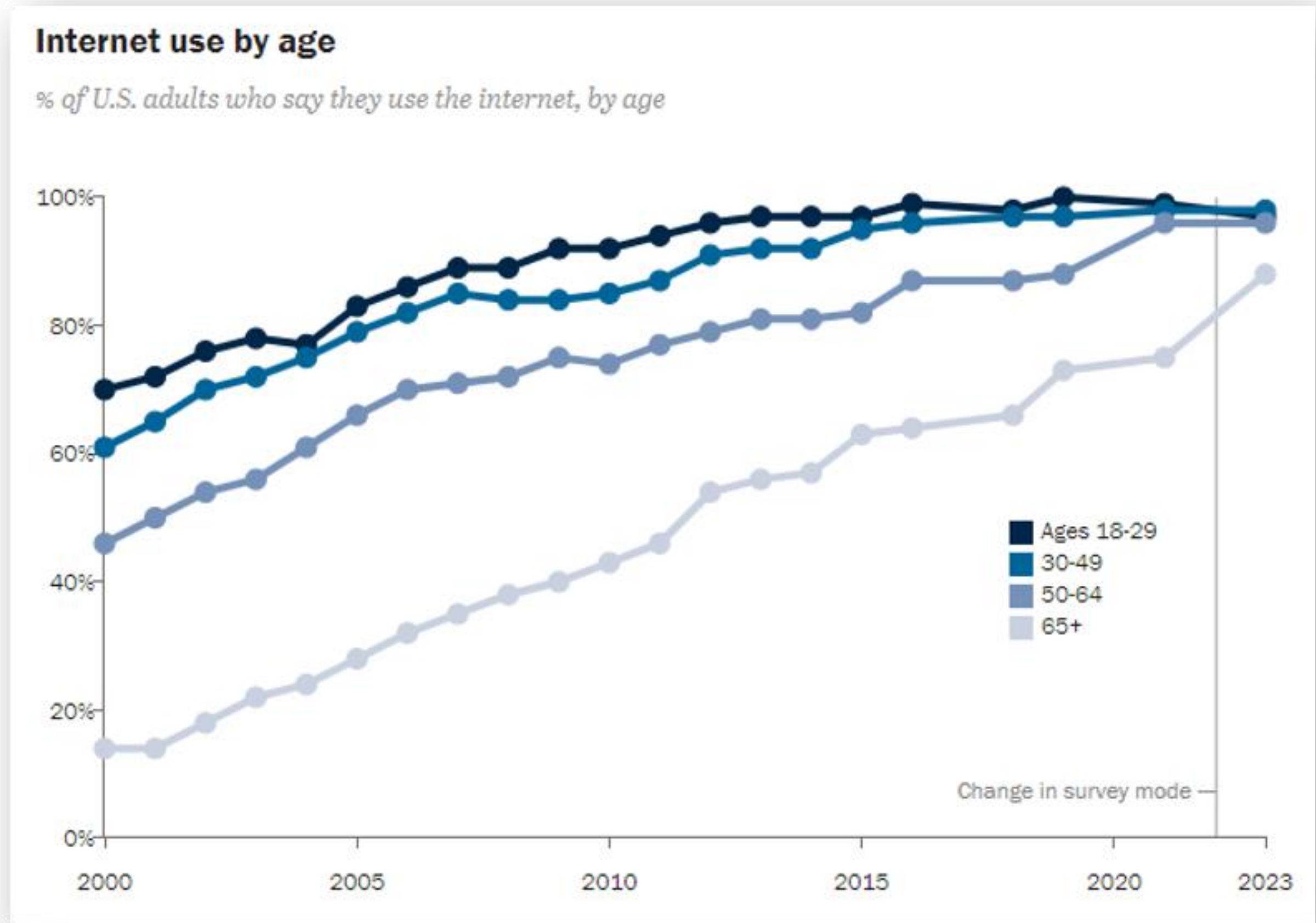
Reports: Community Response to COVID-19

- Older adults **disproportionately impacted** by the pandemic include those with limited access/proficiency with technology
- Communities focused their initial efforts on meeting **basic needs** (food, medicine, personal care, and healthcare and home-based services) among older adults
 - Then, communities **shifted their focus** to social connection, stable housing, mobility, and other conditions that affect well-being and the ability to navigate daily life
 - **Technology was a critical part** of all these responses
- Older adults and their families who had **access** to technology were able to seek out a wider array of information, services, and social connections **more quickly**, and organizations were able to reach them **more effectively**
- A lack of technology was a **significant barrier**

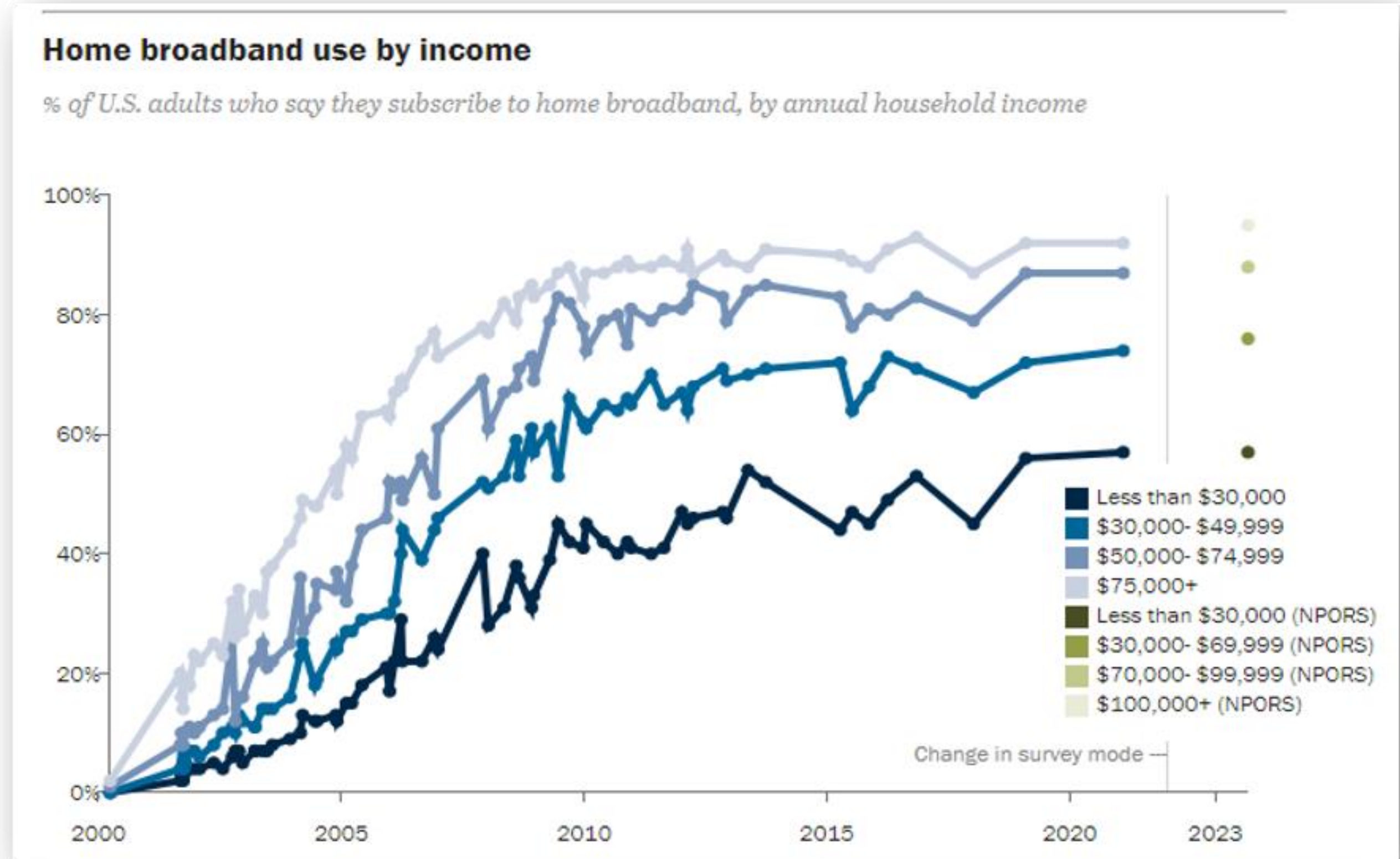


https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20.10.27-How-Innovative-Community-Responses-to-COVID-19-Support-Healthy-Aging_FINAL.pdf

Digital Equity & AGE



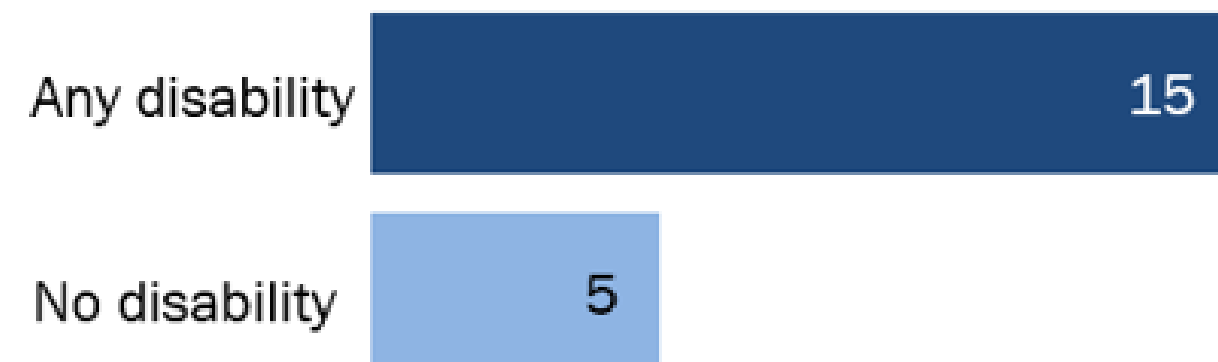
Digital Equity & INCOME



Digital Equity & DISABILITY

Americans with a disability are more likely than those without disabilities to say they never go online

% of U.S. adults who say they do not use the internet



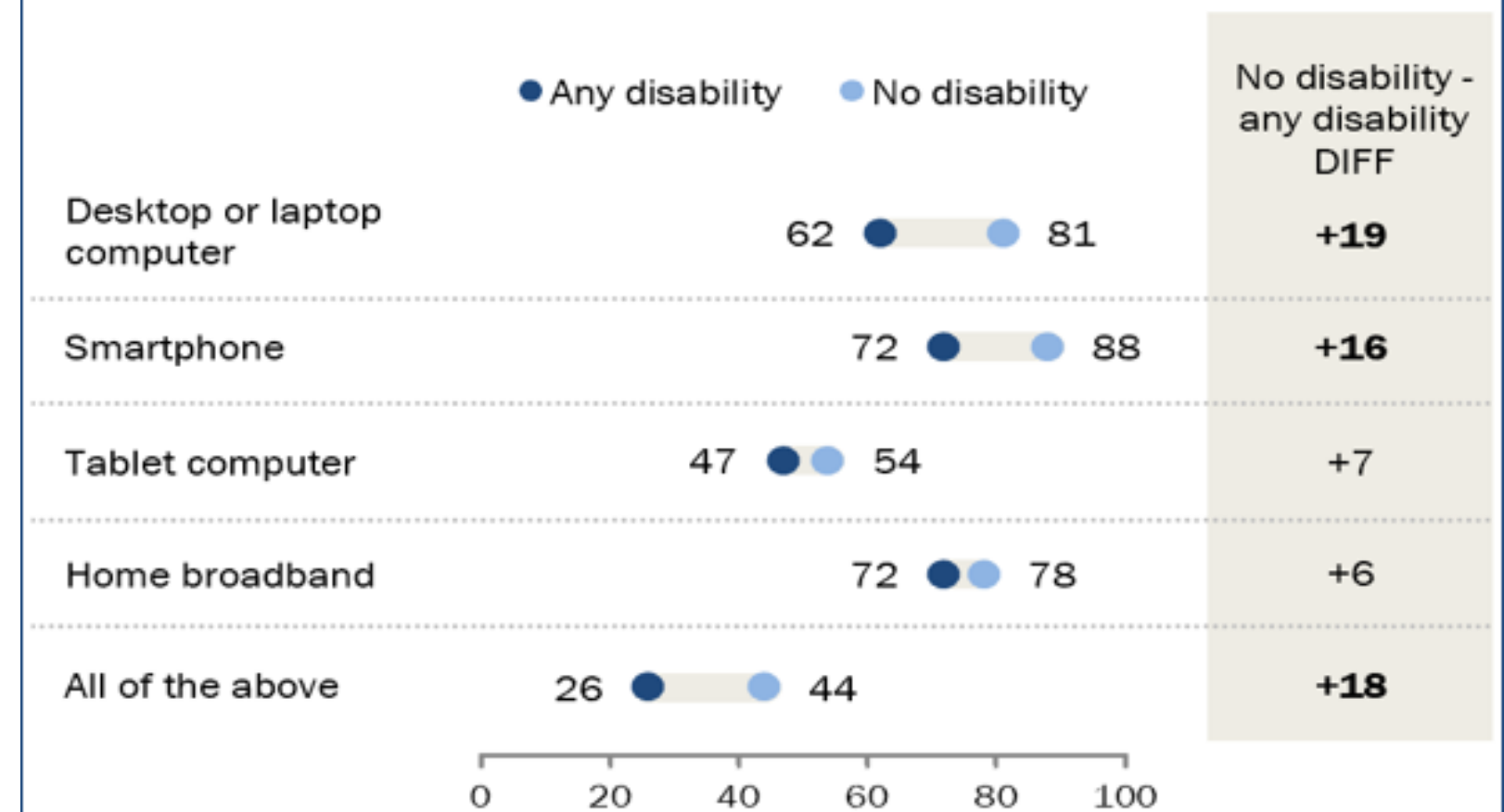
Note: Respondents who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Americans with a disability are less likely than those without one to have traditional computer, smartphone

% of U.S. adults who say they have the following



Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**. The difference values shown are based on subtracting the rounded values in the chart. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

8

Groups

Historically experience lower rates of computer and internet use

Digital Equity Act of 2021

Establishes these eight groups as “covered populations”

People 60 years of age or older

Veterans

Members of a racial or ethnic minority group

Persons with disabilities

Incarcerated individuals

Rural residents

Individuals with a language barrier

Individuals in households w/ incomes under 150 percent FPL

Opportunity: Digital Equity and Older Adults



The **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program**, established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), is a \$42.45B program to award block grants to states for broadband deployment and adoption.



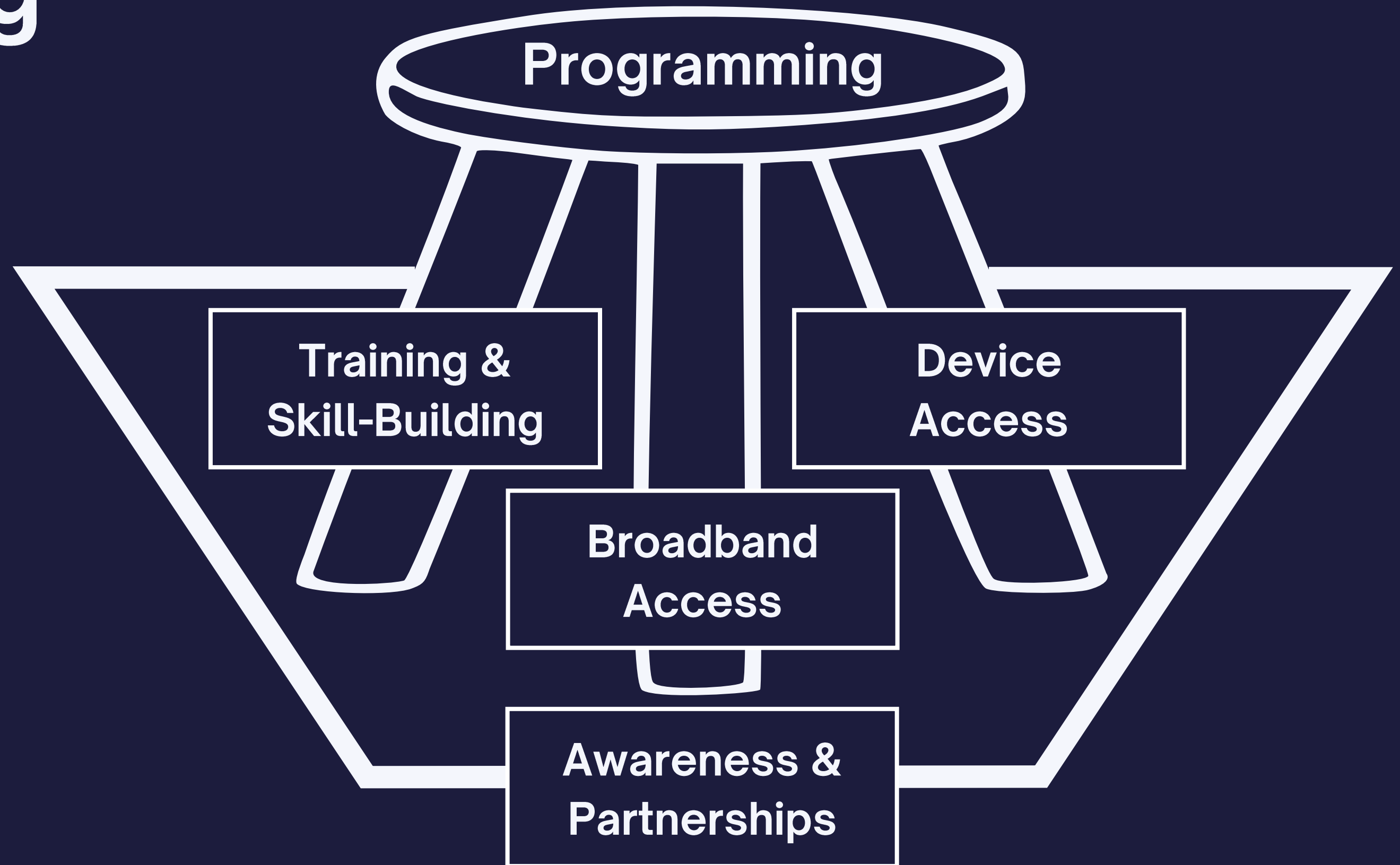
The **Digital Equity Act of 2021 (DEA)**, part of the IIJA, establishes 3 programs:

- State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program: \$60M to develop state digital equity plans.
- State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program: \$1.44B for implementation of state digital equity plans.
- Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program: \$1.25B for public and non-public entities.



The **Capital Projects Fund (CPF)**, established by the American Rescue Plan Act, is a \$10B program to award block grants to states for a range of broadband and digital inclusion activities.

Supporting Digital Access



For More **INFORMATION**

James Fuccione



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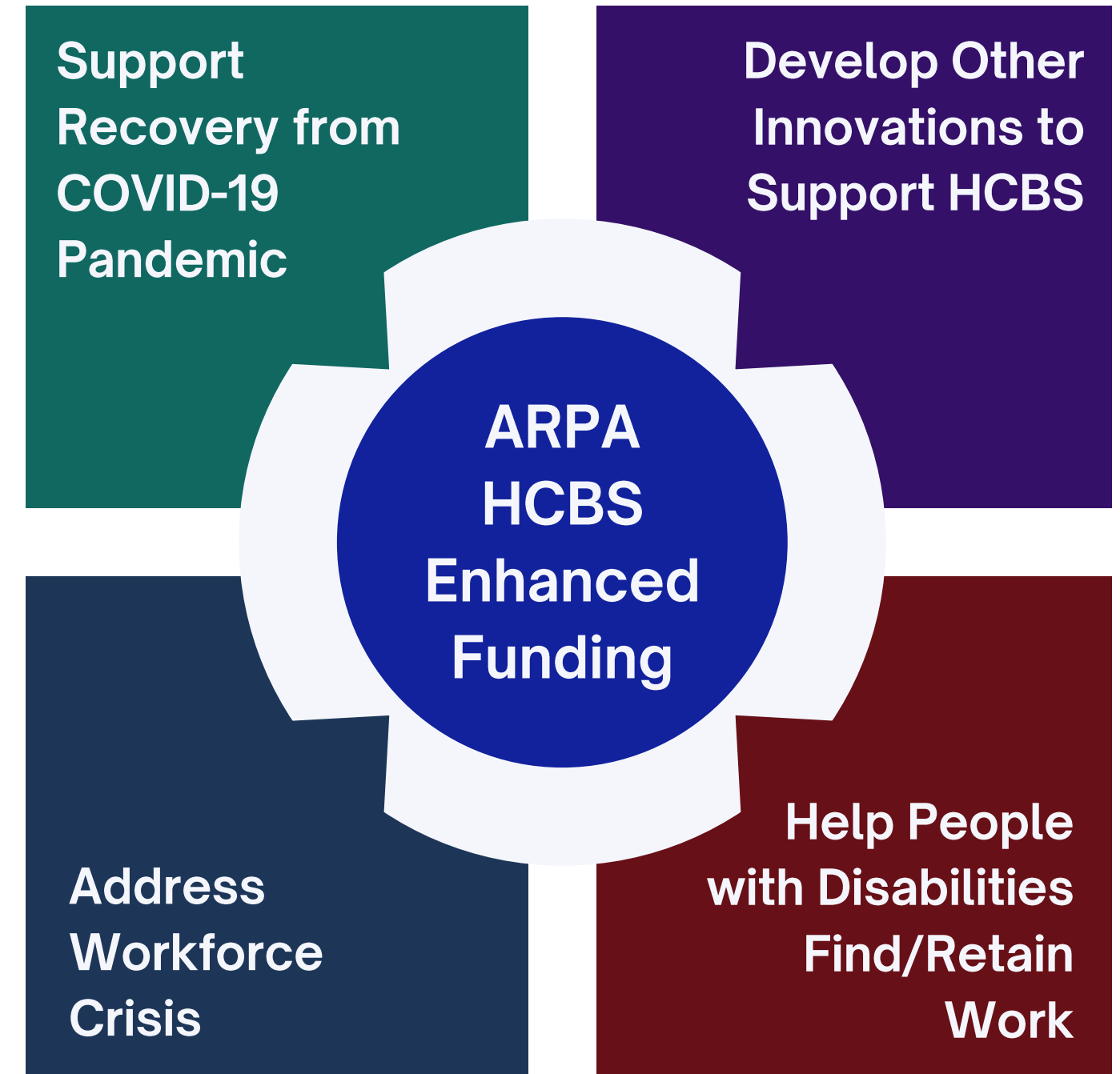
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Wisconsin

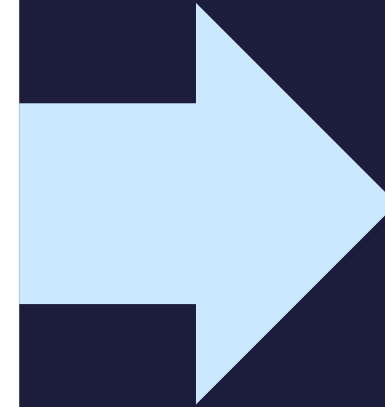
Wisconsin's Approach

- Wisconsin Department of Human Services leveraged HCBS ARPA dollars to support two rounds of competitive grant funding to support HCBS quality and innovation
- HCBS organizations were allowed to apply for \$25,000 to \$1 million in grant funding



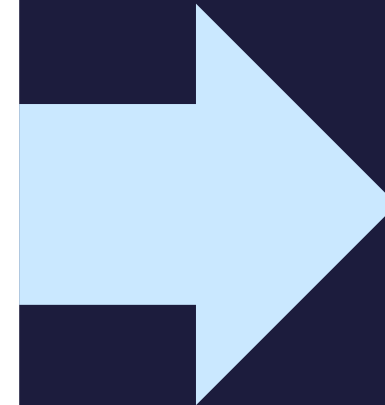
HCBS ARPA Grants

1,171
Applicants



157
Grants Awarded

\$298M
Funding Requested



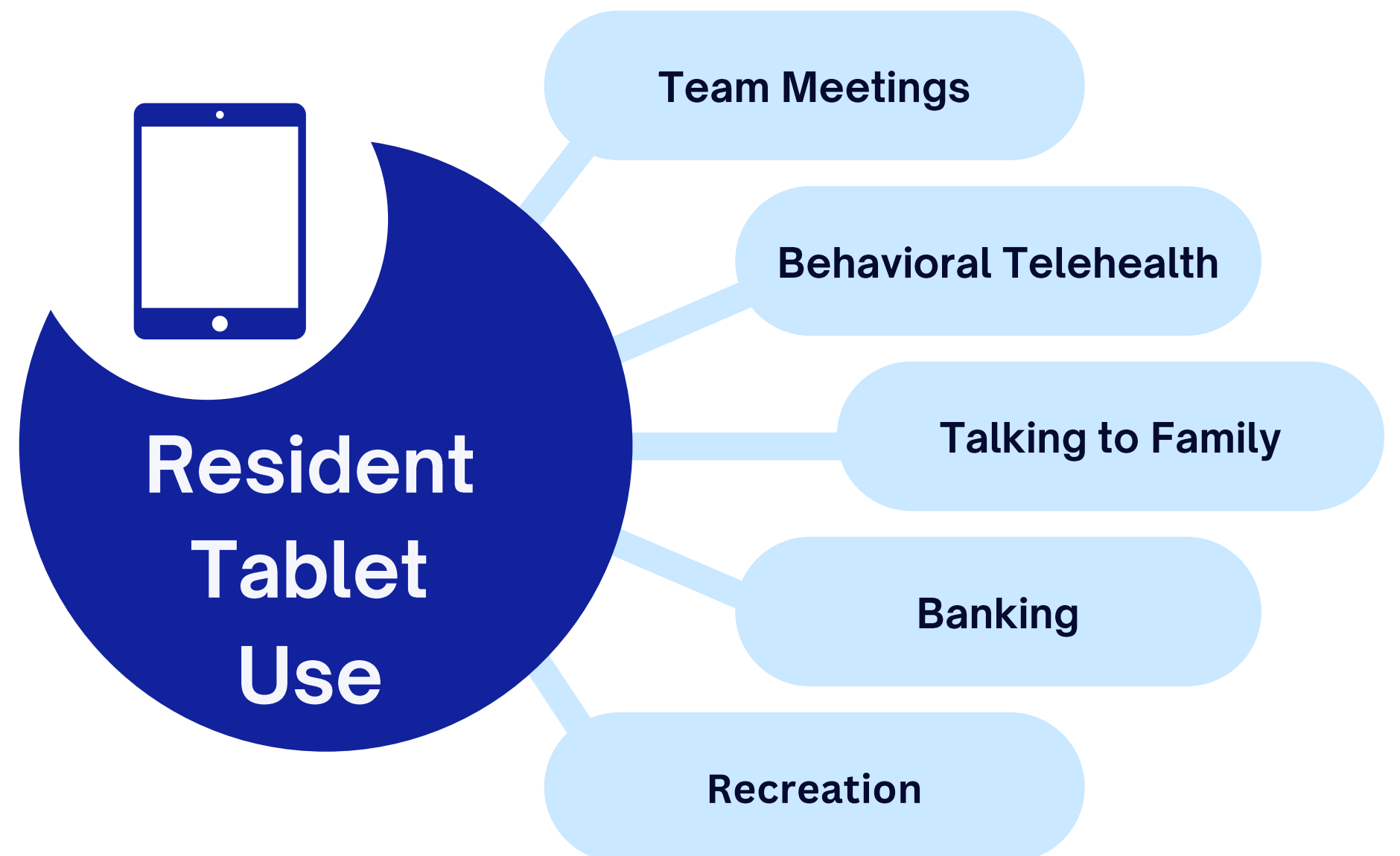
\$30M
Funds Awarded

Success Stories: Lakeview Health Center & Assisted Living



- Purchased technology such as **tablets/accessories** and the conference room **teleconferencing equipment**
- **All 13 residents** have been trained on the equipment and utilize the tablets 1–5 times per week

Investment: \$80,197.85



Success Stories:

Nash Home Health Center

- Recognized a digital equity gap for Personal Care Workers
- Built an **in-office technology center** to address digital divide for both personal care workers (PCWs) and clients
- To date, **40 HCBS participants and their families** have accessed the data

Investment: \$26,000



Empowerment is the right word!... It is amazing the lack of technology resources in the inner-city, and **any additional resources are definitely needed.**”

Grantee discussing the impact of this project



Success Stories:

BU4U

- Technology is provided to staff and clients and their families via **iPads and apps to streamline services** of home management, personal care, medical management and EVV through Medicaid
- To date, **40 HCBS participants and their families have received a laptop** and been trained on how to communicate with their providers using apps such as Generations, Trainual, and Family Wall

Investment: \$121,500

Success Stories: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

- Established an **Intergenerational Technology Services community engagement center**
 - The center provides technology services, education, and training to rural HCBS participants
- IGeTS (short name formerly was ITS) helps consumers harness technology for social good
 - Specifically, it helps **consumers develop skills and confidence to use technology** to access needed goods and services, connect with others, and engage in activities while fostering social engagement
- To date, they have supported **59 HCBS participants and 4 family caregivers**

Investment: \$378,353



“

I had never used a computer, but now I will be able to Zoom with my sister in Florida to keep in touch.”

Participant discussing what she learned in the program

Impact to Date

Most grants run through September 30, 2024. An evaluation in the Spring of 2025 will provide a comprehensive analysis of lessons learned.

487

Number of HCBS Participants Impacted to Date

171

Number of Families Impacted to Date

208

Number of Direct Care Workers Impacted to Date

9

Number of Providers Impacted to Date



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

For more

Information



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dhs.wisconsin.gov/arpa/hcbs-grantsopportunities

2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit

October 7-8

Listen to presentations from grantees and talks from national organizations on best practices and future trends in home- and community-based services (HCBS).

**Join as a Virtual
Attendee**



<https://cvent.me/PExqgL>

A photograph of a computer lab or office with several HP desktop computers on desks. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. In the center, there is a dark blue rounded rectangle containing the word "Massachusetts" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts's Approach

11 ARPA Grants

Massachusetts (MA) released 11 health and human services ARPA grants with defined parameters based on key priorities for the Commonwealth

Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults Grant

\$1.8 million grant program to help COAs improve the digital literacy of older adults

Hybrid Programming for Councils on Aging Grant

\$1.75 million grant program to help COAs offer older adults hybrid programming

MA released two ARPA grants available specifically to [Councils on Aging](#) (COAs) focused on improving digital equity and delivering remote HCBS for older adults

COAs and senior centers provide programming, services, and support for older adults in 350 communities across the Commonwealth

Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults Grant

- COAs could apply for one or both of the following:
 - Technology training and support for older adults
 - Purchasing technology that older adults could use at home or at the senior center
- Awarded amounts ranged from \$5,000 to \$299,780

\$1.8M

Available
Funding

+\$3M

Funding
Requested

53

Applicants

24

Grants
Awarded

Hybrid Programming For Councils on Aging Grant

- COAs could use funding for one or more of the following:
 - Purchasing equipment to conduct hybrid programming at the senior center
 - Hiring staff to manage hybrid programming
 - Covering program expenses
- Awarded amounts ranged from \$7,078 to \$199,492

\$1.75M

Available
Funding

\$1.65M

Funding
Requested

26

Applicants

25

Grants
Awarded

Success Stories



A collaboration between
the Athol Council on Aging and the Athol Public Library

Resources and Services

Hotspot Lending

50 Hotspots providing free internet access through November 2024 are available for short-term (3 weeks) and long-term (through 11/24) loan.

Requests are approved by the COA and complete set-up and use instruction is provided along with ongoing support.

One-to-One Tutoring

Drop-in tutoring is available at both the COA and APL during most open hours. Individuals needing more in-depth instruction (30–60 minute sessions) can schedule an appointment with one of our tutors at either location.

Multiple sessions can be scheduled if needed.

Pop-Up Tutoring

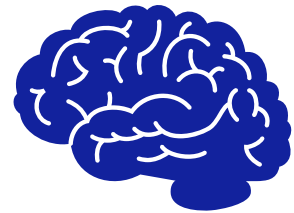
To help accommodate individuals with transportation or mobility challenges, a series of drop-in sessions are being offered at senior housing residences in the community. Held in the common/activity room, technology tutors assist participants with using their personal devices.

Peer-to-Peer Group

A drop-in group for our 60+ community to practice building technical skills, share tips, and increase confidence using tablets and smartphones. Held monthly at the COA, support and encouragement are available from one of our friendly tutors.

Participants in our Digital Workshops are encouraged to attend.

Success Stories



New Knowledge

An older adult who never used a device before asked me how to clear her browsing history. Prior to the program she didn't even know what a browser was.



Overcoming Barriers

A participant with arthritis had difficulty typing. After taking an iPhone class, she learned how to use the voice-to-text feature, and began comfortably dictating messages.



Empowerment

A participant gained confidence and reduced stress by learning online banking skills, enhancing financial security. Surveys show high satisfaction rates, with many participants feeling more empowered and engaged.



Social Engagement

Our COA's Facebook followers have grown over 500% just this past year.



Active Learning

The library has seen an increase of older adult users borrowing technology how-to books. After some basic training, they are then confident enough to branch out on their own.



Lessons Learned from Grantees

Keep Classes Small and Short

We found that reducing class size to 1:1 or 2:1 sessions, and limiting them to 30 minutes, significantly improved engagement and outcomes.

Group Classes by Device and OS

Training on the same equipment streamlined curriculum development and class management, facilitating easier learning and peer teaching.

Offer a Home-Based Training Option

Solving home printer issues would have been complicated, involving device transportation and network concerns, without home-based training.

Diversify Your Marketing

Identifying older adults without internet access has been challenging due to our tech-based marketing, so we've started using flyers, yard signs, direct mail, and press releases.

Choose an Engaging Curriculum

Our data shows that older adults primarily used the dashboard for playing computer games (31.8%) and reading news or books (19%).

Hire for Impact: the Right Fit Matters

Our most successful instructors had strong teaching skills, while our least successful ones were overly technical and lacked patience.

Strengthen Impact Through Strategic Partnerships

Reach out to as many local organizations as possible to get involved. Banks, libraries, schools and other businesses have all been more than willing to help. Most of these agencies have online platforms, so it also benefits them to have more seniors digitally involved.

Consider Privacy

Training older adults on how to use their medical portals was challenging due to privacy and navigability concerns. Using a generic test for live demos would have been more effective.



Just Start Somewhere

I think our biggest lesson learned is that no matter what resources you have, **just start somewhere**. You can make changes and adjustments along the way. It might feel daunting, but just starting with one class or one 1-on-1 session will increase digital literacy for older adults.



**Executive Office of Elder
Affairs**

For More Information

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Questions and Answers

Thank You!



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